Dear Ms Loudon,

ADVERTISING IN LOCAL PAPERS DURING THE PANDEMIC

I am writing to you, on behalf of the Scottish Parliament’s Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, with regard to the evidence taken, on the sustainability of the newspaper industry, by the Committee held 1 October 2020.

The evidence session focussed on three areas: the industry pre-pandemic; the impact of the pandemic; and possible future direction for the industry so it can deal with the long-term challenges it is facing and still contribute to a well-functioning democracy. The official report for this session is available here: [www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12869](http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12869).

The Committee heard from witnesses about a range of issues affecting local newspapers during the pandemic. One of the issues has been the difficulty to generate revenue from advertising. A long-standing issue for local papers has been that the public sector has reduced spend on advertising (e.g. listing jobs) in local publications.

The Committee believes that a strong local media will support the delivery of local public services through its scrutiny and publication of the actions of local authorities and other bodies. The presence of local newspapers is also linked to greater engagement with local democracy.
The Committee would be grateful if COSLA could seek the views of your member authorities to find out if they are using their advertising budgets to support local publications in their area while securing best value for money. We would welcome any examples of successful advertising campaigns benefitting local newspapers local authorities might have supported.

Yours sincerely,

Joan McAlpine MSP
Convener, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee