



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

AGENDA

17th Meeting, 2020 (Session 5)

Friday 14 August 2020

The Committee will meet at 10.00 am in a virtual meeting which will be broadcast on www.scottishparliament.tv

1. **Decision on taking business in private:** The Committee will decide whether to take item 3 in private.
2. **Homelessness and COVID-19:** The Committee will take evidence from—

Kevin Stewart, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, Janine Kellett, Head of Homelessness and Housing-Related Social Security Policy Unit, and Graham Thomson, Supported and Temporary Accommodation Team Leader, Scottish Government.
3. **Homelessness and COVID-19:** The Committee will consider the evidence heard at today's meeting.

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The papers for this meeting are as follows—

Agenda Item 2

Note by the Clerk

LGC/S5/20/17/1

PRIVATE PAPER

LGC/S5/20/17/2
(P)

Local Government and Communities Committee

17th Meeting (Session 5), Friday 14 August 2020

Homelessness and Covid-19: Note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. This paper provides some background information on the Committee's evidence session with the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning on homelessness on 14 August 2020.

Background

2. Since lockdown measures commenced in March, the Committee has mainly focussed its scrutiny on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on matters within its remit, affecting local government, housing planning, licensing and the third sector, and the support being made available. You can read relevant Official Reports and associated meeting papers [here](#).
3. All written updates sent to the Committee on Covid-19 are available on the Committee's [Covid19 page here](#).

Homelessness Scrutiny

4. A focus of the Committee's scrutiny of the Scottish Government's response to Covid-19, has been the impact of the pandemic on homelessness and efforts to protect homeless people and rough sleepers from the virus. Since lockdown, local authorities and third sector partners have provided homeless people, previously sleeping rough or in unsuitable accommodation with hotel rooms, short-term lets and other temporary accommodation to allow them to self-isolate, as this can be difficult in night shelters.
5. The Committee previously took evidence on homelessness and Covid-19:
 - from the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government [on 15 May](#).
 - from providers of frontline homelessness services [on 28 May](#). The witnesses were Alasdair Bennett, Chief Executive of the Bethany Christian Trust; Margaret-Ann Brunjes, Chief Executive of the Homelessness Network Scotland; and Mike Wright, Senior Service Manager of outreach services with Cyrenians.
 - from COSLA as part of an evidence session on how councils are dealing with current challenges relating to COVID-19 [on 3 June](#).
6. Key issues have included:
 - efforts to support homeless people and rough sleepers since social distancing measures were introduced; the extent to which this has reduced rough sleeping; and examples of good practice;
 - how to sustain gains made in any return to "normality";

- the short and long-term impact of measures to postpone tenant evictions contained in [The Coronavirus \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#);
 - how COVID-19 is affecting the implementation of [Housing First](#) and [Rapid Rehousing](#) policies, which aim to prioritise the most vulnerable homeless people in terms of housing and support;
 - the effect of the Scottish Government's decision to pause the [Affordable Housing Supply Programme](#) and how Covid-19 has impacted house-building;
 - the impact of Covid-19 on demand for social housing.
7. The Committee will likely revisit these issues at the 14 August meeting, with an emphasis on next steps as Scotland emerges from lockdown. The Scottish Government is likely to be asked about its measures to help prevent a return to pre-lockdown levels of homelessness and rough sleeping.

Next steps

8. The Committee will consider its next steps immediately after the evidence session. The discussion is likely to be in private, in line with normal Committee practice.