



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Joe FitzPatrick MSP  
Minister for Local  
Government  
Empowerment and  
Planning  
By email only

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Email: [localgov.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:localgov.committee@parliament.scot)

28 June 2023

Dear Joe,

### **Tracker report of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee**

We have welcomed your contributions to the work of this committee during the short time you have been in your new role.

One of the key priorities of this committee is to keep track of the work it undertakes and to re-visit its recommendations on an annual basis to see what progress has been made. The Committee produces an annual tracker report reflecting on that progress.

The Committee expects to consider that report shortly after summer recess.

In order to inform that report the Committee would welcome your reflections on progress made over the last year on the issues we've considered falling within your responsibility.

In particular, we'd welcome your reflections on progress made in the following areas:

- **The New Deal**
  - As you will be aware, the Committee has been closely following the progress being made toward a new deal for local government. The Committee believes that the agreement of the new deal is essential and the findings of the Accounts Commission's overview of local government only strengthen that view. The Committee very much welcomes the positivity and drive you have brought to the efforts to establish a new deal and the Committee would welcome any update you can give it.

- **Local Governance Review**
  - While we fully support the current focus on the new deal for local government, the wider ambitions of the local governance review must not be neglected and we have welcomed your commitment to reigniting the democracy matters conversations. The ambitions expressed at the outset of the local governance review must be realised and power, responsibility and resources devolved to the most local level. We would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with more detail on the timescales for the democracy matters conversations and what their focus and format will be.
  - The Committee has been exploring issues around both community planning and community councils. We look forward to receiving your response to the Committee's report on community planning. The Committee will also be continuing its work looking at community councils and would welcome your thoughts in that context on the role you envisage for community councils.
- **Understanding barriers to local elected office**
  - The Committee is continuing to pursue its work in relation to understanding barriers to local elected office. The Committee has recently published letters from political parties where they have set-out how they are seeking to improve the diversity of their candidates at local elections. The Committee welcomes the re-establishment of the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee and looks forward to considering its findings. In the meantime, the Committee would welcome any further reflections you might have on how the local governance review is considering the diversity of councillors in its efforts to renew local democracy.
- **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – post legislative scrutiny**
  - As noted earlier, the Committee has published its report on its post-legislative scrutiny of Part 2 of the Act and looks forward to your response in relation to that. Last year the Committee published its report in relation to Part 9 of the Act. We would be grateful for any update the Scottish Government could give on how it is responding to that report and providing the leadership role the report envisages for the Scottish Government.
  - We appreciate that a review is ongoing of the Community Empowerment Act, but we would be grateful too if you could provide the Committee with any update on progress in relation to Parts 3 and 5 in particular, which were looked at by our predecessor committee. We understand that these matters fall within the responsibility of the Minister for Public Finance and Community and we have accordingly copied this letter to him.
- **NPF4**
  - The consideration of NPF4 has occupied much of the Committee's time so far this session. We appreciate it is too early to assess the extent to

which its ambitions are being realised. We would, however, welcome an indication of what you are doing to ensure that we have sufficient planners with the necessary skills to give full effect to NPF4. Moreover, we would welcome your reflections on what you are doing to ensure that NPF4 is sufficiently joined up with other Scottish Government strategies such as Housing to 2040 and Local Outcome Improvement Plans. We look forward to considering NPF4 in more detail with you in the early part of next year.

I would be grateful for a response by 21 July 2023.

I look forward to your response and to continuing to work with you on these issues for the remainder of this session.

Yours sincerely,

Ariane Burgess  
Convener, Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee