



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Tom Arthur, Minister for  
Community Wealth and  
Public Finance

Local Government,  
Housing and Planning Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
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Dear Tom,

As you know the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee has been closely monitoring a number of issues relating to community engagement and empowerment, in addition to following the progress of the Local Governance Review. There are a number of areas where the Committee would welcome clarification from the Scottish Government of the current position, as set out below.

It is particularly welcome that the Verity House Agreement includes a commitment to complete the Local Governance Review by the end of this parliamentary term. I understand that phase 2 of the Democracy Matters consultation began last summer, after a long hiatus caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and that the programme is a key part of the Local Governance Review.

- I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with an update on the progress that has been made with Democracy Matters, and your expectations for the next steps in the Local Governance Review. It would be helpful to have an outline of the different strands of work beyond the Democracy Matters consultation.

The current consultation highlights both the Scottish Government and local government's commitment to the principle of subsidiarity and local self-determination. The Committee's scrutiny last year of the important role that Community Councils play in local democracy took a similar position, proposing a number of actions which would strengthen their role.

The Committee therefore has a continuing interest Community Councils. It was recently brought to my attention that there is currently no uniformity across local authorities in establishing complaints processes to allow community councillors to

raise issues about their community council or other councillors. This would seem to be good practice however some councils appear to have not put any such process in place, leaving community councillors with limited opportunities for redress, whereas others have clear and transparent complaints procedures.

- I would welcome the Scottish Government's views on the situation with regards complaints procedures for community councillors, and what options may be available to address it.

Finally, the Committee and our predecessor have completed several inquiries into various aspects of the Community Empowerment Act, and we will be tracking the issues raised in those during the remainder of this parliamentary session. Those inquiries covered Part 2 (Community Planning), Part 9 (Allotments), Part 3 (Participation requests) and Part 5 (Asset transfer requests).

- Could you provide an update on the progress being made by the Scottish Government on its review of the Community Empowerment Act and when you expect it to be completed.

Yours sincerely,

Ariane Burgess  
Convener, Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee