

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 19 March 2025
5th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2074: Increase local government funding to help protect the vulnerable elderly population and prevent the closure of care homes

Introduction

Petitioner Iona Stoddart

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the funding it provides to local councils, enabling them to deliver the best possible health and social care, and help to protect the vulnerable, frail and elderly population from the closure of residential and nursing care homes.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2074>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 1 May 2024.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 13 February 2024.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 173 signatures have been received on this petition.
8. Members may wish to note [that the 2025-26 Scottish Budget included a funding package for local government worth over £15billion](#), with £125million allocated for adult social care workers in commissioned services.

Action

9. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
March 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2074: Increase local government funding to help protect the vulnerable elderly population and prevent the closure of care homes

Petitioner

Iona Stoddart

Date Lodged

18 December 2023

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the funding it provides to local councils, enabling them to deliver the best possible health and social care, and help to protect the vulnerable, frail and elderly population from the closure of residential and nursing care homes.

Previous action

Have contacted Humza Yousaf MSP, Shona Robison MSP, Michael Matheson MSP, Anas Sarwar MSP, and South Lanarkshire Council Chief Executive regarding the proposed closure of McClymont House in Lanark.

A similar petition, related to the proposed closure of McClymont House, has have been handed into South Lanarkshire Council's public petitions committee.

Background information

Due to government cuts and the current cost of living crisis, councils are being forced to make drastic cuts in their health and social care budgets.

Unused COVID-19 funds were clawed back from local authorities; we suggest the return of these funds would alleviate the considerable financial burdens facing councils, helping prevent care home closures. Current research suggests one care home in Scotland is closing every week!

South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) have a £38million budget deficit for year 23/24. To save money, they have proposed closing two care homes in Lanarkshire.

After being advised that the Integration Joint Board (IJB) would be holding a vote on whether to close McClymont House, family members lobbied the four voting councillors about our concerns as this is the only remaining council run care home in the vicinity. They voted against the proposal, resulting in a split vote, a first for any Scottish IJB. New admissions have been halted and a consultation process is underway.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2074 on 1 May 2024

The Convener: PE2074, which was lodged by Iona Stoddart, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the funding that it provides to local councils, enabling them to deliver the best possible health and social care, and help to protect the vulnerable, frail and elderly population from the closure of residential and nursing care homes.

Ms Stoddart draws our attention to research that suggests that as many as one care home a week is closing, in part due to cuts to health and social care budgets. The petition has also been prompted by proposals to close two local authority-run care homes in South Lanarkshire.

It is perhaps worth noting that, since the petition was lodged, South Lanarkshire integration joint board has passed plans to close both care homes. However, it has also written to the Scottish Government in an attempt to secure funding that would enable the closures to be reconsidered.

The SPICe briefing notes that it is the responsibility of individual local authorities to allocate funding provided by the Scottish Government based on local needs and priorities. The briefing also notes the Accounts Commission publication, "Local government in Scotland: Overview 2023", which includes reference to a UK-wide survey by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers that found that 44 per cent of respondents identified adult social care as a service at risk of cuts. I think that any MSP would be aware of the pressures on all health and social care partnerships in their constituencies and the particular cuts that are being imposed unless care is defined as critical or essential.

The Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning has responded to the petition, stating that this is

“not a matter that the Scottish Government can intervene in”,

and that it is up to each democratically elected council how it manages the spending of discretionary budget allocations. In doing so, the minister notes

“record funding of over £13.9 billion”

being delivered as part of the latest local government settlement.

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action?

I am minded to say that I am inclined to write to the Minister for Local Government, Empowerment and Planning to seek his reflections on the UK-wide survey by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, which found that 44 per cent of council chief executives and senior managers had identified adult social care as a service that was at risk of cuts due to very large gaps in local government budgets. I am not prepared to sweep the issues that are raised by this new petition under the carpet on the back of what we have heard from the

Government so far. I suspect that the position has deteriorated even since the petition was lodged. Do colleagues have any views?

David Torrance: I agree with your suggestion, convener.

The Convener: Are members content with that course of action?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: In that case, we thank the petitioner, and we will pursue the aims of the petition accordingly.

Annexe C: Written submission

Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government written submission, 29 May 2024

PE2074/B: Increase local government funding to help protect the vulnerable elderly population and prevent the closure of care homes

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 May 2024, on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, calling on the Scottish Government to increase the funding it provides to local councils, enabling them to deliver the best possible health and social care, and help to protect the vulnerable, frail and elderly population from the closure of residential and nursing care homes.

I have been clear that the UK Government's Spring Budget and Autumn Statement failed to deliver the funding Scotland needs for public services. When more support is desperately needed for public services and infrastructure, Scotland's Block Grant from the UK Government is still less in real terms in 2024-25 than in 2022-23 by around £0.4 billion. However, the Scottish Government recognises the financial challenges that the entire public sector is currently facing and that local authorities and their employees play a crucial role in our communities.

Despite continued UK Government austerity measures, the Scottish Government have increased the Local Government Settlement to over £14 billion in 2024-25, comparing final budget to budget - as required by Parliament - this represents an increase of £574.6 million – equivalent to a 4.3% cash terms increase (2.5% real terms).

Critically, alongside providing record funding, the Local Government Settlement's share of the discretionary Scottish Budget has increased. This assessment is supported by SPICe in their report on Local Government Finance, with Table 10 of that report confirming that Local Government's share of the discretionary Scottish Budget is not only higher in 2024-25 than it was in 2023-24 but also higher than it was in 2013-14.

Similarly, the Accounts Commission Overview of Local Government in Scotland 2023 confirms that the Scottish Government provided a real-terms increase in revenue funding for local government between 2013-14 and 2023-24, the recent Local Government Budgets 2024-25 publication confirms that the Scottish Government has also provided a real terms increase in revenue funding in 2024-25.

This evidence does not ignore the challenges councils face locally or the difficult decisions taken to balance budgets but does serve to highlight that where Ministers have had discretion, they have demonstrably prioritised Local Government, highlighting the importance the Scottish Government places on our local services.

The Scottish Government also continues to work with COSLA to empower councils through a New Deal with Local Government including consideration of a fiscal framework, with a joint progress report on that Framework being published on 14 December. We have also committed to empowering Local Government through

increasing discretion to determine and set fees and charges locally, in the coming year this will include joint work on building warrant fees and planning fees.

The vast majority of funding available to Local Authorities is provided by means of a block grant. It is then the responsibility of individual local authorities to manage their own budgets and to allocate the total financial resources available to them, including on health and social care services, on the basis of local needs and priorities, having first fulfilled their statutory obligations and the jointly agreed set of national and local priorities.

In respect of the provision of Health and Social Care, Councils are independent bodies with their own powers and responsibilities and are entirely separate from the Scottish Government. Local and national government have committed to respecting each other's democratic mandates as part of the Verity House Agreement.

As long as they act lawfully, it is up to each democratically elected council how it manages its day-to-day business and decision making processes. Ultimately, it is for locally elected representatives to make local decisions on how best to deliver services to their local communities.

The 2024-25 budget provides funding of over £19.5 billion for NHS, recovery, health and social care, providing an uplift exceeding frontline Barnett consequentials; meaning resource funding for health and social care has more than doubled since 2006-07, 37.1% in real terms. This includes an additional £230 million to support delivery of the pay uplift to a minimum of £12 per hour for adult social care workers in third and private sectors from April 2024, representing a 10.1% increase for all eligible workers.

As well as this, Councils are budgeted to spend almost £4.5 billion on social work services in 2023-24. This is around one third of Net Revenue Expenditure and follows a similar trend to spending in recent years.

The Scottish Government has limited fiscal levers to increase its annual funding envelope. The budget is fully allocated at the start of the financial year and if any additional funding is required for one area there must be a corresponding reduction in budget of another area to fund this.

Finally, the Scottish Government will continue to work in partnership with local government to ensure that the people of Scotland continue to receive the high quality public services that they expect and deserve.

I hope you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely,

SHONA ROBISON