



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Local Government and Regeneration Committee

**Kevin Stewart MSP
Convener**

*By e-mail
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Dear Margaret

During the Parliamentary debate on the Local Government and Regeneration Committee's report on the Delivery of Regeneration in Scotland I indicated that I would write to you on behalf of the Committee to seek clarification in a few areas arising from the report which were not covered by your formal written response dated 12 May. I apologise for the delay in writing and now set out those areas in which the Committee would appreciate further information.

Given the many linkages to the Community Empowerment Bill (CE Bill) **it would be extremely helpful to receive your reply by 10 November** which will allow us an opportunity to fully consider the Scottish Government's position as we finalise our stage 1 report on the Bill.

The Committee were grateful for the background detail contained in your response and appreciated the themed approach taken. Perhaps as a consequence of providing information in that way there are a few recommendations the Committee made upon which the Government response is not immediately obvious.

It would also be helpful to the Committee in our ongoing work for you to provide a little elaboration on a few aspects. These too are covered in this letter.

References to paragraph numbers are references to the Committee's report and references by page are to the Scottish Government response of 12 May.

At page 2 in the second paragraph you discuss the roles of local and central government. It would be useful if you could develop the position and respond to our recommendation at paragraph 211 and the role that the Scottish Government can undertake. You rightly link to paragraph 153 but can I also direct your attention to paragraph 198, taken together this highlights a lot of what the committee has been hearing recently; while local authorities are seeking to align their activities to support community planning and empower communities, this does not appear to be recognised at a community level. This is of significant interest as we continue to scrutinise the CE Bill and the Governments views on paragraph 211 will be helpful and important to that work.

On page 4 you refer to our recommendations 341 and 344, these refer to dedicated community officers and community groups using school facilities at affordable cost. Clearly, as you indicate, these are matters which can only be delivered at local level, however the Committee would appreciate the views of the Scottish Government in relation to each of these recommendations.

In the final paragraph on page 4 running into page 5 you indicate a commitment to drawing out evidence through your monitoring and evaluation framework. Could you indicate how that will be undertaken and provide an indication of the timescale around those activities producing the evidence sought. Should any of the evidence be available now that would be particularly welcome.

In relation to paragraph 206 could you provide the update the Committee has sought.

On paragraph 207 we would be interested in the detail of how this joint working is working to support regeneration. This recommendation is mentioned on page 5 without a response from the Government being provided.

We acknowledge the issues set out on page 18 in relation to recommendation 212 although we do hope that as the principal funder of local government, and given COSLA's support for the recommendation, there is more that the Government could do in relation to an issue which was highlighted to us on a number of occasions by local groups. Any further comments here would be useful.

At paragraph 213 we sought to highlight the importance of the longevity of longer term funding. I am not sure that the reference on page 12 covers the point we are making and the Committee would welcome the Governments views on ways in which longer term stability can be provided.

Given our ongoing scrutiny work of the CE Bill the Committee would welcome the Government's thoughts on paragraph 215 and the importance of the People and Communities Fund (PCF) to successful delivery of the policy.

Similarly we could not identify any response to our suggestion in paragraph 217 around the degree of prescription underpinning the criteria to access the PCF.

We would welcome the Government's response on the following paragraphs: 342, 345, 481, 485, 490 all of which have relevance to the CE Bill and which were not covered in your formal response.

Finally on the subject of State Aid Regulations we would welcome the Government's response on paragraphs 533, 538 and 539. Again your formal response was silent on these points.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Stewart', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Kevin Stewart MSP
Convener
Local Government and Regeneration Committee