****

**OPEN GOVERNMENT STEERING GROUP**

Online - Microsoft Teams

9 December 2020 15.00 – 16.30

**NOTE OF MEETING**

**Attendees**

**Co-chairs**

Graeme Dey (Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans)

Elric Honoré – Chair of Civil Society Network

Councillor Graham Houston – Vice President, COSLA (Apologies)

**Civil Society**

Graham Meikle - University of Westminster (Apologies)

Alex Stobart – Director Scotland, Mydex CIC

Shaben Begum – Director, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (Apologies)

Kelly McBride – Director of The Democratic Society in Scotland

Lucy McTernan – Independent Expert

Ian Watt – CodeTheCity

**Government**

Doreen Grove – Head of Open Government (Facilitator)

Jennie Barugh – Director of Performance and Strategic Outcomes

Julie Humphreys – Interim Director Communications, Ministerial Support & Workplace

Audrey MacDougall - Chief Social Researcher

Colin Cook – Director of Digital (Apologies)

Albert King – Chief Data Officer (Apologies)

Shona Nicol – Team Leader, Data Standards (Deputising)

Stephen Gallagher - Director for Local Government and Communities (Apologies)

Catriona Maclean - Deputy Director Public Service Reform (Apologies)

**Steering Group Secretariat**

Madeleine Fleming – Open Government, Scottish Government

Simon Cameron – Corporate Policy Manager, COSLA

**Observers**

Daren Fitzhenry - Scottish Information Commissioner

Saskia Kearns – Commitment 4 Lead, Scottish Government  
Pamela Rennie, Policy and Governance Officer, Glasgow City Council  
Kathleen Caskie – Glasgow Third Sector Interface Network

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

Doreen Grove welcomed members to the meeting, extending a particular welcome to Pamela Rennie and Kathleen Caskie, attending from Glasgow . Members introduced themselves, stating their interest and involvement in Open Government.

1. **Partner Updates**

**Scottish Government**

Graeme Dey (Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans) expressed his gratitude for the technology which enabled the meeting to go ahead, though acknowledging the “Zoom-fatigue” which this period has induced for most.

He also expressed his thanks towards the Scottish Government Officials who have worked to keep services running throughout Covid-19. Mr Dey acknowledged the reprioritisation which took place as the organisation responded to Covid, including pausing the delivery of the Open Government action plan. He thanked members for their patience during this time. The response of communities to the pandemic has been very moving, as people have come together and organisations have cooperated during this time of need.

Speaking about the open conversations which have taken place between Government, stakeholders and the public throughout this period, Mr Dey expressed his belief that this experience has produced many lessons for Government, which we will reflect on over the next few months. Over 1000 pieces of information have been proactively published about the pandemic, provoking mature and helpful responses from the public.

Mr Dey welcomed Glasgow to the Open Government Partnership, expressing his hope that we able to work well together over the coming year as both partnerships design our next action plans.

Finally, Mr Dey welcomed the discussion around young people’s engagement in Open Government on the agenda for this meeting. He expressed his personal belief in the importance of this conversation, and of ensuring that we welcome young people into this space without patronising them. He apologised that another commitment prevented him from staying for this part of the conversation, but looked forward to hearing about it at a later date.

**Civil Society**

Elric Honoré, head of the Civil Society Network, thanked everyone working on the action plan commitments for their work in continuing to drive the commitments forward despite the difficult circumstances. He welcomed Mr Dey’s openness to learning from the positive changes which we have seen around ways of working during the pandemic, stating that this is an opportunity to change and leave behind old habits which no longer serve us well.

He welcomed the Framework for Decision Making, which has been really valuable for the relationship between the public and Government, and expressed his view that there is a need for continued commitment to openness and transparency.

Referring to the impact of Covid on local communities, Elric highlighted the need for better information and data which movements like Black Lives Matter have brought to public attention. He expressed his hope that public bodies will move on from responding to questions around data with “why do you ask?” to instead ask themselves “why can’t we answer this easily?”. Policies and procedures which are put in place should encourage organisations to do what is right as opposed to what is convenient.

Finally, Elric updated the group on the Civil Society network. There is a refresh planned for the next few months – ways of working will be reviewed, and an election will be held in the new year to fill vacant positions on the steering group.

**COSLA**  
Simon Cameron reiterated Councillor Graham Houston’s apologies for being unable to attend the meeting, and provided an update on COSLA’s recent work in his absence. COSLA has of course experienced the same rapid change in priorities as other organisations, and has been able to step up to meet the challenge. This has included adopting a wide range of new technologies to facilitate collaborative home working.

Councils across Scotland have worked closely with their communities to deliver real and impactful change. The new blueprint for Scottish Local Government sets out the ambition for this model of embracing new technology and working flexibly to continue. This presents the opportunity to make real lasting changes, as well as through the Local Governance Review, European Charter of Self Government, and Open Government.

**International Open Government Partnership**

Lucy McTernan echoed others in welcoming Glasgow to the Open Government locals programme, and emphasised the role which Scotland played within the first group of pioneer authorities in the local programme. She also highlighted the new challenges which and opportunities which the new cohort of local members presents for Scotland – around becoming a role model and mentor, and sharing the development of our commitments and learning with other regions.

Doreen Grove updated the group on links Scotland is making with other regions:

* Doreen has had discussions with Northern Ireland around their onboarding to OGP and the development of the new plan
* Doreen was part of a panel during IRM week, discussing how Scotland has used the IRM to refine our actions
* Scottish Government officials are due to meet with other OGP countries in the “Nordics” group in March of 2021.

1. **Commitment Updates**

Commitment leads provided a short summary of progress on their commitment, in complement to the written updates already provided. Key points are recorded below.

Commitment 1 – Jennie Barugh

* Commitment has been formally paused, meaning that the working group has not met. However, a paper-based update on the commitment has been completed.
* The Scottish National Investment Bank is on track to meet all commitments, following its launch in recent weeks. The bank has been established with Open Government principles at its heart.
* There have been some delays around the delivery of the 3rd procurement milestone due to staff being redeployed – however it is still on course for delivery.
* Milestones owned by the Scottish Exchequer are on track. The team have taken the opportunity to do some forward planning, with a stronger and deeper understanding of the benefits of openness and transparency and how they complement other goals within the exchequer. These steps also help pave the way towards next plan. Lucy McTernan also commended the team for this forward planning.
* The working group will meet again in the new year.

Commitment 2

Doreen Grove:

* The Participation Framework has been created and is useable – it now just needs to be operationalised, and training needs to be set up to support its use
* A lot of work around participation was incorporated into the response to Covid-19. A team has been set up to work with experts to look at what a strategic approach to participation around Covid-19 should look like
* Members of the team have been feeding into the design and delivery of both citizens assemblies - testing these mechanisms to ensure we have effective ways to engage with the public is crucial, and learning from these will feed into the participation framework
* An event exploring what a gender lens on our next Open Government action plan would look like is planned for 16th Feb next year.

Kelly McBride:

* Welcomed news that the participation framework is moving forward, and that the citizens assemblies have been formally incorporated into the commitment.
* A Participatory budgeting strategic group been brought together - chaired by Martin Johnstone.

Simon Cameron:

* Local Governance Review discussions have been taking place at a political level, and the programme board has been re-established. Local governments have submitted proposals, and the team is actively looking at how we re-establish Democracy Matters 2 in the post-Covid context. This may include doing small pilots with communities across Scotland, with a view to later in the year establishing some wider engagement and participation

Commitment 4 – Alex Stobart and Saskia Kearns

* The commitment did not formally pause, but spent time working offline. A helpful update has been produced by the Chair, Alasdair Hay, and those partners who have retained capacity to support this.
* A discussion is scheduled to consider this update before Christmas, with the aim of discussing next steps with the signatories before winding up the commitment by February.
* A large piece of engagement work was completed over the summer period by WeAreSnook and CAS. This has contributed valuably towards the good package of evidence and understanding around accountability of public services which now exists in this commitment.
* Discussions are ongoing with Education Scotland around a potential collaborating to update one of their toolkits in this area

Commitment 5

* There was no verbal update on commitment 5 at this meeting, however Elric expressed his thanks for the work done by the Scottish Government for civil society organisations on the Brexit EQiA, as this will prove valuable in the coming months as a baseline for any forthcoming evidence from various groups/grassroots organisations.

**Youth Involvement in Open Government**

Madeleine Fleming introduced the background paper previously shared with the group looking at youth involvement in the Open Government process. The floor was opened to discussion as to how Scotland’s Open Government Partnership could be best opened up to input and involvement from young people.

The group agreed that this should be a priority during the cocreation of the next action plan, and that it was important that inclusion was not tokenistic. Linked to this, it was agreed to be important that communications targeted at young people include a clear ask, or offer. Members suggested that it was important to work with those who are experienced and expert in this area, in order to ensure that involvement is done properly.

Members identified several organisations and workstreams which it could be beneficial to link to or work with

* Scottish Youth Parliament
* Children’s Parliament
* Young Scot
* UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Next steps for this workstream:

* Scottish Government team to reach out to YoungScot and/or other youth organisations to set up initial conversations to explore how to bring young people into the conversation

1. **IRM Working Group**

Daren Fitzhenry, chair of the working group which has been commissioned with providing options to the steering group around what an Independent Reporting Mechanism for Scotland could look like, gave an update on the working group. The group has now met 4 times, including a meeting with representatives from the current IRM. The options paper is on track to be presented in February, as planned, and following input from the “IRM-in-a-box” which will be released in late January. Daren thanked members of the working group for their input to the paper so far.

1. **Cocreation of the next action plan**

Doreen Grove introduced this discussion, asking the group to agree to the principle that while this cocreation process should engage widely and give real opportunities for the public and stakeholders to shape commitments, it would be disingenuous to present this as though the next action plan is a blank piece of paper. Instead, Doreen proposed that the 4 main “themes” from this action plan are retained, focussing the cocreation process around these themes and refining what actions should be committed to within these areas.

Members agreed to this approach, adding that outputs from the Citizens’ Assembly, Social Renewal public engagement, Digital Strategy consultation, and work with the Scottish Cities Alliance around data could provide useful insights to shape commitments.

Doreen offered to set up a workshop with Alessandro Bellatoni, head of the Open Government Unit at the OECD, to discuss their vision for an Open State, and how this might help to inform the vision set out for our next action plan.

**Next Steps**

The next meeting of the Open Government Steering Group will take in February, with the exact date to be arranged by correspondence. A workshop with OECD will be organised separately. Any non-members wishing to attend this meeting as observers should contact the secretariat (madeleine.fleming@gov.scot)