

Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Industrial Communities – Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 27th March, 2019

In attendance – Colin Beattie MSP (Chair), John Mason MSP, Lauren Nelson, Cllr. Russell Imrie, Cllr. Altany Craik, Andrew Ralton, Jonathan Gibson, Malcolm Leitch, Joe Larner, Ian McCrory, Bob Young, Roddy MacDonald.

Apologies – Angus MacDonald MSP, Andy Wightman MSP, Cllr. Peter Henderon, Cllr. Andrew Woods, Cllr. Tony Buchanan, Cllr. Iain McLaren, Cllr. Margot Russell, Cllr. Stephen Curran, Cllr. Ian McNeil, Sandra Brown, Jim Johnstone, Professor Steve Fothergill.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting dated the 30th January 2019

The minutes were proposed by Cllr. Altany Craik and seconded by John Mason MSP. Colin Beattie MSP advised the Group on his engagement with other Parties in relation to gaining some consensus on the ‘Key Principles of Allocation of the proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund’.

The Scottish Parliament Finance and Constitution Committee – Inquiry into Funding of EU Structural Fund Priorities

Roddy MacDonald spoke to his report on the Inquiry. He stated that the Finance and Constitution Committee is calling for views on how Scotland’s share of post-Brexit Structural Funding should be determined. The Inquiry aims to explore the experiences of lead partners, delivery agents and beneficiaries to inform the design of any future funding of structural priorities in Scotland post-Brexit. It was noted that the deadline for submissions is Thursday 25th April, 2019. Following discussion the following actions were agreed;

- The Policy Advisory Group Scotland will be asked to comment on and amend, as appropriate, a response drafted by Roddy MacDonald.
- The draft will be signed off by the ICA Scotland Elected Members Executive Group and submitted to the Inquiry.
- The submission will then be homologated by the ICA Scotland meeting of the 16th May 2019 and thereafter referred to the Cross- Party Group on Industrial Communities on the 19th June 2019.

The Stronger Towns Fund

Roddy MacDonald spoke to his report on the Stronger Towns Fund. The following points were noted;

- £1.6bn for six years through to 2026.
- £1bn pre-allocated to English regions with a strong skew to the Midlands and the North.
- The remaining £600m to be available through a bidding process.
- Money to be used to create jobs, train local people and to boost economic activity.

- Communities to draw up their Town Plans with advice from their local LEP's.
- The fund is specifically for Towns and not Cities. The definition of what constitutes a Town to be defined.
- What about Scotland? It was noted that James Brokenshire, UK Government Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced to Parliament on the 4th March 2019 that *'The Government will seek to ensure that Towns in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can benefit from the Stronger Towns Fund. This will build on the success of our City and Growth Deal Initiatives. Today we extend our approach to devolution and make a new offer to Towns and the millions of hard working people who live in them.'*
- Discussion then took place on a number of topics including the quantum and the governance arrangements for such a fund in Scotland. These included issues such as the Barnett Formula; how does it sit with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; what about the Research and Development monies; how do we ensure that we 'get the right questions in front of the right people?'
- It was agreed that Colin Beattie MSP would write to Derek Mackay MSP, Cabinet Secretary, to raise some of the issues which emerged from the GB Secretariat's analysis on the impact of formulae on the final quantum available to Scotland.
- It was also agreed that this issue would merit further discussion at the next meeting of the Cross-Party Group.

Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 19th June, 2019

It was noted that the next meeting of the Cross-Party Group would also include arrangements for the Annual General Meeting. Group Office Bearers will be elected at the AGM. The regulations stipulate that there must be two MSP Office Bearers and that one of these must be Convener. The other MSP Office Bearer position is entirely a matter for the Group. Non-MSP members of the Group can also hold positions. It is also permissible to have more than one Office Bearer elected to each position.

AOCB

Cllr. Russell Imrie extended an invitation to Colin Beattie MSP to attend the next ICA Scotland meeting which will be held in Midlothian.

Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 19th June, 2019 from 5.30pm in CR3 at Holyrood.