Local Government and Regeneration Committee

7th Report, 2014 (Session 4)

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Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Remit and membership

Remit:

To consider and report on a) the financing and delivery of local government and local services, and b) planning, and c) matters relating to regeneration falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment.

Membership:

Richard Baker (3 September 2013 – 25 February 2014)
Cameron Buchanan (11 September 2013 - present)
Mark McDonald (7 November 2013 - present)
Stuart McMillan (18 September 2012 - present)
Anne McTaggart (22 December 2011 - present)
Margaret Mitchell (16 November 2011 - 11 September 2013)
John Pentland (22 December 2011 - 3 September 2013)
Alex Rowley (25 February 2014 - present)
Kevin Stewart (Convener) (1 June 2011 - present)
Stewart Stevenson (18 September 2012 - 7 November 2013)
John Wilson (Deputy Convener) (18 September 2012 - present)

Committee Clerking Team:

Clerk to the Committee
David Cullum

Senior Assistant Clerk
Fiona Darwin

Assistant Clerk
Seán Wixted

Committee Assistant
Paul Nicholson
Local Government and Regeneration Committee

7th Report, 2014 (Session 4)

Annual Report 2013 - 2014

The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

1. This report covers the work of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee during the parliamentary year from 11 May 2013 to 10 May 2014.

Introduction

2. This was our third year since we were established following the beginning of the fourth Session of the Scottish Parliament on 11 May 2012.

Membership of the Committee

3. The Committee was formally established, by a motion of the Parliament on 1 June 2011, and we met for the first time on 15 June 2011. There are seven members appointed by the Parliament to serve on the Committee. During the period June 2011 to May 2014, 18 different members have, at some point, served as members of the Committee.

4. At the start of the parliamentary year on 11 May 2013, our membership was as follows: Kevin Stewart MSP (Convener); John Wilson MSP (Deputy Convener); Stuart McMillan MSP; Anne McTaggart MSP; Margaret Mitchell MSP; John Pentland MSP and Stewart Stevenson MSP.

5. On 3 September 2013, John Pentland MSP was replaced by Richard Baker MSP as a Member of the Committee.

6. On 11 September 2013, Margaret Mitchell MSP was replaced by Cameron Buchanan MSP as a Member of the Committee.

7. On 7 November 2013, Stewart Stevenson MSP was replaced by Mark McDonald MSP as a Member of the Committee.

8. On 25 February 2014, Richard Baker MSP was replaced by Alex Rowley MSP as a Member of the Committee.
9. We would like to take this opportunity to record our thanks to our fellow members who have served on the Committee over the last 12 months, for their hard work and dedication and the way in which they addressed themselves to the successful delivery of our challenging work programme.

Presiding Officers agenda for parliamentary reform

10. In line with the agenda for the reform of parliamentary business during Session 4, as set out by the Presiding Officer Tricia Marwick MSP, we have continued our efforts to develop new ways of making our work relevant and accessible to the people of Scotland.

11. During the parliamentary year we sought ways to build on the work we undertook last year in three principal areas, namely engagement with remote communities; support for the Parliament’s Gaelic policy and expanding our use of social media platforms.

12. Our inquiry into the Flexibility and Autonomy of Local Government provided us with useful opportunities to deliver on all of our reform ambitions at a single meeting. On 2 May 2014 we undertook a community engagement event, and public committee meeting in Stornoway. The aim of the meeting was to support one of the strands of the inquiry by examining the needs of island communities in relation to reform of local government in Scotland.

13. Despite meeting in Stornoway, we were conscious that communities on other parts of Na h-Eileanan Siar, as well as communities in Orkney and Shetland, needed to be included as part of our community discussion. Therefore, we initiated a ‘digital discussion’ via our Committee Twitter feed to allow people from all over the three island local authorities to feed in their views to our discussions.

14. We also actively encouraged people to tweet us views in Gaelic. This community event immediately followed the Parliament’s first Gaelic Twitter Day on 1 May 2014, and allowed us to support the efforts of the Presiding Officer to ensure all communities across Scotland are included in the work of the Parliament.

15. The Committee received over 60 participations via twitter, more than half of which were in Gaelic. This greatly contributed to the discussion with the community group as well as facilitating an online bilingual discussion in line with the community engagement strategy.

16. Overall the Committee has undertaken five fact-finding visits around Scotland during the parliamentary year 2013/14. These covered Aberdeen; Dundee; Glasgow; Paisley and Stornoway as part of our inquiry work on both regeneration and the flexibility and autonomy of local government. This level of public engagement has allowed us to continue the face-to-face engagement central to
our work as a parliamentary committee, grounding our scrutiny in the real-world experience of communities across Scotland.

Inquiries and reports

Delivery of Regeneration in Scotland

17. Throughout the parliamentary year, we undertook a detailed and extensive inquiry examining the delivery of regeneration policy in Scotland. Our inquiry focussed on the community aspects of regeneration. Our inquiry sought to ascertain how regeneration activity is tackling and reducing poverty, decline and inequality of opportunity in areas of disadvantage across Scotland, and how it is seeking to improve outcomes for those communities.

18. Throughout our inquiry we received invaluable evidence from community engagement events, and fact-finding visits, which greatly informed our findings. We visited communities across Scotland to hear first-hand about their experiences of regeneration. This included visits to Maybole in South Ayrshire, Ferguslie Park in Paisley, Govan in Glasgow, Whitfield in Dundee, Abronhill in Cumbernauld and Seaton in Aberdeen. We wish to thank the hundreds of individuals who took the time to talk to us and contribute their views and experiences.

19. From our inquiry we concluded that years of regeneration policies have delivered few long-lasting outcomes for the most deprived communities in Scotland. We found that although community was at the heart of much of the focus of regeneration work, in practice it was difficult for those living and working in those communities to have a real say on what was happening to them.

20. We also identified that there is a key role for the Scottish Government in ensuring central responsibility for oversight and co-ordination of regeneration activity.

21. The Scottish Government responded to our findings and recommendations on 9 May 2014, and the Parliament will consider our report in late May 2014.

Proposed Third National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy

22. Between January and March 2014 we led the Parliament’s efforts to scrutinise the proposed Third National Planning Framework for Scotland. This Framework sets out the broad policy by which spatial planning and development will be taken forward across Scotland over the five-year period from mid-2014 to mid-2019.

23. The Framework also sets out the key principles by which the major national development projects (such as the construction of major infrastructural projects) will proceed. The aim of the Framework is to ensure the planning system achieves a series of overarching policy objectives set by the Scottish Government, such as
ensuring Scotland is a low carbon society; a natural place for investment and a successful and sustainable country with high levels of connectivity.

24. The Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act") required the Scottish Government to lay a copy of a draft National Planning Framework before the Scottish Parliament prior to its finalisation. This provides the Parliament, and its committees, with an opportunity to consider and report on the draft Framework before it comes into force. The Parliament had 60 days to conclude its scrutiny of the draft Framework.

25. We were the lead committee for scrutiny of the Framework. Three other committees also had a major interest as it impacted on their remits. These were the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee; the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee and the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee.

26. Despite the strict 60-day statutory timeframe for the scrutiny of the Framework we agreed the cross-remit nature of the Framework allowed us to support the Presiding Officer’s agenda for parliamentary reform. We did this by designing a more effective and efficient method to scrutinise this important public policy area.

27. We also examined the Government’s review of Scottish Planning Policy. This, along with the Framework, forms the basis of planning policy across Scotland, with the Framework setting out where development should take place, and Scottish Planning Policy setting out how it should take place.

28. By working closely with colleagues in the other committees we ensured scrutiny of the Framework complimented our collective efforts. This included each committee reporting directly on specific aspects of the Framework, coordinating evidence taking and synchronising publication of findings and recommendations.

29. Amongst our recommendations was the need to more closely align future reviews of the Framework and Scottish Planning Policy, the need for clearer guidance on the balance between the duty to deliver sustainable development alongside sustainable economic growth, and the need to ensure local authorities have up to date development plans.

30. The Parliament debated and approved the reports of all four committees on 18 March 2014.

**Flexibility and autonomy of local government in Scotland**

31. In February 2014 we launched an inquiry into the flexibility and autonomy of local government in Scotland. The aim of the inquiry being to examine the levels of flexibility and autonomy available to local government in Scotland to learn lessons,
and inform the ongoing debate on whether there is a need to strengthen and enhance local democratic structures in Scotland.

32. Between Monday 7th and Wednesday 9th April 2014, Kevin Stewart MSP, Anne McTaggart MSP and Mark McDonald MSP undertook a three day fact-finding visit, as part of the inquiry, to Hamburg (Germany), Copenhagen (Denmark) and Malmö (Sweden). The focus of this visit was to examine the structure and funding of local government in these neighbouring EU countries and identify best practice which can be applied in Scotland.

33. The inquiry has heard from a broad range for witnesses including elected council leaders, council chief executives, leaders of opposition parties on councils, academics, community groups, the voluntary and third sector, as well as representatives from the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy.

34. We have also focussed on the needs of rural, peripheral and island communities during our evidence gathering. We examined a system of autonomous government operating in the Åland Islands in Finland, when we took oral evidence from members of the Parliament of Åland via video conference link.

35. On 2 May 2014, we held a public Committee meeting in Stornoway to take evidence from representative of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council on the Our Islands Our Future proposals. We also heard from representatives of the island communities and voluntary sector groups (see paragraphs 12 and 13).

36. We expect to report our initial findings by June 2014 with a view to forming the basis for further inquiry work as part of our 2015 work programme.

Legislation

37. Over the course of the parliamentary year we have considered two primary pieces of legislation, both members’ bills: the Dangerous and Defective Buildings (Recovery of Expenses) (Scotland) Bill, introduced by David Stewart MSP; and the Disabled Persons’ Parking Badges (Scotland) Bill, introduced by Dennis Robertson MSP.

38. In addition we have taken the opportunity of contributing to legislation being examined by other committees to add value to the parliamentary scrutiny process, as well as supporting our overall work programme. As a result of this approach we have examined parts of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill and the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill during the parliamentary year.
Dangerous and Defective Buildings (Recovery of Expenses) (Scotland) Bill
39. The Dangerous and Defective Buildings (Recovery of Expenses) (Scotland) Bill was introduced into the Parliament by David Stewart MSP on 30 October 2013. The purpose of the Bill is to amend the Buildings (Scotland) Act 2003 to allow local authorities to make charging orders for recovery of expenses incurred where they have carried out work to defective or dangerous buildings under various sections of the 2003 Act.

40. Following its referral to us by the Parliament we took written and oral evidence on the Bill between November 2013 and February 2014. We published our stage 1 report on the general principles of the Bill on 18 March 2014, and the Parliament considered and agreed the Bill at Stage 1 on 3 April 2014.

41. In the wake of our scrutiny of this Bill, the Scottish Government indicated it would support the passage of the Bill through the Parliament, subject to various amendments. This demonstrates the value of effective committee scrutiny of legislation in building cross-party consensus around an area of public policy, thereby contributing to an effective legislative process. We expect to consider the Bill at Stage 2 in June 2014.

Disabled Persons’ Parking Badges (Scotland) Bill
42. The Disabled Persons’ Parking Badges (Scotland) Bill was introduced into the Parliament by Dennis Robertson MSP on 17 December 2013.

43. The objective of the Bill is to protect the rights of badge holders and strengthen the existing framework of the disabled persons’ parking badges scheme, (the blue badge scheme). The Bill aims to improve the quality of life for disabled people by tackling misuse of the badge system, thereby freeing up parking spaces for those who are entitled to the parking concessions.

44. This Bill provided us with a further opportunity to examine an important area of local government policy relating to equalities in terms of vital services which support vulnerable groups, such as those with a disability.

45. Following its referral to us by the Parliament we took written and oral evidence on the Bill between January and April 2014. We published our stage 1 report on the general principles of the Bill on 7 May 2014, and the Parliament considered and agreed the Bill at Stage 1 on 20 May 2014. We expect to consider the Bill at Stage 2 in June 2014.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill and Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill
46. Following the in-depth work we have carried out on public services reform and local government since 2012, we sought to add value to the parliamentary consideration of these important and interlinked pieces of legislation. Our aim was to assess the extent to which the principles of the Christie Commission
recommendations on joined-up services delivery and preventative spending are being translated into primary legislation.

47. The purpose of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill is to put children and young people at the heart of planning and delivery of services and ensure their rights are respected across the public sector. Specifically this Bill aims to improve the way services support children and families by promoting cooperation between various services.

48. The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill provides the framework which will support improvement to the quality and consistency of health and social care services through the integration of health and social care in Scotland. The Bill permits integration of various local authority services with health services.

49. Both these Bills had implications for the way in which vital public services will be delivered, both by local authorities and other services, such as the NHS. As such, these proposed changes go to the very heart of the principles set out by the Christie Commission in terms of building an effective joined-up public service delivery model in Scotland.

50. We highlighted several areas where more effective coordination of legislation could assist in delivering effective reform.

51. This work also complimented our ongoing programme of monitoring the Public Service Reform agenda through the Local Government Benchmarking Framework operated by COSLA, SOLACE and the Improvement Service. As we progress our programme of work on benchmarking, we will look to see if the expected public service reform outcomes are being achieved by the joint service provision established by these Bills.

Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill
52. The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill was introduced into the Parliament in October 2013 by the Scottish Government. The aim of the Bill is to establish a national legislative framework for public procurement that supports Scotland’s economic growth. As nearly one third of all public procurement contracts in Scotland are issued by local government, this legislation has major implications for our committee remit.

53. Examining various aspects of the Bill allowed us to support three key outcomes of our work programme, namely: scrutiny of local government budgets and financing; examination of European Union priorities and delivery of key targets on equalities, sustainable development and preventative spending.

54. With this in mind we examined those parts of the Bill which addressed sustainable procurement, community benefit requirements and the transposition of EU Directives into Scots law.
55. This work allowed us to add value from the expertise we have gained from our inquiry work on public service reform and on the delivery of regeneration, in terms of the need to empower communities across Scotland via effective community benefit provisions.

56. It also supported one of our key European scrutiny objectives by allowing us to examine the process of the transposition of new EU Directives on procurement into Scots law. This work aided the debate, as a major factor we have identified from our inquiry work to date is a cultural inhibition amongst the local government sector to allow community and voluntary sector groups to tender for procurement contracts for fear of potentially breaching EU State Aid Rules.

57. This is a further example of the joint-up approach we have adopted to our committee work programme yielding dividends in terms of effective parliamentary scrutiny of legislation.

**Subordinate Legislation**

58. We considered a total of 18 Scottish Statutory Instruments during the course of the parliamentary year. One was subject to affirmative procedure, 17 were subject to negative procedure. We recommended that the Parliament approve the affirmative instrument. No motions to annul were lodged in respect of any of the negative instruments.

**Budget process**

*Scrutiny of the 2014/15 draft budget*

59. Following the detailed pre-budget scrutiny process we undertook in early 2013, we had a key focus for our scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s 2014/15 budget proposals. As a result, some key themes which emerged from our scrutiny of the draft budget were—

- How councils have responded to local government settlements to date;
- The future of local government financing;
- Public services reforms.

60. Two of the key findings we identified in terms of local government budgets and financing were on charges and fees, and savings in staffing costs. From our scrutiny of the draft budget we identified information indicating that councils are raising over £1.3 billion a year through charges and fees. This accounts for 7.4 per cent of councils’ total revenue.

61. Our scrutiny of local government funding also identified figures which showed that while overall, local government staff costs grew from 2008-09 to 2010-11, all 32 councils combined achieved a saving in staff costs in 2011-12 of just under...
£537 million. Both of these findings greatly added to our understanding of the totality of funding streams available to local government in Scotland. We are further considering local authority financing through our inquiry work (see paragraphs 31 to 36).

**Mainstreaming consideration of the Scottish Government draft budget proposals**

62. One of the key outcomes of our scrutiny of the Scottish Government's 2014/15 budget proposals, was our decision to mainstream consideration of budget issues across our annual work programme from 2013/14 onwards.

63. As well as providing a more manageable approach to the scrutiny of Scottish Government spending plans on local government and regeneration, this approach also helps us to avoid the compression of examination of the draft budget normally undertaken each October and November, following the publication of the Government's draft budget proposals.

64. As part of this approach we have already considered the financial and resource implications in relation to the following-

- regeneration and community planning as part of our Delivery of Regeneration in Scotland Inquiry;
- planning as part of the our scrutiny of the draft Third National Planning Framework and review of Scottish Planning Policy.

65. In the next phase of this scrutiny, in late May 2014, we will examine the impact of UK welfare reform policies on local government budgets and services. We will also seek to examine the steps councils are taking to assess and plan for any future financial and resourcing pressures welfare reform changes may place upon them.

**Petitions**

66. We had two active petitions before us during the parliamentary year.

**PE 1433:**

67. On 5 March 2013 the Public Petitions Committee referred Petition PE 1433 to us. This petition, in the name of John Hancox, called on the Scottish Parliament to—

“urge the Scottish Government to encourage public agencies such as Forestry Commission Scotland, Crown Estates, health boards, public trusts and landowners, public and private, rural and urban, to make land available for people to plant, grow and harvest their own food.”

68. We have brought this petition to the attention of the Land Reform Group and will consider it further as part of any consideration we undertake of the Scottish Government's forthcoming Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill.
PE1469

69. PE1469 was referred to us 10 December 2013. The petition, in the name of Aileen Jackson—

“Calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to consider a change in planning regulations to enable an increase in the current neighbour notification distance of 20 metres in relation to wind turbine planning applications.”

70. We considered this petition as part of our scrutiny on the draft Third National Planning Framework and review of Scottish Planning Policy in January 2014. A decision on whether to take any further action on this petition will be made following the receipt of a formal response to our report on the draft Third National Planning Framework by the Scottish Government.

EU Priorities

71. As in the last parliamentary year, our efforts in scrutinising our EU priorities for 2013/14 have been ably led by our EU Reporter, Stuart McMillan MSP. On 21 and 22 September 2013, the EU Reporter visited Brussels with counterparts from other committees. This visit specifically focussed on examining proposed changes to EU procurement regulations in advance of the introduction of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill. The information gained from the visit informed the Committee’s decision to examine the provisions of the Bill and its subsequent inquiry.

72. As outlined, a key focus of our EU priorities for the parliamentary year has been to ensure the expertise we have gained from our programme of inquiry work on public services reform and regeneration policy was effectively directed to support the scrutiny of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill.

73. Through our EU Reporter we have also contributed to the work of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee in reviewing the operations of the Parliament’s Standing Orders relating to the consideration of EU legislation.

Other issues

74. In line with our standard approach of scrutinising key policy areas which fall within our remit, over the parliamentary year we have examined the following areas—

- **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman:** On 11 December 2013, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, Mr Jim Martin, and members of his senior staff appeared before us to report on his annual report for 2012-13. We also examined the SPSO’s Complaint Handlers Network for the local authority as part of this work. We took a novel approach to this work by inviting
members of the public to contribute suggested questions in advance of the evidence session. We also followed up on this session by ensuring all relevant questions we received were answered by the SPSO;

- *The Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Scotland:* On 4 December 2013, the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Scotland, Mr D Stuart Allan, appeared before us to report on his annual report for 2012-13;

- *Accounts Commission for Scotland reports and Audit Scotland work programme:* On 5 March 2014, we heard from the Chair of the Accounts Commission for Scotland, Mr Douglas Sinclair, on his 2014/15 work programme. We also heard from the Auditor General for Scotland, Caroline Gardner, on the joint programme of work being undertaken by her, and the Accounts Commission, on examining the local government sector. Reports from Audit Scotland are an invaluable source of information which supports our inquiry and budget scrutiny work. We will examine the Accounts Commission’s 2013/14 overview report on local government as part of our work programme for autumn 2014.

**Meetings of the Committee**

75. During the parliamentary year, we met 30 times: two meetings were held wholly in private and the remaining 28 had both public and private items on the agenda. Items we considered in private included the consideration of oral evidence heard in public, consideration of the text of draft Committee reports, our future work programme and the appointment of advisers for specific inquiries.

76. 29 of our meetings took place at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. On Friday 2 May 2014 we held a public Committee meeting at the Headquarters of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in Stornoway. This meeting took evidence from witnesses representing the island authorities of Na h-Eileanan Siar, the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands, as well as representatives from the community and voluntary sector as part of our inquiry on the Flexibility and Autonomy of Local Government in Scotland.

77. We are indebted to all those who have assisted us by providing both written and oral evidence over the year.

**Visits and public engagement**

78. As a Committee we have again this year focussed on meeting with communities across Scotland as often as possible, taking into account our work schedule as a parliamentary committee and the effective, efficient and proper use of public funds.
79. Between 11 May 2013 and 10 May 2014, various members of our Committee have undertaken six external visits around Scotland. This has included visiting Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Dundee and Paisley as part of our regeneration inquiry.

80. We also held a formal Committee meeting and community engagement event in Stornoway on 2 May 2014 as part of our inquiry on the Flexibility and Autonomy of Local Government in Scotland.

81. Three members of the Committee also undertook a busy three-day fact-finding visit to Germany, Denmark and Sweden in April 2014, to examine the structure and funding of local government in neighbouring countries. This provided valuable information to support our inquiry on the Flexibility and Autonomy of Local Government in Scotland.

82. The Convener, Kevin Stewart MSP, also spoke at two conferences during the year as part of our engagement with key stakeholders, presenting our recommendations and outcomes from our three-strand inquiry on Public Service Reform, and on our inquiry on the Delivery of Regeneration in Scotland.

Digital Parliament Programme and use of social media
83. As part of our commitment to delivering on the Digital Parliament Programme, we now receive and use committee papers in a digital format. This allows us to interrogate evidence and information provided to us in more effective and interactive ways.

84. We have also actively sought to make more effective use of our committee presence on social media platforms such as Twitter (@SP_LocalGovt), regularly tweeting information about our meeting and committee work. We currently have 682 followers on twitter.

85. In another innovation we utilised our twitter feed to conduct a digital discussion with community representatives during our recent visit to Stornoway (see paragraphs 13 to 15). This allowed people to remotely participate in the community engagement event we undertook in Stornoway by contributing their views our discussions.

Equalities Issues
86. During 2013/14, we continued our commitment to equalities in our work programme by examining the role of regeneration policy on improving the lives of various disadvantaged and minority groups in society.

87. As part of our scrutiny of the 2014/15 draft budget, we specifically sought information, as part of our call for written evidence, on the impact of regeneration policy and preventative spending on equalities.
88. This laid the groundwork for ensuring scrutiny of equalities issues formed a part of our inquiry on the Delivery of Regeneration in Scotland. As a result, this inquiry has a specific focus on the community aspect of regeneration policy. We sought to ascertain how regeneration activity is tackling and reducing poverty, decline and inequality of opportunity in areas of disadvantage and improving outcomes for communities across Scotland.

89. As part of our ongoing programme of mainstreaming equality scrutiny into our work programme, we have sought to further explore the impact of public policy on the most vulnerable in society. We are conscious that local authorities often act as the final safety net for the most fragile communities in Scotland, and that local government support for vulnerable groups is a key aspect of the social architecture of Scotland. This is why we have decided to undertake a focussed examination of the impact of UK welfare reform policies on local government funding.

90. In line with the Presiding Officer’s reform agenda we are conducting this work in co-ordination with the Welfare Reform Committee to maximise the Parliament’s effectiveness in scrutinising this vital area of public policy. We will report on this outcome of this work in our next annual report in 2015.

91. This work was further reinforced by our consideration of equalities as part of our annual budget scrutiny process. As a result, in our report on the 2014/15 Scottish Government’s budget proposals we highlighted our concerns at the ongoing cost implications arising from single status and equal pay rulings, and the provisions some councils are having to make for these. We recommended that COSLA should provide an up to date monitoring report on the position of single status and equal pay costs for all 32 local authorities, setting out the amount each has set aside to deal with this issue.

**Climate change issues**

92. Building on the strong foundations from our consideration of climate change issues on 2012/13, we have continued to mainstream examination of climate change issues into our work programme for the current parliamentary year.

**Sustainable regeneration and environmental outcomes**

93. As part of our major inquiry into the Delivery of Regeneration in Scotland, we examined how sustainable regeneration policies were working to meet environmental outcomes for Scotland.

94. During our inquiry we highlighted some good examples of regeneration activity with environmental benefits, such a sustainable urban drainage system in Cumbernauld, or the work of the Clyde Gateway project in Glasgow in contributing to environmental outcomes by reducing energy usage, building sustainable homes and creating green jobs. We also examined projects where improvements in the environment had to other positive outcomes, such as health.
95. Another important issue we explored during this inquiry was the concept of sustainability and its environment and social aspects. We identified evidence highlighting the potential mismatch between sustainable development and sustainable economic growth and the impacts this can have on policy development towards climate change.

The planning process and climate change targets
96. During our consideration of the proposed Third National Planning Framework, we scrutinised local authorities’ objectives for ensuring their local development plans support Scotland’s ambitions on climate change targets.

97. One of the key recommendations we made in relation to the National Planning Framework was the need for the Government to refine its approach to the development of future NPFs to provide more clarity on the strategy and criteria upon which national developments are selected by the Government. This would allow the Parliament to better scrutinise key policy areas such as how the planning system delivers on sustainable development and climate change targets.
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