

November 2018

Local Governance Review

The Scottish government and COSLA launched a Local Governance Review in December 2017. The review is based on a belief that the best outcomes come from decision making being done at the right geographical level. Tied to this is an acceptance that this will lead to variations in both decision making arrangements and services in different areas. A summary of the Scottish Council discussion in February is available [here](#).

The review has two strands: **Community Decision Making** and **Public Service Governance**. The community decision making strand involves a range of meetings/focus groups across Scotland with community groups and a formal consultation which closes in November. The public service governance section has involved discussions between local authorities and the Scottish government focusing on their powers and responsibilities.

This is a review of **all** devolved public services. It could lead to a wholesale reorganisation of not just local authority boundaries but all services. There are alternative routes to increased community participation but those could also involve changes to how staff are employed and how UNISON works to support members. Following on from the Community Empowerment Act, more services could come under the control of community groups and development trusts. Participatory budgeting (public meetings decide funding) could be extended impacting considerably on staff, particularly if funding decisions are short-term. Even without restructuring there could be considerable changes:

- Who employs staff? New authorities, national bodies (a national care or education service), current bodies but with day-to-day decisions devolved to community groups, community councils or Development Trusts or do those community bodies become employers?
- Negotiating bodies: where will terms and conditions be decided?
- Will there be a national set of terms and conditions or will each employer negotiate their own with trade unions.
- How will T&Cs be harmonised if reorganisation takes place?

The Education Reform Bill has been shelved partly because John Swinney feels that wider reform may better achieve his aims. Time has been set aside before the end of this parliamentary term for a Reform Bill should the government decide that this review indicates that reform is necessary. The next meeting of the enabling group (which includes UNISON) is November 12th.

The Democracy matters section has been holding a series of meetings with who they consider to be key stakeholders across Scotland, this includes the community groups, community development trusts and of course the usual third sector service providers. The website also has a section asking people to post their ideas and comment on each others. So far people have posted 31 ideas and 24 votes have been cast. Some do have a few comments on them but often it's just a dialogue between the contributor and the civil servants. The next stage, as well as analysing contributions to the consultation, will be larger meetings than the so called Grassroots conversations. These are being organised by the Scottish government, Highlands and Island Enterprise and the Scottish Community Development Trust. They will take place in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Lerwick and Inverness: 2 per day 60 participants in each. Branches are asked to send members to take part in these events. An further paper contains dates, times of the meetings and links to enable those who wish to go to book a place at the events. UNISON will organise a follow up meeting for those who attended to support the development of UNISON's response to the ongoing review. Please send the contact details for those who attend to Rosaleen: r.rodgers@unison.co.uk to ensure that you are invited to the follow up meeting.

The process is underway. The team seem convinced that unlike many of the other reviews, this will lead to action. Space has been set aside for a reform Bill in the next parliamentary session. As we have seen with the regional collaborative, change can take place without a bill.

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