

Witness Name: Nicola Dickie

Statement No.:

Exhibits:

Dated: 7/9/23

## UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

---

### WITNESS STATEMENT OF NICOLA DICKIE

---

I, Nicola Dickie, will say as follows: -

I am the Director of People Policy of COSLA, having taken up this role in October 2021, prior to that I was the Chief Officer Health and Social Care within the organisation between February 2020 and September 2021. As Chief Officer Health and Social Care and Director of People Policy I played an integral part in setting up the frameworks, mechanisms and partnerships that underpinned the response of COSLA to the pandemic. I have first-hand knowledge of the matters covered in this statement.

1. **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)**

- 1.1 The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) is the national association of Scottish councils and acts as an employers' association for its 32 member authorities. Detailed information pertaining to COSLA's function, constitution, structures, roles, people and processes is provided in Nicola Dickie's statement dated 6 April 2023 submitted to Module 1 of the Inquiry (INQ000147705).
- 1.2 Throughout the pandemic COSLA utilised its pre-existing governance structures as much as was possible. COSLA did however, in common with other parts of civic society in Scotland, pivot the resources in the organisation to prioritise pandemic related policy work. This meant the organisation was able to focus available resources for the benefit of COSLA member authorities and the communities they serve.

- 1.3 During the course of the pandemic COSLA continued to function as the membership organisation of all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland. COSLA championed councils' vital work to secure the resources and powers they needed to response to the pandemic. That included COSLA's efforts on councils' behalf to focus on the challenges and opportunities our members faced, and to engage positively with governments and others on policy, funding and legislation. This included engaging in key financial, legislative and policy developments to ensure those developments had the best possible impact, developing partnerships with the Scottish and UK governments, parliaments, and the third and private sectors. COSLA also supported councils to work together and deliver shared services and mutual aid to increase their capacity to deliver services during the pandemic.
- 1.4 COSLA engages regularly with our sister organisations in the LGA, WLGA and the NILGA on a range of issues. We also engage through the Council of European Municipalities and Regions with umbrella organisations across Europe on areas of shared interest. We did not have specific structures across COSLA, LGA, WLGA and the NILGA to consider emergency preparedness or Covid-19 specifically. This was not required given the way that the response to the pandemic was handled by the UK and devolved governments, there would, however, have been no issue in creating a specific cooperation framework if that had been required.

**2. Cooperation and joint working between COSLA, Scottish Government and UK Government (and other devolved nations)**

- 2.1 In the period immediately prior to March 2020 COSLA and the Office of the Secretary for State for Scotland (OSSS) had regular calls with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). These calls were purely focused on Brexit and immigration issues. There were no meetings that involved COSLA, Scottish Government and the OSSS.
- 2.2 A physical meeting took place between the COSLA President and the Secretary of State for Scotland on 23 January 2020. One of the items discussed was future engagement between COSLA and the Scotland Office. The intention was to

arrange regular political meetings going forward as well as a presentation on the work of COSLA in London.

- 2.3 However, due to the impact of Covid-19 on COSLA's day to day work, particularly a focus on prioritising the local response needed and work with Scottish Government and other key stakeholders, there were then no further meetings with Scotland Office in until 9 September 2020, when the then President and Vice-President met virtually with the Secretary of State for Scotland.
- 2.4 There were further meetings during the relevant period however it should be noted that the meetings with Scotland Office, as with irregular face to face meetings in the years before 2020, focused mainly on the implications of Brexit, together latterly with COP26 and asylum and refugee issues. These were political meetings designed to maintain communication channels and to cover issues which were reserved to Westminster but impacted local government in Scotland. As the Covid-19 pandemic operational response was directed by decisions of the Scottish Government it was not necessary to discuss the response at these meetings.
- 2.5 All communication in the periods between meetings was by email and related to the agreement of agenda items or agreed actions to be reported upon in advance of the next meeting. Minutes were not taken and the usual practice was to begin each meeting with matters arising from the previous meeting.
- 2.6 There were no tripartite meetings between COSLA, Scottish Government and the Cabinet Office during the Specified Period.
- 2.7 The relationship with the other Local Authority Associations (LAAs) remained a relatively informal one through the Covid-19 period. The differences between Devolved Administrations and the legal position in each country required COSLA to direct our focus to work with the Scottish Government and other Scottish partners. Where there was an opportunity for learning or comparison that tended to be done informally. There were no documents drafted jointly by the LAAs.

However COSLA produced a Blueprint for Local Government (ND/1 - INQ000220342) in September 2020 which we refer to later in this submission.

- 2.8 Most of the work was done through established resilience arrangements across the four nations. From 30 April 2020, there were calls between the LAA chief executives sharing information on the position in their country, though no formal notes were taken of these meetings. Specific issues that arose during these discussions were dealt with separately. There was some sharing of information around financial implications for Local Government of Covid-19 and priorities for Covid-19 recovery, but these remained, for the most part, separate and not joint documents. The primary purpose of these meetings was to create a forum for high level collaboration, and would have afforded the opportunity to put in place more formal meeting arrangements if that had been necessary.

### **3. Cooperation and joint working between the COSLA and Scottish Government**

- 3.1 As would be expected, COSLA became aware of Covid-19 in the early part of 2020. At the beginning of March 2020 internal structures started to be created to track issues related to Covid-19. The first meeting of the Scottish Government Resilience Cabinet Sub Committee (SGORR) in relation to Covid-19 took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> March and was attended by the COSLA Chief Executive. There was a meeting of Group Leaders on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 which the Scottish Government Clinical Director joined to discuss the ongoing public health emergency and answer questions from Group Leaders.
- 3.2 Over the specified period COSLA played a key role in the frameworks set up by the Scottish Government to respond to the pandemic. As the representative body for all 32 Scottish Local Authorities, COSLA had regular meetings with the Deputy First Minister (DFM). The DFM met with COSLA's Presidential Team, COSLA Leaders and on occasion leaders from individual councils. In addition to the meetings with the DFM there were regular meetings between Cabinet Secretaries and the relevant spokespeople at COSLA who were the relevant policy leads. For instance, on matters pertaining to education the Cabinet

Secretary would meet with COSLA's President or the Spokesperson for Children and Young People. These meetings were conducted weekly when there were particularly acute educational issues such as the phased reopening of establishments. No minutes were kept of these meetings, there were, however, other channels of communication that were in place to implement decisions, such as COSLA Leaders meetings and meetings of the political Group Leaders within COLSA.

3.3 In addition to these bilateral meetings COSLA was also represented on a number of groups set up by the Scottish Government, These included:-

- SGORR (Ministerial)
- SGORR (Officials)
- National Incident Management Team
- National Contingency Planning Group
- Shielding Group
- PPE Group
- Test and Protect
- Education Recovery Group
- Strategic Resilience Partnership

3.4 The Scottish Government was responsible for the core political and administrative decision making in terms of the Covid-19 response. Through involvement in the groups listed above COSLA was in a position to reflect the views and concerns of local government and the professional bodies working within its structures.

3.5 In order to inform the position advocated by COSLA throughout the pandemic COSLA and local government consulted with and relied on expert, scientific and medical expertise provided by Scotland's Chief Medical Officer, Scotland's National Clinical Director, Public Health Scotland nationally and Directors of Public Health at local health boards. This was then augmented with expert professional advice from subject experts who would be delivering services on the ground. This included resilience structure and specialisms alongside traditional



professional roles such as Chief Executives of Councils, Environmental Health Officer, Social Workers and the teaching profession. COSLA has well established working relationships with all of the professional associations in the local government family.

- 3.6 Specifically in relation to the introduction of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPI) there existed mechanisms that allowed the views of local government, both political and professional, to be fed in to the decision-making process. Prior to the pandemic COSLA and Scottish Government officials already had consultation frameworks in place to develop policy which had an impact on local government or required to be delivered by local government. During the specified period further steps were taken to ensure that those working arrangements continued and where necessary working groups were established to provide a platform for consultation on specific issues. Further information on these working groups is provided later in this statement. These arrangements helped to ensure that potential implementation problems (such as issues with practical implementation and resourcing) were identified at an early stage. An example of is the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Expert Group which worked closely with Scottish Government officials on the legislation and guidance in relation to the reopening of premises to ensure that social distancing was observed, and one to one contact reduced. Environmental Health and Trading Standards professionals provided advice on how premises could be reopened and assisted in the production of guidance. In addition an operational guidance document (ND/2 - INQ000220343) was developed by this group to ensure a consistency of approach across Scotland and close links were maintained with Police Scotland to ensure a uniformity of approach. In addition the Scottish Government identified additional funding to enable additional resource to be allocated to the enforcement of the regulations. COSLA Leaders agreed a distribution of this funding across the 32 local authorities against established principals.

- 3.7 COSLA also worked closely with Public Health Scotland and clinicians. All this work was done at pace using the most up to date information and advice

available at the time with the aim of ensuring that decision making incorporated all the relevant information and made use of the expertise of professionals.

- 3.8 Meetings to decide on the implementation of NPI's were not hosted by COSLA. However COSLA Leaders were involved in deciding how NPI's would be implemented where there was specific local government involvement such as the reopening of educational establishments and the shielding arrangements for vulnerable individuals. Decisions in relation to these matters were made at either full COSLA Leaders meetings or Group Leader meetings depending on the timescales required. A full list of these meetings and the decisions made is available in the document pack (ND/3 - INQ000220329).
- 3.9 The introduction of the Scottish Government five-level Strategic Framework on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020 saw an engagement protocol (ND/4 - INQ000220339) agreed with local government in April 2021. COSLA also maintained a risks and issues log (ND/5 - INQ000220344, ND/6 - INQ000220345, ND/7 - INQ000220346, ND/8 - INQ000220347, ND/9 - INQ000220348, ND/10 - INQ000220349, ND/11 - INQ000220350, ND/12 - INQ000220351, ND/13 - INQ000220352, ND/14 - INQ000220353 ) based on feedback from members and officers. This provided a method to identify and track the response to emerging issues.
- 3.10 COSLA was involved in a number of Scottish Government groups that considered and discussed the use of NPIs. A full list of these with details of areas discussed is included in the document pack (ND/15 - INQ000220354).
- 3.11 Groups that considered NPIs and where COSLA were consulted on the introduction, extension or amendment included the Workforce Issues Group, the Education Recovery Group and the Self-isolation Support Grant group. The Education Recovery Group was the umbrella group for a number of sub groups which considered different aspects of education including early learning and the phased return to in-person learning. The ability to discuss the issues that local government would face in implementing NPIs was critical and ensured they were practical and that there was suitable resource. The Workforce Issues Group

provided a route to ensure that local authority employees were protected whilst still delivering essential services.

- 3.12 COSLA was, for the most part, adequately consulted and engaged in relevant decision making prior to the public announcement of decisions taken to amend, extend or end the use of NPIs. That said, the speed of decision making and announcement meant that, on occasion, some of COSLA's Members became aware of changes to NPI at the point of public announcement – this position is reflected in the submissions from Individual LAs appended as part of the document pack for this module (ND/16 - INQ000114207). That is not, however, to say that COSLA did not support its members in implementing all changes regardless of the pace at which they were announced.
- 3.13 In order to ensure that COSLA considered the views of Local Authorities or the public to NPIs there were close working arrangements with the Society for Local Authority Chief Executives and in addition the Local Authority Resilience Group Scotland and other professional organisations. This allowed views to be sought and fed in to the decision making process. In addition the Engagement Protocol (ND/4 - INQ000220339), developed with the local authorities, set out how individual local authorities could feed in their individual council views including the views of their Council Leader. This Engagement Protocol was agreed by COSLA Leaders in April 2021 as a result of the close collaboration that had existed until then. It embedded the working practices that were proven to be effective. On occasion, prior to the proposed introduction, amendment or extension of NPIs that related to individual or groups of local authorities, there would be specific communication between the Scottish Government and the Council Leader, this would generally take the form of a phone call and provided a platform for leaders to provide their views.
- 3.14 COSLA sought to identify the impact on different groups of people in relation to the imposition, amendment, extension and/or termination of NPIs. This was done through the prism of the four harms approach adopted by the Scottish Government in 2020 and reviewed by them in December 2020. This document can be accessed [here](#) (ND/17 - INQ000273689). COSLA provided information



from individual local authorities, 'different groups of people' and the views of professionals working at a local level to support various groups. As the Inquiry will be aware, COSLA also undertook a survey (ND/16 - INQ000114207) of each of the 32 LAs to assist with collation of the Nicola Dickie's witness statement for Module 1 (INQ000147705). As part of the survey councils were asked to what extent emergency plans and risk assessments in place at January 2020 considered the risk factors and potential impacts on the groups of people with listed characteristics, in the event of a pandemic emergency occurring. The majority of councils answered "yes" to age, disability, clinically vulnerable, people living in residential care and nursing homes, homeless and vulnerably housed, those with mental health difficulties and groups outlined in Chapter 7 of Emergency Response and Recovery. An approximately equal number answered "yes" or "no" to pregnancy & maternity and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Whilst proportionally more local authorities answered "no" to the remaining characteristics, it should be recognised that at least 25% of local authorities had answered "yes".

- 3.15 COSLA did not have a formal role working with Scottish Government on the impact the border with England may have had on the imposition of NPIs in Scotland. That said, individual Councils who have borders with England did feed in their views to the Scottish Government on how any differences between Scotland and England were likely to play out – given Councils are uniquely placed to understand their local areas and how people tend to move between boundaries. Councils fed back using the channels highlighted in the Engagement Protocol

- 3.16 The Engagement Protocol, mentioned above, and the [Scottish Government route map](#) (ND/18 -INQ000273690) which was published in May 2020 provided the framework for decision making and engagement in relation to the imposition of local restrictions. Whilst those decisions rested with the SG there was opportunity for COSLA to feed in evidence and data that assisted with making those decisions. There were effective and active lines of communication throughout the relevant period facilitated by the various groups referred to earlier in this statement.

#### **4. Public health communications and public confidence**

- 4.1 During the course of the pandemic COSLA used all its available communication channels to disseminate public health messaging (as appropriate) this included Twitter, Facebook, COSLA website and media releases, furthermore COSLA also provided a weekly information bulletin issued to all Elected Members in Scottish local government.
- 4.2 This content of what was shared by way of public health messaging was provided by Scottish Government nationally for onward dissemination by national and local organisations.
- 4.3 The arrangements put in place by COSLA for such communications interacted well with the Scottish Government's own arrangements for such communications given we were all using the one set of baseline assets that were then tailored to specific audiences i.e. Elected Members, Professional Associations etc. COSLA was not curtailed in public health communications in any way by Scottish Government, however, given the rapidly developing nature of much of the public health messaging there were challenges across the piece in ensuring all messaging remained accurate and up to date across national and local settings.
- 4.4 COSLA was regularly involved in the development of campaigns, social media, digital media including apps albeit we were less involved with press conferences and slogans in support of public health messaging. COSLA staff worked with public relations leads in councils to produce messaging that was included in the

Elected Members Bulletin and disseminated through social media channels. Messaging stressed the importance of reducing social contact and how to access support. The Trading Standards Scotland team, based within COSLA, produced messaging in relation to contact tracing, vaccine scams and community sign posting for sources of help and assistance.

- 4.5 Local and regional restrictions were the subject of regular public health messaging after the initial national lockdown came to an end. Scottish Government would provide information, and assets, to local areas advising the rules for each area. Individual councils and local partners would then disseminate information widely using all available channels. Regular radio adverts and bulletins tailored to individual areas were also widely used. COSLA sought at all times to maintain public confidence by ensuring the messages we were transmitting were relevant, up to date and delivered in a way that provided clarity and authenticity – this included sharing video clips of Scottish Government and COSLA politicians as well as sharing Scottish Government, local government and relevant professional information was also shared e.g. specific interventions from Scotland's Clinical Director or Chief Medical Officer.
- 4.6 Disinformation and confusion with messaging was monitored regularly nationally and locally and fed in to local and national structures for the implantation of corrective action. Each organisation issuing comms monitored the reach and any confusion and disinformation as per normal operating procedures. As a matter of course COSLA and individual councils monitor the amount of interactions particular forms of communication have. The Trading Standards Scotland team carried out active monitoring of social media channels for scams that related to Covid-19 and took appropriate action to have websites or social media profiles taken down if necessary.
- 4.7 Local government also has a vast array of experience in communicating messages to different groups in our communities, including faith groups and those that speak, or read, a different language from English. This experience was fed in to local and national structures to ensure messages were being provided in a form different groups could and would interact with. Councils also have links

with communities of interest at a local level, e.g. Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers, again the experience and networks of these officers were utilised to ensure all communities had access to relevant information in formats they could interact with.

- 4.8 COSLA did not specifically commission studies on behavioural management throughout the pandemic – we did, however, have access to studies and commissions from Scottish Government on behavioural management by virtue of our attendance at national meetings.
- 4.9 As the membership organisation for Scottish Local Government, COSLA has limited contact with individual local residents. Where people did contact COSLA for information and support they were signposted to their own council area. Councils had a vast array of ways local residents could contact them throughout the period of the pandemic whilst ensuring restrictions in place at the time did not impact on the availability of information.

## **5. The public health and coronavirus legislation and regulations**

- 5.1 As with all areas of policy development that impact on local government, COSLA works with Scottish Government officials as policy is developed in relation to public health and pandemic preparedness. COSLA will use the structure of policy boards to develop an agreed political mandate based on its analysis of and response to the policy as it is developed. For particularly significant developments and those with a financial impact, decisions will be sought from COSLA Leaders. In general, where policy development relates to public health it will be initially considered by the Health and Social Care Policy Board.
- 5.2 Where new legislation is being taken through Parliament that impacts on local government COSLA will submit evidence to the relevant parliamentary committee in order to inform the process and ensure that the voice of local government is heard.



- 5.3 COSLA were not formally consulted on the Coronavirus Act 2020 as it was put in place at pace and without time for a consultation process. Many conversations were held during March 2020 around how public health could be protected and, as described previously, COSLA was involved in these discussions with the Scottish Government rather than the UK Government.
- 5.4 COSLA responded to Scottish Government consultations on Scottish specific Covid-19 related legislation. Evidence was submitted to the Local Government and Communities Committee, the Education and Skills Committee, the Local Government Housing and Planning Committee and the Education, Children and Young People Committee. Full details are included in the document pack (ND/19 - INQ000220338).
- 5.5 COSLA identifies a number of different groups of people as requiring particular or specialist support. Work undertaken to support these groups was regularly highlighted and discussed at COSLA Leaders and Board meetings prior to the relevant period and during the period. In relation to the pandemic response COSLA sought to ensure that the needs of these groups were recognised in the development and enactment of legislation and support mechanisms.
- 5.6 COSLA identified the following groups of people: those residing in care homes, vulnerable children and young people, people with complex needs affected by delays in the hospital setting (both in terms of treatment and discharge), those on low incomes including those requiring hardship payments, destitute people with no recourse to public funds and gypsy (and other) travellers.
- 5.7 COSLA does not hold any powers of enforcement, thus, had no direct involvement in the enforcement of the legislation related to the coronavirus.
- 5.8 The [Health Protection \(Coronavirus\)\(Restrictions\)\(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#) (ND/20 -INQ000273699) came into effect on the 27 March 2020 imposing restrictions and requirements across Scotland in response to the serious and imminent threat to public health posed by coronavirus. In the main, local authority Regulatory Services Teams led the local government enforcement



response in relation to Covid-19. Responsibilities were discharged under the Public Health (Scotland) Act 2008, Health and safety at Work etc Act 1974 and emergency regulations introduced by the Scottish Government, including the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act and Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) Regulations 2020.

- 5.9 Police and local authorities were given enforcement powers to secure compliance with these restrictions with local authorities being given specific powers for regulations 3 and 4 (requirement to close premises and businesses). Police Scotland were given specific powers to deal with restrictions of movement and gatherings. Local authorities enforced the restrictions to close premises and businesses in the premises specified in [Schedule 1](#) (ND/21 - INQ000273698) of the 2020 Regulations and authorised officers of the Councils regulatory services acted as “relevant persons” under the 2020 Regulations.
- 5.10 The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Expert Group was set up on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 specifically to allow real time consultation to happen between the Scottish Government officials and local authorities on the legislation and the enforcement of the regulations. The group also created enforcement guidance in order to ensure a consistent approach across the country. The approach was based on the 4 E’s: engage, explain, encourage, enforce. This was also in line with the Police Scotland approach to enforcement. This approach meant that compliance with the regulations was secured through interactions with businesses rather than resorting to a criminal prosecution.
- 5.11 The Scottish Government also produced the following document to support enforcement by local authorities. [Enforcement - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): local authority directions - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) (ND/22 - INQ000273688)

## **6 - Involvement with third sector (voluntary) organisations**

- 6.1 The local and regional area resilience partnerships include third sector interfaces providing a mechanism for involving the voluntary organisations that operate in each local authority area. The Local Resilience Partnerships provided pre-existing mechanisms which supported the engagement with these organisations

and helped to ensure that the resources of these organisations were used effectively to deliver support to individuals and communities.

- 6.2 COSLA did not provide any direct assistance to the third sector as it does not receive funding for this purpose. Local Government continued to pay staff and honour contracts as per Scottish Procurement Policy Notices 2020/5. This was challenging in early 2020 as there was no clarity about whether sufficient funding would be made available from UK Government and subsequent consequentials for Local Government to cover existing contracts and meet the additional costs being incurred to support communities in the pandemic, while also having significant drop in income due to lockdown restrictions.

## **7. Recovery Planning**

- 7.1 In May 2020 COSLA set up a Special Interest Group (SIG) to consider recovery planning from the pandemic. Subject to the approval of the Leadership Sounding Board, the Leaders' Meeting or a Board may establish Special Interest Groups in relation to functions within their remit. On this occasion Leaders recommended the formation of a SIG to provide political direction, and leadership, as Scotland sought to begin recovery and renewal across public services and the communities they support. It was recognised that this was an opportunity for transformation in the delivery of public services building on the experiences gained during the immediate response to the pandemic.
- 7.2 The core members of the SIG were the presidential team and the spokespersons with the ability to invite specialists and advisors to meetings. The Chief Executive of the Local Government Improvement Service was also a member in order that the positive elements of whole system collaboration that emerged during the initial phase of the pandemic and opportunities to capitalise on these going forward in terms of transformation were captured and developed.
- 7.3 The SIG met on six occasions between the 20<sup>th</sup> May and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020. Minutes of these meetings are provided in the document pack (ND/23 - INQ000273693, ND/24 - INQ000273694, ND/25 - INQ000273695, ND/26 -

INQ000273696, ND/27 - INQ000273697). During this period the SIG identified that there were particular policy areas that required attention and development during the recovery phase. These were:-

- Local Government Finance;
- Economy and the Environment;
- Vulnerable Communities;
- Schools and Children and Young People; and
- Health and Social Care.

- 7.4 Several common priorities emerged from this work. These included the importance of a recovery centered on local decision making (including the potential for devolution of further powers to the local level), the centrality of effective partnership working in the post-emergency period landscape, the involvement of communities and vulnerable groups in the decision making process and consideration of the expanded role of technology in service provision.
- 7.5. A number of recurring challenges also emerged from this work, notably the need to adapt to the likely resource challenges posed in the recovery period, the rolling back of support that was provided during the emergency period without new supports having been established and the likelihood of increased demand for services across a range of areas.
- 7.6 The work of the SIG contributed significantly to the [COSLA Local Government Blueprint](#) (ND/1 - INQ000220342) which was agreed by Leaders and published in September 2020. The Blueprint sought to outline a cohesive vision for Local Government, including identifying the themes and priorities to shape medium to longer term recovery work and renewal. The SIG considered a wide range of evidence and information put forward for consideration in the Blueprint, including from external partners in areas such as human rights. The launch of the Blueprint was accompanied by a comprehensive communication strategy.
- 7.7 In August 2021 Leaders agreed a joint Scottish Government/Local Government approach to recovery from Covid 19 (ND/2 - INQ000220340). This agreement outlined a shared vision and priority outcomes for recovery from the Covid19

pandemic recognising that there was an opportunity to work differently. The paper identified four priorities: public services recovery, redesign and renewal; good green jobs and fair work; financial security for low income households and wellbeing of children and young people.

- 7.8 Leaders had overall responsibility for ensuring that recovery plans were implemented.

## **8. Future risks, reviews, reports and lessons learned exercises**

- 8.1 Throughout the specified period COSLA sought to learn and adapt. This can be demonstrated by the publication of the Local Government Blueprint and the creation of the Special Interest Group.
- 8.2 In December 2020 the SIG submitted a report to Leaders on lessons learnt, the report was finalised at the January 2021 meeting and was produced jointly with the Local Government Improvement Service. The report (ND/29 -INQ000220330) identified areas of success and areas of challenge articulating the lessons learnt for each.

## **Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

**Signed:**

**Personal Data**

**Dated:** 07/09/2023