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Copy to: The Leaders of all Scottish local authorities

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Dear Alison,

Today I set out the Scottish Government's proposed Budget, including tax and public sector pay policies for 2021-22 and introduced the associated Budget Bill to Parliament. Further to the announcement I write now to confirm the details of the local government finance settlement.

The intention is that details of the indicative allocations to individual local authorities for 2021-22 will be published on Monday 1 February in a Local Government Finance Circular which will begin the statutory consultation period on the settlement.

COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on our society, communities and lives. While the local impacts have undoubtedly been severe in many areas, our communities have also shown an enduring resolve in a time of great crisis. I am indebted to local authorities in continuing to support their communities and to deliver vital public services and for the central role in administering financial support to our businesses under the most significant of pressures.

The physical and mental ill-health caused by COVID-19, together with the economic impacts, including loss of businesses and jobs, have in turn impacted people's standards of living and put many more on the cusp of financial insecurity, with the risks of poverty and homelessness that brings. There have been significant consequences for education and our communities have felt the economic impacts sharply in how we travel, live, work, and shop. Our Budget responds to those challenges.

The total non-COVID-19 revenue funding to be provided through the settlement for 2021-22 will be £11,003.4 million, which includes distributable non-domestic rates incomes of £2,631 million.

The Capital settlement has been set at £617 million.

The total funding which the Scottish Government will provide to local government in 2021 -22 through the settlement is therefore £11,620.4 million, and includes;

- £59 million revenue to support the final tranche of increased funding for the expansion in funded Early Learning and Childcare entitlement to 1,140 hours;
- In addition to the £100 million available in 2020-21, a further £72.6 million to be transferred from the health portfolio to the Local Authorities in-year for investment in adult health and social care and mental health services that are delegated to Integration Authorities under the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. This brings the total transferred from the health portfolio to support health and social care integration to £883.6 million in 2021-22. The additional £72.6 million for local government includes a contribution to continued delivery of the real Living Wage (£34 million), uprating of free personal and nursing care payments (£10.1 million), continued implementation of the Carers Act in line with the Financial Memorandum of the Carers Bill (£28.5 million);
- The ongoing £88 million to maintain the pupil:teacher ratio nationally and secure places for all probationers who require one under the teacher induction scheme;
- Continued provision in support of Teachers Pay (£156 million) and Pensions (£97 million);
- An increase of £7.7 million in the specific grant support for Inter-Island Ferries bringing the total to £19.2 million;
- £5.3 million for Barclay implementation costs; and
- The capital settlement includes an uplift in provision for flood risk schemes of £10 million.

In recognition of the unique pressures created by the pandemic the settlement also includes an additional £90 million available to compensate councils who choose to freeze their council tax at 2020-21 levels, helping to protect household incomes. This additional allocation provides compensation to support services and equates to an increase in council tax of around 3%.

Including the additional funding to compensate for a council tax freeze the revenue allocation delivers an increase for local government for 2021-22 compared to 2020-21 of £335.6 million or 3.1% to support services.

I can also confirm local government will be allocated a further £259 million of non-recurring COVID-19 funding for 2021-22. The distribution of this funding, which will be provided as general revenue grant, will be discussed and agreed with COSLA.

Local authorities will again, in return for this settlement, be expected to deliver further certain specific commitments.

This year, we will again work with local government to agree a small number of deliverable outcomes to help ensure Integration Authorities use total resources to focus on delivery of key areas for improvement, including: reducing delayed discharges; improving availability of, and access to, community-based health and social care services; and ensuring more people are

supported to stay at home. We will also wish to ensure that the social care workforce is supported and sustained during and following the challenges of the Covid pandemic. We will provide support and challenge by working with local government to agree a shared national and local approach to accountability for delivery, building upon existing shared mechanisms for routine reporting of expenditure, activity and outcomes across Scotland.

The funding allocated to Integration Authorities should be additional and not substitutional to each Council's 2020-21 recurring budgets for adult social care services that are delegated. This means that, when taken together, Local Authority adult social care budgets for allocation to Integration Authorities must be £72.6 million greater than 2020-21 recurring budgets.

The Scottish Government, in partnership with local authorities, retains the ambition of empowering schools to make key decisions over areas such as the curriculum, budgets and staffing while continuing to deepen collaboration across the education sector. In recognising that teachers are central to achieving our ambition of delivering excellence and equity in Scottish education we will continue to commit an overall funding package of £88 million in the local government finance settlement to support both maintaining the pupil teacher ratio at a national level and ensuring that places are provided for all probationers who require one under the teacher induction scheme.

We will continue to invest in the Attainment Scotland Fund to deliver the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This will see each local authority area continue to benefit from over £120 million in Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), which will go directly to headteachers to provide additional support to help close the poverty-related attainment gap and overcome barriers to learning linked to poverty. This is in addition to the £62 million in Attainment Scotland Funding allocated to LAs outwith the local government finance settlement. This funding will continue to provide authorities and schools with additional means to provide targeted literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing support for children and young people most impacted by poverty.

On non-domestic rates, the Scottish Budget commits, within the fiscal limitations of the devolved settlement, to extending the 100% Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) and aviation relief for at least three months. We hope that this interim measure will provide a degree of certainty in the absence of any clarity from UK Government over both the future of their equivalent RHL relief and other macroeconomic support measures such as the furlough scheme. Should the UK Government bring forward an extension to their equivalent RHL relief that generates consequential funding, Ministers will match the extension period as part of a tailored package of business support measures. In addition, our decision to reduce the Basic Property Rate ('poundage') to 49 pence, the same as in 2019-20, will deliver savings for Scottish businesses compared with previously published plans. Notwithstanding the limitations of the devolved settlement we are fully committed to doing all we can to prioritise support for businesses and this unprecedented step will ensure that properties' gross rates liabilities are no higher than they were prior to the pandemic, all else being equal.

In coming to the decisions announced in the Scottish Budget I have listened carefully to the representations that COSLA made on behalf of local government over the unprecedented pressures and challenges they are facing and this is recognised in the decisions taken on the level of funding to be delivered through the local government finance settlement.

The Scottish Government and COSLA worked together to agree the details of a lost income scheme to compensate councils for the loss of income from sales, fees and charges due to the pandemic in 2020-21. The scheme was worth an estimated £90 million for 2020-21 but was subject to confirmation of the consequentials from the UK Government. While that confirmation is still awaited, I can also confirm that I am increasing the allocation to £200

million, which when added to the previously committed £49 million of consequential that could also be used to support lost income for council Arm's Length Organisations will provide an extra £249 million of allocated funding to support councils losses due to the pandemic. While I appreciate that confirmation of this additional funding is coming late in the financial year it will allow councils to manage the costs of COVID-19 and subsequently support continued financial sustainability. I can reaffirm my commitment that if there are any further consequential that accrue to the Scottish Budget for this purpose in 2021-22, I will pass these on in full to Scottish local authorities.



KATE FORBES