Note of the Scottish Cities Alliance Leadership Group meeting
Wednesday 24th June 2015
Edinburgh

Attendance

Cllr Ken Guild	Leader, Dundee City Council
David Martin	Chief Executive, Dundee City Council
Cllr Andrew Burns	Chair & Leader, City of Edinburgh Council
Sue Bruce	Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council
Annemarie O'Donnell	Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council
Stuart Black	Director of Development & Infrastructure, Highland Council
Cllr Ian Miller	Leader, Perth & Kinross Council
Jim Valentine	Executive Director (Environment), Perth & Kinross Council
Cllr Johanna Boyd	Leader, Stirling Council
Stewart Carruth	Chief Executive, Stirling Council/SCA Strategic Director
Keith Brown MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities
Oonagh Gil	Deputy Director, Enterprise, Cities and Tourism, Scottish Government
Aileen Edwards	Programme Director, Scottish Cities Alliance

Also in attendance

Dr Morag Watt	Cities Team, Scottish Government
Sharon Miller	Cities Team, Scottish Government
Simon Forrest	Private Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, Scottish Government
Alexander Anderson	Scottish Government
Professor Donald Houston	Scottish Cities Knowledge Centre (item 3)
Dr Georgiana Varna	Scottish Cities Knowledge Centre (item 3)
Dr Mark Robertson	Partner, Ryden (item 4)
Alistair Dinnie	Business Manager, Leader's Office, City of Edinburgh Council
Kate Leer	Infrastructure Project Manager, Scottish Cities Alliance
Iain McCreaddie	Policy Manager, Scottish Cities Alliance
Lillian McDowall	Communications Officer, Scottish Cities Alliance
Isabel McDermid	Administrator / PA, Scottish Cities Alliance

Apologies

Cllr Jennifer Laing	Leader, Aberdeen City Council
Angela Scott	Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council
Cllr Gordon Matheson	Leader, Glasgow City Council
Cllr Margaret Davidson	Leader, Highland Council
Steve Barron	Chief Executive, Highland Council
Bernadette Malone	Chief Executive, Perth & Kinross Council

Note of meeting

1.   Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Introductions were made and apologies were tabled as noted above.

2.   Note of Previous Meeting

The note of the previous meeting on 18th March 2015 was agreed and will now be published on the Alliance website.

2.1   High Speed Rail

The Chair thanked the Scottish Government on behalf of the City Leaders for arranging the presentation by the Director of Rail, Transport Scotland at their meeting on 22nd May 2015, which was well received. In Aberdeen's absence, the Chair advised that Aberdeen are comfortable with supporting the extension of High Speed Rail to Scotland on the basis that it is seen as part of broader connectivity issues that need to be addressed to ensure all Scottish cities remain competitive. The Chair outlined that this would include exploring opportunities from the extension of High Speed Rail to Scotland to enhance the air access of Aberdeen and Inverness to national hub airports in London.

The Cabinet Secretary sought the support of the Scottish Cities to signing a letter from the Scottish Government to the Secretary of State for Transport alongside other stakeholders in England, seeking the acceleration of the extension of High Speed Rail to Scotland. The six cities in attendance at the meeting confirmed that they would be supportive of signing the letter which the Chair authorised on the basis that Aberdeen, who were not in attendance, were consulted on the content of the letter and approved the final version. The Scottish Government would follow up on this action. The Cabinet Secretary also agreed to raise the issue of additional air access to national hub airports in London for Aberdeen and Inverness with the Secretary of State for Transport as part of the ongoing discussions on extending High Speed Rail to Scotland.

The Cabinet Secretary advised that he would be speaking at a national high speed rail conference in September and was seeking an opportunity for the SCA to be represented too.

The Cabinet Secretary has asked Transport Scotland to set up an event to discuss wider cross border connectivity between Scotland and the north of England. The group were supportive of this event being taken forward in partnership with the Alliance and the Chair asked the Scottish Government to work with the Alliance Core Team and Transport Scotland on the event to ensure there is a collective city input to the agenda and outcomes, including sign-off of the invitation list and on the comms.

2.2.   Cities Convention

The Cabinet Secretary updated the Leadership Group on the Scottish Government's plans for this event which he first raised at the last Leadership Group meeting. The group were supportive of this event being taken forward in partnership with the Alliance on the basis that the Scottish Government will take the lead, working closely with the Alliance Core team to ensure there is a collective city input to the agenda and outcomes, including sign-off of the invitation list and on the comms. Inverness offered to host a dinner on the evening before the event and this will be progressed.

3.   Empowering Scotland's Cities to Grow

The Chair introduced Prof. Donald Houston and Dr Georgiana Varna to present the outcomes from their research to date.

The SCKC's presentation detailed a menu of city empowerment mechanisms including a summary of the main benefits and risks associated with each mechanism. The Chair advised that as an initial next step the City Leaders would attend a workshop facilitated by the SCKC in August 2015 to explore the issues raised in the research in more detail with a view to establishing a collective city position on city empowerment and autonomy. It was agreed that the city CEO's will work with the SCKC to clarify the scope of the agenda for the workshop.

Later in the year a wider, collaborative, stakeholder seminar will be held involving the Scottish Government, partners and other key stakeholders, with a view to presenting and discussing the collective cities position. The Cabinet Secretary welcomed this activity and noted that there were currently many changes impacting on Local Government and, within this context, it is important that the cities voice is heard as part of the wider consultation process with other key stakeholders. The Cabinet Secretary also noted that the Scottish Government would have to take account of all views.

4. Infrastructure : Housing and Commercial Property Business Cases

The Alliance's Infrastructure Project Manager introduced the work she has led, together with a cross partner working group to develop collaborative business cases for the housing and commercial premises investment opportunities across the Scottish Cities. Dr Mark Robertson from Ryden outlined the potential opportunities identified as well as next steps. Five areas were agreed by the Leadership Group for further market testing. These were Tier 1 opportunities (Private Rented Sector (PRS), Hotels, SME space) and Tier 2 opportunities (student accommodation & assisted living).

In discussion, the Chair advised of a PRS opportunity in Edinburgh, and suggested that Edinburgh's experience in securing this deal be shared.

As the lead on Infrastructure Development Opportunities in the Cities Vision, Dundee commended the work undertaken to date noting that it had demonstrated added value for the large cities as well as the smaller ones. The group approved the next steps, including the need for external market testing with developers, investors and professional bodies and the development of detailed business cases on the identified opportunities. Approval was also given in principle for additional funding from the City Investment Fund to progress additional market testing and further development work. An update on progress will be available in September 2015.

5. City Deals

The Scottish Government gave an update, noting that 28 City Deals are in place across the UK, including the Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal. The UK Government has committed to entering tripartite discussions with the Scottish Government about potential deals for Inverness and Aberdeen, and these are ongoing. It was acknowledged that as each city deal is being taken forward in a unique and bespoke way that fits each city region's priorities, there is no standard template for developing a City Deal.

It was noted that a Commission on Urban Economic Growth is being established to advise on the targets on which the success of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal will be judged. The Commission will work alongside a UK wide advisory panel.

The cities gave updates on the status of their respective City Deals and it was noted that their city officers had found the City Deal and Economic Modelling Forum established by the Alliance to allow the city partners to share information and best practice very helpful.

It was further noted that many of the cities were considering focusing their City Deals around a particular theme. Glasgow advised that, in recognition of their social justice theme, their City Deal had created a joint procurement strategy to assist them in ensuring that every contract awarded as part of the City Deal secured wider social benefits for the city region. Glasgow offered to share information on this strategy with the other cities which was gratefully received by the group.

6.   Director's Update

The Programme Director spoke to the Director's Report which updated the Leadership Group on key progress and achievements made on delivering the Operational Plan since the previous Leadership Group meeting. Of particular note was activity undertaken to increase the profile of the Alliance's work since the last meeting both nationally and internationally.

The budget report detailing approved spend and drawdowns to date as well as actual spend to 31st March 2015 was noted. A high level version of the budget was published following the last Leadership Group meeting as part of the Alliance's Annual Report for 2014-2015 which is available on the Alliance's website.

7.   Governance Arrangements / Protocols

A paper detailing the revisions made to the Alliance Protocols to take account of the changes to the Governance Arrangements for the Alliance which were agreed at the last Leadership Group meeting was tabled and approved.

The Chair thanked the Alliance partners and the Alliance Core Team for their input to the revision process and advised that Annex A and B of the protocols would now be amended to reflect the changes approved. It was agreed that the Alliance Core Team should work with the Delivery Group to approve the required changes to Annex A and B and that a final version of both Annexes should then be passed to the Chair of the Leadership Group for final approval on behalf of the Leadership Group.

8.   Date of next meeting :

Wednesday 28th October 2015, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm in Glasgow

The meeting closed at 12.10 pm.