



**Note of the Scottish Cities Alliance Leadership Group meeting
Thursday 11th March 2021 – 9.00 am – 11.00 am – virtual online meeting**

Attendance :

Cllr Jennifer Laing	Co-Leader, Aberdeen City Council
Angela Scott	Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council
Cllr John Alexander	Leader, Dundee City Council (Chair)
Gregory Colgan	Chief Executive, Dundee City Council
Sharon Thomson	Glasgow City Council
Andrew Kerr	Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Margaret Davidson	Leader, Highland Council
Donna Manson	Chief Executive, Highland Council
Cllr Murray Lyle	Leader, Perth and Kinross Council
Barbara Renton	Interim Chief Executive, Perth and Kinross Council
Steven McDonald	Economic Development Lead, Stirling Council
Iain McCreddie	Programme Director, Scottish Cities Alliance

Also in attendance :

Kate Forbes MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Scottish Government (item 4)
James Sheppard	Head of Commercial UK & Ireland, Kadans (item 3)
Jenny Bann	Scottish Government
Manisha Gulati	Economist
Lillian McDowall	Scottish Cities Alliance
Amy Groden	Scottish Cities Alliance
Veni Kojouharova	Scottish Cities Alliance
Isabel Brennan	Scottish Cities Alliance

Apologies received from :

Cllr Adam McVey	Leader, City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Susan Aitken	Leader, Glasgow City Council
Annemarie O'Donnell	Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council
Cllr Scott Farmer	Leader, Stirling Council
Carol Beattie	Chief Executive, Stirling Council
Jon Pickstone	Scottish Government

1. Welcome, Introduction & Apologies

The Chair welcomed the group and noted apologies as detailed above.

2. Note of Previous Meeting – 11th November 2020

The note of the previous meeting was approved and an update was given as follows:-

Item 2 – The Chair updated the group on Dundee's experience of following up with the Department for International Trade following their presentation at the September Leadership Group meeting and encouraged all Leaders to speak with the Alliance's Investment Promotion team if they would like to follow up with Ummer Hanif and Anthony Danaher from the DiT.

Item 4 – The Alliance has commissioned the Fraser of Allander Institute to undertake an updated analysis of the remaining 4 challenges in the Scottish Cities Outlook report which will reflect on the impact of COVID and interdependencies with the Transition to Net Zero Action Plan. The CEO/Agency group will have an opportunity to inform this work on 26th March and thereafter consideration will be given as to how best to progress the recommendations contained therein.

It was noted that Angela Scott, CEO of Aberdeen as the strategic lead for the Transition to Net Zero Carbon Action Plan is working the cities, government and agencies on a collaborative Funding and Investment Strategy which will aim to support the delivery at pace of priority actions in the Plan. The aim is to table a final version of the strategy at the next Leadership Group meeting on 3rd of June.

Item 6 - following the presentations by Mark Wells, Aviva and Cameron Park and Peter Manners-Smith, M&G Real Estate individual introductions have now been made with all cities interested in an individual introduction.

3. Kadans – James Sheppard, Head of Commercial UK & Ireland

The Chair welcomed James Sheppard, Head of Commercial UK & Ireland for Kadans to speak to the group.

James Sheppard provided an overview of Kadans, a Dutch organisation which specialises in life science real estate, including an overview of their approach to developing long term investments in cities through partnership working with local authorities and universities to deliver growth and regeneration.

James spoke in detail about the two key pillars which underpin the life science sectors – Ecosystems and Clusters. Key elements of the ecosystem include: people and the importance of attracting mid-senior executive talent; funding and using existing investment to attract more to the Scottish market; space and the importance of building the right type of space in the right quantities at the right time; professional services and the importance of using Scotland’s existing expertise. Creating a successful cluster then happens through collaboration between academia, the public sector and private sector with the help of a coherent and structured strategy.

The Chair thanked James for his presentation and noted that there will be an opportunity for each city to follow up individually with Kadans on how it might work with cities to expand its portfolio in Scotland in collaboration with city stakeholders.

4. Kate Forbes, Cabinet Secretary for Finance – Scottish Government

The chair invited Kate Forbes, Cabinet Secretary for Finance to speak to the group about the role government and cities could play in delivering both a short-term recovery from the pandemic as well as a longer-term vision for growth. The discussion with city leaders highlighted a number of opportunities where cities and the government could come together to show leadership including on the shift to digital in terms of innovation, research and development; utilising the cities to anchor demand as Scotland transitions to net zero, ensuring the economic opportunities are realised in Scotland and not lost internationally; and working collectively to address the scale of change in city centres including repurposing them for housing and ensuring they are vibrant liveable spaces for people.

Specific ideas raised in discussion include:

- The importance of fiscal interventions and dealing with issues such as reviewing business rates;
- Relaunching the cities’ tourism offer recognising that approaches may vary across cities depending on the type of tourism they are targeting;
- Incentivising developers to convert properties in city centres for housing of all tenures;
- Planning regulations and the need for more flexibility;
- Working collaboratively as cities and government with academic institutions to tailor skills and retraining programmes to meet local need;
- Maximising public sector fiscal powers to leverage in and accelerate private investment;
- Utilising cities to test and pilot new technologies; and

- Reflecting on the relaxation of rules and regulations granted in response to the pandemic, continuing those that have worked, and considering the relaxation of further rules and regulations where appropriate to address wider challenges facing cities.

Ms. Forbes welcomed the cities' reflections and encouraged them to follow up if there are particular incentives and policies which they would like explored in more detail especially on repurposing existing buildings and planning flexibilities. She acknowledged that the issues cities and government are facing can be difficult to predict but through strong partnership working we can ensure that the funding that is available is invested in a way that maximises opportunities for everyone.

The chair thanked Kate Forbes for her insight and welcomed opportunities in the future months to continue the dialogue with the Scottish Government to strengthen partnership working through regular strategic conversations with Ministers on key areas including those discussed today.

5. Reinvestment Scottish Cities Alliance – 2022-206

The Programme Director spoke to the paper tabled noting the achievements of the Alliance since its inception in 2011 and setting out an approach to securing a reinvestment in key elements of the Programme when existing funding comes to an end in March 2022.

The Leadership Group:

1. Noted the achievements of the Scottish Cities Alliance to date;
2. Noted work underway led by the CEO Group to develop a comprehensive funded and resourced Action Plan which responds to the Scottish Cities Outlook report;
3. Agreed in principle that they would like to secure a reinvestment in the Scottish Cities Alliance for a further 4 years in advance of existing funding coming to an end on 31st March 2022;
4. Agreed that as an immediate priority the CEO Group be asked to consider the approach to securing a reinvestment in the Alliance Operational Budget which supports the Core Team in SCDI as well as the Investment Promotion programme from 2022-2026; and
5. Agree that the CEO Group should set out its recommendations for reinvesting in the Alliance Operational Budget and Investment Promotion Programme at the next Leadership Group meeting on 3rd June 2021.

The Chair welcomed the paper and noted that it was useful to see within the report the achievements of the Alliance so far and its ambitions going forward.

6. Directors Report

The Programme Director spoke to the Directors Report giving an update on the Operational Programme 2018-2022 including:-

- The Alliance's Workplan December 2020 – February 2021.

Key developments noted in the last period include: completed series of online panel events involving all city leaders; facilitated discussions with SDI on their Green Investment Prospectus; hosted a roundtable discussion with CEOs with Ivan McKee MSP on the Capital Investment Plan; launched the Alliance's refreshed website and delivered a social media campaign profiling the achievements of the 8th City ERDF Programme. It was also noted that the Alliance is working towards the launch of a cities peer-to-peer network on transition to net zero on 28th of April as well as with the Scottish Government on the launch of the City Centres Recovery Taskforce.

- Budget

The budget report was approved for publication on the website.

7. AOB

- The Chair confirmed that the first meeting of the City Centre Recovery Taskforce will take place on the 18th March with Fiona Hyslop MSP and the City Leaders in attendance.
- The Chair advised that this is Lillian McDowall, the Alliance's Communications and International Marketing Manager's last meeting as she is leaving the Alliance at the end of the month. The group thanked Lillian for her support leading the Alliance's Investment Promotion workstream and expressed their appreciation the role she played in ensuring that the Scottish cities are best placed to attract new investment.

8. Dates of Future Meetings:

- Thursday 3rd June 2021 – MS Teams
- Wednesday 15th September 2021 – MS Teams
- Special Leadership Group as part of Glasgow Programme COP26 – 18th May

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting finished at 10.45 am.