Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy
Ministear airson Poileasaidh Dhrogaichean is na Dibhe
Elena Whitham MSP/BPA

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

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Item 7(a)

7th December 2023

Cllr Allan Casey
Kirsty.MacAlpine@glasgow.gov.uk

Our Reference: 202300375583
Your Reference: AC/PD/07/09/2023Whitham

20 September 2023

Dear Cllr Allan Casey,

Thank you for your email asking to meet with Elena Whitham MSP, Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy, to discuss the position Glasgow City Council have taken to support the decriminalisation of drugs, and to discuss the work being done following the meeting of the Global Commission on Drug Policy.

The Minister would be delighted to accept your invitation. Please email MinisterforDAP@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements.

Yours sincerely

KEEGAN SCHMIDT

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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Councillor Allan Casey
Scottish National Party
DENNISTOUN - WARD 22

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Our Ref: AC/PD/07/09/2023Whitham

7 September 2023

Elena Whitham MSP

Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ministerfordap@gov.scot

Dear Elena,

Glasgow City Council recently passed a motion which I have produced in full below.

The Council welcomed the recent reduction in drugs deaths in the city whilst committing to redoubling its efforts to reduce them further. It placed on record its thanks to those HSCP staff, alongside colleagues in partnership organisations and our inspirational recovery community for their tireless work to make inroads into this ongoing health crisis in the city.

Council was updated on some of the harm-reduction interventions that the city has been progressing recently and which we think are starting to make an impact on death levels in the city.

For the first time, Glasgow City Council has taken a position in favour of decriminalisation and a belief that the war on drugs has failed.

Council reaffirmed Glasgow's commitment to hosting a Safe Drugs Consumption Facility should the legal issues be overcome.

Council noted the recent report by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee and noted its disappointment that the Home Office have already come out against those evidence based recommendations.

Council received an update on the work that we are doing following the Global Commission on Drugs Policy AGM earlier this summer. I would be happy to meet you to discuss this work further.

Finally, Council reaffirmed its position that Glasgow will continue to be a place where innovation around what harm-reduction approaches we can take to try to combat this public health crisis.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Allan Casey
City Convener for Workforce and Homelessness
And Addiction Services

7(a) – Motion moved by Cllr Casey, Seconded by Cllr Blench.

Council notes the recent annual publication of the drug related death statistics in Scotland and the 37% reduction in drugs-related deaths in Glasgow this year.

Council further notes the range of interventions that are being made with partners across the city to tackle this crisis. These interventions include - The Crisis Outreach Service; Mobile Harm Reduction Initiative; Injecting Equipment Provision and, The Enhanced Drug Treatment Service. Council notes continuing discussions about creating a supervised drug consumption facility within Glasgow and restates its support for this facility.

Council places on record its thanks to Health and Social Care Partnership staff, as well as colleagues in partner organisations, and our inspirational recovery communities for their tireless work to make inroads into this ongoing health crisis in the city.

Council is encouraged that the interventions that have been made are beginning to make a difference, but Council is resolute in its belief that these figures remain too high and that more needs to be done locally and nationally to end this crisis.

Council welcomes the Scottish Government's recent publication of 'A Caring, Compassionate and Human Rights Informed Drug Policy for Scotland'. Council believes that this prospectus is one which is ambitious, progressive, and radical. It is grounded in evidence from around the world and aligned to our values that this is a public health emergency rather than a criminal justice one.

Council notes that some of the evidence-based interventions which have a track record of success outlined in that paper include changes which could allow wider access to naloxone, allow for supervised drug consumption facilities, create a network of drug checking facilities, and increase access to harm reduction approaches such as provision of drug paraphernalia. Council notes that naloxone training has been offered to all elected members and agrees that a further training session should be arranged and that the more people who are trained and carry a naloxone kit, the more lives might be saved.

Council notes that the publication of this policy paper was launched at the Global Commission on Drug Policy's annual general meeting in Scotland in July. Council further notes that Glasgow City Council have been invited by the Global Commission to work with them to establish a cities initiative to bring together cities across the world who have a particular interest in drug-related issues. Council welcomes this opportunity which has the potential to draw together insights from leading academics and civil society organisations across the globe, build a coalition for change with other urban networks like Eurocities, galvanise collaboration between the public sector and third sector organisations and showcase Glasgow's issues and solutions.

Council further notes the recent report by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee found that the UK Government's response could "go further by adopting a broader range of public health-based harm reduction methods" and recommends that the "UK Government support a pilot facility in Glasgow and create a legislative pathway to enable more".

It is disappointing that the Home Office has immediately ruled this considered position out and Council remains frustrated that the UK Government continue to view drugs policy solely as a justice issue rather than a public health matter. Council therefore agrees with the call for the Decriminalisation of all drugs for personal supply and seeks approval for the Council to adopt a formal position in favour of decriminalisation.

Council agrees that the "war on drugs" has failed and that decriminalisation would allow people found in possession of drugs to be treated and supported rather than criminalised and excluded. Council notes that decriminalisation is the common position of the UN Chief Executives Board.

Council asks the Convener to write to the Scottish Government and UK Government outlining the Council's support for decriminalisation; note the Home Affairs Committee the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 require reform; highlight the recommendation that Glasgow should pilot the use of drug consumption rooms; restate our longstanding commitment to be a place where new ideas to tackle this ongoing public health crisis are progressed.

Home Office

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP
Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Councillor Allan Casey
Glasgow City Council
Glasgow
G2 1DU

DECS Reference: MIN/1016379/23
Your Reference: AC/PD/07/09/2023Braverman

16 November 2023

Dear Councillor Casey,

Thank you for your letter of 7 September to the former Home Secretary regarding a motion on drug policy approved by Glasgow City Council. I am replying as the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire and I am sorry for the delay.

The number of drug deaths across the UK is extremely concerning and I was pleased to see positive signs of a reduction in drug deaths in Glasgow and Scotland this year and to read of your commitment to redouble efforts to reduce them further.

I want to take this opportunity to provide clarity on the UK Government's position on the areas of drug policy you raised in your letter. The UK Government takes a balanced approach to drug misuse, as set out in our ten-year Drug Strategy 'From Harm to Hope', a government plan focusing on three key strategic priorities: breaking drug supply chains, delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system and achieving a generational shift in the demand for drugs. The Strategy is underpinned by nearly £900 million of additional investment over 2022-25, of which the largest amount, £780 million, is a dedicated additional funding for the treatment and recovery system,

We also continue to support a range of evidence-based approaches to reduce the health-related harms of drug misuse, such as maintaining the availability of needle and syringe programmes to prevent blood-borne infections, rolling out the novel opioid treatment depot buprenorphine and widening the availability of naloxone to prevent overdose deaths.

I was pleased to read about some of the interventions being offered by your partner organisations in Glasgow and of your plans to organise naloxone training sessions for council members. I am aware of the plans to open a drug consumption room in Glasgow and the recent statement issued by the Lord Advocate indicating that, subject to certain conditions, she would be willing to publish a prosecution policy that it would not be in the public interest to prosecute drug users for simple possession offences committed within a pilot drug consumption room in Glasgow.

The UK Government does not support drug consumption rooms as we have significant concerns that they risk condoning and encouraging drug misuse, undermining our efforts to reduce the number of drug users and stem the criminal supply of drugs to users. For that reason, they will not be introduced in England and Wales and will remain unlawful under UK drug legislation. We do, however, respect the independence of the Lord Advocate as Scotland's prosecutorial authority and will not interfere with plans to establish a drug consumption room in Glasgow, providing that those powers are exercised lawfully and the conditions stipulated in her statement are met.

I note Glasgow City Council's new position in favour of decriminalisation. I should be clear that the UK Government has no plans to decriminalise drug possession. There is a substantial body of scientific and medical evidence to show that controlled drugs are harmful and can damage people's mental and physical health, as well as having a devastating effect on our wider communities. Additionally, the decriminalisation of drugs in the UK would not eliminate the crime committed by the illicit trade, nor would it address the harms associated with drug dependence. The Home Affairs Select Committee also raised concerns about the harms that cannabis for non-medical use may pose, particularly in relation to young people, in its recent Drugs Inquiry report, which can be accessed at: https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/41147/documents/203039/default/.

I have considered the recommendations made by the Home Affairs Select Committee, which are referenced in both the motion and your letter and have provided a formal response to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP

Councillor Allan Casey
Scottish National Party
DENNISTOUN - WARD 22

Phone 0141 287 5468
Fax 0141 287 4173
E-mail allan.casey@glasgow.gov.uk

Our Ref: AC/PD/07/09/2023Braverman

7 September 2023

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP
Home Secretary
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

By email: **public.enquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk**

Dear Home Secretary,

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City Convener for Workforce and Homelessness
And Addiction Services

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