Item 2

19th November 2026

COMPOSITE MOTION – PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

Council notes the central focus of Public Service Reform to the Scottish Government's current programme and that this includes proposals to radically reorganise local government in Scotland.

Council notes that, although the SNP did signal in their manifesto that they would look at the devolution of specific powers to regions, that a change of this nature and magnitude was not signalled during the Scottish Parliament elections,

Council notes that the Glasgow City Region Cabinet has been meaningfully engaging with both the Scottish and UK Governments around what additional powers and funding for the Glasgow City Region could look like.

Council understands there will be different views on aspects of the initial proposals shared by the Scottish Government which is why Council is concerned about the extremely limited three-month engagement period announced by the Government meaning that these proposals are not being developed collaboratively with local government. Concerns have also been raised by community councils about their being an afterthought in this process. Council believes the Government must reconsider its approach to engagement if proposed changes are to have legitimacy.

Council believes it is important that it engages with the current conversation and is able to advocate confidently for an outcome that is in the best interests of our citizens. However Council believes that the first priority must be to agree which powers are devolved to local authorities then work out what boundaries match the decentralised powers.

Council notes the unique role Glasgow plays as Scotland's largest city and regional economic centre and further notes the significant pressures associated with poverty, homelessness, health inequalities, population need and regional service provision. Council believes that any future local government settlement must properly recognise the financial, social and economic responsibilities borne by the city on behalf of the wider region.

Council notes that any structural changes are likely to have a significant impact on our workforce, and resolves to keep staff informed of the Council's position, particularly given the ongoing uncertainties for many staff regarding the new pay and grading structure.

The Council recognises the essential role of local government workers in delivering public services. Any future reform programme should be developed with meaningful consultation from recognised trade unions and workforce representatives from the beginning. This ensures that workforce wellbeing, job security, and service quality are central to the reform process. Additionally, recognised trade unions should be included in any formal engagement structures established to evaluate proposals impacting local government services or employees.

Council notes that local government continues to face significant financial pressures arising from increasing demand for services, workforce costs and budget constraints. Council believes that meaningful reform must therefore be accompanied by a fair, sustainable and long-term funding settlement for councils. Council believes that successful public service reform should be judged by whether it improves outcomes for citizens, strengthens

democratic accountability and provides local authorities with the resources required to deliver high-quality services, rather than by the scale of structural change implemented.

Council therefore agrees the following principles to frame and direct its engagement with local and national partners:-

- Reform should be focused on improving outcomes and empowering local government so it is better able to respond to local needs. It should not be driven by cost-cutting. Local Government has been and continues to be disproportionately under-funded by the Scottish Government. The Government is deeply misguided if it thinks there are significant savings to be made from local government reorganisation.

- Central to this is understanding what is the appropriate level for powers to lie at, and so any discussions must begin with a debate about which powers should be devolved from the UK Parliament to the Scottish Parliament; and from there to Local Government – this must include appropriate, single-pot and multi year funding settlements.

- There is a need to rebuild trust in politics and to improve democratic accountability; people need to feel closer to and better able to influence decisions that affect them.

- Reorganisation should reinforce people's sense of connection and place, not confuse it.

- Reorganisation should not add unnecessary complexity or cost to how services are organised and delivered, especially in dense urban areas where this may lead to perceived unfairness.

- Because of the above, there is a strong case to not split Glasgow into smaller administrative units. Council notes that in Nordic countries, which have two-tier systems similar to the approach the Scottish Government is proposing, the main cities are largely kept as extant wholes.

- The roles of elected members in any new structure need to be carefully considered so that they are easily understood by the electorate and do not exacerbate disparities in terms of representation given Glasgow currently has the smallest number of Councillors per head of population in Scotland.

- Fiscal empowerment is the most important reform needed and this must be done alongside if not before any structural reform. In a regional context, this must address the financial disadvantage that Glasgow still experiences as a result of previous reorganisation. Council believes local and regional governments need a broad ability to raise revenue in ways that are relevant for their areas, and that this should be underpinned by a power of general competence.

- There are powers and areas of responsibility which currently sit with national governments and/or agencies which can be better delivered at local or regional levels, including aspects of transport, skills, economic development, and environmental quality, and, where it will lead to better outcomes, the further devolution of these should be pursued. This can include devolving powers currently reserved to Westminster directly to local or regional authorities. Council believes that any programme of public service reform must demonstrate clearly how powers,

resources and decision-making will be devolved closer to local communities and not become subject to further centralisation.

- Conversely, there are proposals to remove responsibilities, most notably over social care, from local control. Council believes this is likely to make those services less accountable and will cause unnecessary disruption to services which are under extreme financial pressure, without doing anything to address the cause of that pressure. Council notes that the issue of delayed discharge is frequently cited as the Government's rationale for doing this, however whilst agreeing this is an important issue, Council believes that using this as a reason for massive structural change is disproportionate, will not address the underlying issues, and risks damaging other vital social work services.

- Workers and communities need to be central to these discussions and not treated as an afterthought. We will ensure their voices are heard in any discussions that could affect Glasgow.

- We recognise and support the principles of the European Charter on Local Self-Government, which is now embedded in Scots law, and this must be upheld at all stages of the reform process.

Council emphasises the need for reform to address long-standing concerns regarding the balance of funding and powers between central and local government and to provide councils with greater certainty to plan and deliver services over the long term.

Council maintains that the integration of health and social care should strengthen local accountability and service delivery rather than remove decision-making further from the communities that rely on those services.

Council believes that successful public service reform should prioritise prevention and early intervention, reducing demand on acute services whilst improving outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

Council agrees to write to the First Minister, the Prime Minister and CoSLA in these terms and to use these principles as its basis for further engagement.

Council further agrees to seek clarity from the Scottish Government on how any future public service reform programme will protect local democratic accountability, support the local government workforce and ensure that reform is accompanied by sufficient long-term funding.

Council welcomes the commitment made by Council Leader Councillor Ricky Bell to "fight with the Scottish Government about funding for this city" and believes that future public service reform must be accompanied by sufficient investment to meet Glasgow's needs and support frontline service delivery.

Proposed by Councillor Molyneux, jointly seconded by Councillor Bell and Councillor Hussain.