

## Minutes of ESEC Policy Board

10.00-13.00, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

Room C, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB

Present:	Stuart Bews	Aberdeen City Council
	Laura Paterson	Aberdeen City Council
	Martin Brebner	Aberdeenshire Council
	Cllr Isobel Davidson	Aberdeenshire Council
	Cllr Lynne Devine	Angus Council
	Shelley Hague	Angus Council
	Diane Milne	Dundee City Council
	Rory Young	Dundee City Council
	Joanne Scobie	ESEC Secretariat
	Sharon Douglas	Fife Council
	Serge Merone	Perth and Kinross Council
	Kevin Stewart MSP	Scottish Government
	Hugh Buchanan	Scottish Government
Apologies:	Cllr Barney Crockett	Aberdeen City Council
	Yasa Ratnayake	Aberdeen City Council
	Cllr Will Dawson	Dundee City Council
	Andrew Wilson	Falkirk Council
	Cllr Tony Martin	Fife Council
	Cllr John Kellas	Perth and Kinross Council
	Steve Docherty	Stirling Council

### Welcome and introductions

- Cllr Lynne Devine welcomed Minister Kevin Stewart and his adviser Hugh Buchanan to the Policy Board, and members introduced themselves.

### Apologies for absence

- Apologies were listed as above.

### Meeting with Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government and Housing

- The Minister thanked the group for the invitation and apologised for being unable to attend previous Policy Board meetings.

- He noted that he is well aware of ESEC as a consortium and the kinds of European cooperation projects undertaken by its members as he attended the ESEC event in the Scottish Parliament on 21 February.
- The minister was a councillor for 13 years in Aberdeen City Council so he is aware of the value that EU funds bring.
- Local Government will be an essential component during the Brexit negotiations and the Scottish Government needs to hear from people working on grassroots projects, from both communities and councils. Members are invited to get in touch with the minister if they have concerns they would like highlighted.
- Members highlighted the following key challenges in the ongoing Brexit process:
  - Following the referendum result, many of the European Structural Fund Strategic Interventions have imposed a deadline of December 2018 for projects to be completed. Members informed the minister that this timeframe is too short, especially for large-scale capital projects, and as a result Local Authorities are not bidding for these funds. The Minister agreed to relay this information to the Structural Funds department.
  - There are other funds which support the services that Local Authorities provide, namely INTERREG, URBACT and LEADER, however the value of these funds has yet to be publicly acknowledged by the Scottish and UK governments. The Minister acknowledged that there is less awareness of much of these programmes and said that the consortium needs to raise awareness of these by collating facts, figures, and case studies. He will check internally on the discussion around INTERREG. He suggested encouraging community groups and individuals to write to their MSPs and MPs.
  - Many local industries are heavily reliant on EU migrant labour, especially the food and drink sector, health and social care providers and local colleges and universities, and at the moment there is no alternative workforce. The Minister stated that the Scottish Government has strongly spoken out in favour of defending their rights but the UK Government looks set on using them as bargaining chips. The Scottish Government has a massive housing programme to be delivered and a very conservative estimate puts 10% of the construction workforce as coming from the EU.
  - For a full report of the meeting, please contact the Secretariat.

#### **Approval of draft minutes of Policy Board 20 January 2017**

- The minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of discussion.

#### **Review of ESEC event in Scottish Parliament and next steps**

- The event in the Scottish Parliament was agreed to be a success, and got good social media attention. It was well attended by Ministers and MSPs, and many members have made connections with their local MSPs that they have since followed-up.
- The event summary and photos are available on the ESEC website.

### **ESEC financial strategy 2017/18**

- The board considered a statement submitted by the ESEC treasurer, Ian Lorimer, which provided a statement of ESEC's financial position for the financial years 2017-19.
- The report highlighted that available reserves are projected to have been all but exhausted by the end of 2018/19. It is therefore recommended that consideration be given to curtailing expenditure from 2017/18 onwards.
- Members reviewed and noted the content of the report.

### **Any Other Competent Business**

- It was noted that the upcoming local elections will have an impact on the work of the consortium and timing of meetings, as councillors will not be readily available in the run up to 4th of May.
- Post-election, the Secretariat has suggested an away day (morning or afternoon) to introduce any new Policy Board members to the work of the consortium, our work plan and other councillors and officers. This date of this will need to be agreed in the weeks following the elections, as time will be needed for councillors to be allocated their respective roles.

### **Date of next meeting**

- Taking into consideration the upcoming council elections, it was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be confirmed via email once the new Policy Board is in place.