



**Message from Cleland Sneddon, Chief Executive**  
**Tuesday 30 June 2020**

**A Week of Firsts**

Last week we had our first virtual Executive Committee meeting using Microsoft Teams with members back in their proper role in making policy decisions for the council. It was quite a meaty agenda for them to consider, especially given the inevitable issues that arise in using that type of new technology with so many individuals connecting from home wi-fi systems. Nonetheless, the Executive Committee was able to consider a number of really key papers, including a suite of finance papers that provided advice to members on the extent of the council's expenditure incurred as a result of Covid-19. From April through to September (the first 6 months of the financial year) we will have spent £21.3m more than the funding we have received for that period to date. We are looking at ways to reduce that gap, and COSLA continues to lobby both the UK and Scottish governments for funding or financial flexibilities to help fill the gap. This is hugely important as we will have further expenditure from September through to March which is likely to increase the gap further.

Amongst many papers considered, arguably one of the most important was the Revenue Budget Strategy for 2021/22 and beyond. Setting Covid-19 aside, there are significant financial challenges that local authorities would be facing in any case, and the strategy sets out a number of ways of making our future funding gaps more manageable. We are still in a period of great uncertainty but it is important for us to take early action to maintain the sound financial stewardship that South Lanarkshire Council has always benefited from.

The committee also agreed to set up a political-led Recovery Board, and arrangements are being made for the board to meet over the summer to guide our decisions on recovery and renewal. The constantly evolving council [Recovery Plan](#) was agreed by the committee.

At times the technology was a bit bumpy but it's a step up from using a pigeon to send messages. Who can forget the fate of poor Speckled Jim, the favoured pigeon of General Sir Anthony Cecil Hogmanay Melchett in *Blackadder Goes Forth* (the full name comes courtesy of Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources Paul Manning, who has stunned colleagues with his encyclopedic knowledge of *Blackadder*). Unlike Speckled Jim, who met his end as someone's lunch, MS Teams has the opportunity to improve, as it looks like, even with the hoped-for resumption of at least partially "in person" committee meetings after recess, it will be needed for some members and staff to connect to those meetings for some time to come. I know from many of you just how quickly we have embraced Teams and other virtual platforms as a way to do business, and it brings a wide range of benefits regardless of the Covid-19 situation. It makes the countless hours we have all spent behind the wheel of cars travelling up and down the area look wasted in retrospect. Every cloud, as they say...

Keep Talking Up South Lanarkshire.

**Cleland Sneddon, Chief Executive**

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