

PE1694/S

COSLA submission of 31 October 2018

COSLA members are aware of the concerns expressed by campaigners in relation to the provision of instrumental music tuition. As such our Board did recently discuss the issue and I can confirm that, while all our members, on a cross party basis, appreciate and greatly value instrumental music tuition and the contribution it can make to children and young people's education, they were also clear that decisions on charging were for each local authority to make based on local priorities and the requirement to set balanced budgets.

The Committee will be aware that local authorities are providing services in a challenging financial environment, a position which the petition itself highlights. Since 2011/12, local authority core budgets have reduced by £1.67bn in real terms. At the same time, demands on the essential services provided by local authorities have continued to grow meaning that difficult decisions have to be made about the funding of services including charging. Decisions to introduce charging for any service are the result of careful consideration and local consultation taking account of the context and circumstances in each local authority area.

COSLA are currently involved in discussions on instrumental music tuition charges with the Scottish Government and the Music Education Partnership Group, which is Chaired by John Wallace O.B.E. the former Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. In September 2018 the COSLA Children and Young People Board gave officers clear direction that while decisions on charging are rightly for democratically elected Councils to take, the Board were open to looking at other pragmatic ways to address some of the issues raised by campaigners in relation to instrumental music tuition. Those discussions are currently ongoing and we expect to take a proposal to our Board on 23rd November on the issue.