

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	14 th May 2014
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive
TITLE OF REPORT	Scottish Independence Referendum – Letter from Secretary of State for Scotland
REPORT NUMBER:	OCE/14/014
CHECKLIST RECEIVED:	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report brings before the Council the Secretary of State for Scotland's letter responding to the Council's invitation to him to provide a written response to the Scottish Government's White Paper *Scotland's Future*.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Council notes the Secretary of State's letter.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The report has no specific financial implications.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The policy statement [Aberdeen – the Smarter City](#) (available at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk) agreed by the Council at its meeting on 22nd August 2012 includes the statement:

“We agree that Aberdeen is stronger now and will be stronger in the future – economically, politically and socially – as a partner within the United Kingdom”.

Given this context, the report brings before the Council the Secretary of State for Scotland's response to the Scottish Government's White Paper [Scotland's Future](#) (available at www.scotland.gov.uk) published in advance of the Scottish Independence Referendum to be held on 18th September 2014.

The terms of the motion agreed by the Council at its meeting of 18th December 2013 include an instruction to the Chief Executive to make a

copy of the Secretary of State's response to the White Paper available to the public. In addressing this instruction, the Council will be mindful of the provisions of Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 and the prohibition of political publicity. The Council may wish to hear the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on this issue.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

At its meeting of 18th December 2013 the Council agreed a motion proposed by Councillors Crockett, Boulton and Forsyth in the following terms:

“Council:-

Notes Scotland's future will be determined by a public referendum on 18th September 2014.

Notes the Smarter Aberdeen vision adopted by the Council, which recognises that Aberdeen is stronger now and will grow even stronger in the future – economically, politically and socially – as a partner within the United Kingdom.

Agrees that the United Kingdom has served Scotland and its people well for over 300 years and that Scotland enjoys the best of both worlds – a parliament making decisions over health and education, plus strength of being part of wider United Kingdom with real economic clout and the most professional armed forces in the world.

Agrees that the 670 page White Paper issued by the SNP Scottish Government fails to provide the facts and answers promised to the Scottish people and instead produces the usual assertion, assumption and uncostered promises which fail to address the needs, aspirations and central questions of hard working Scottish people.

Agrees that it is disappointing that there are pledges made in the White Paper which the Scottish Government already has the power to implement, such as childcare provision.

Agrees that there is nothing in the White Paper to justify the break-up of a country that has been built up over 300 years of shared endeavour and that Aberdeen City Council should actively engage with the local residents it represents to ensure they are fully informed of the potential impact on Council services which many local people depend on before the referendum on 18th September.

Instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Scotland inviting him to provide a written response to the Scottish Government's White Paper and thereafter make a copy

of the Secretary of State for Scotland's response to the White Paper available to the public".

Attached as Appendix 1 to the report is a copy of the exchange of correspondence between the Chief Executive and the Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP, Secretary of State for Scotland.

It is recommended that the Council notes the Secretary of State's response.

6. IMPACT

As noted above the Council's policy statement includes reference to Aberdeen's position within the United Kingdom.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The report brings before the Council correspondence with the Scotland Office.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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