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Thank you for your letter of 28 May regarding the purpose of the Workforce Issues Group (WIG) and the circumstances by which COSLA will invite me to attend. I am very clear that the WIG is an employer space and my attendance has always been by your invitation however I was somewhat surprised at the claim by Unions during our last call on 21 May that I had declined to attend previous meetings. I have attended the WIG and will continue to do so whenever you feel it is relevant, however it was disappointing to hear trade union concerns that I had failed to take up those invitations. Whilst I am sure this is purely a matter of communication, I would ask you to again make clear that I stand ready and have made free my diary in order to attend the meeting whenever requested to do so.

During these difficult times and as we move forward to recover and renew it is vitally important that trade union colleagues feel able to raise concerns directly with Scottish Government and to share their thoughts and ideas as policies and practices are taken forward. On 5 June I took the opportunity alongside the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older people, Ms Somerville to convene a teleconference meeting of trade unions representatives. The purpose of that call was to share information on our initial thoughts around the social renewal programme and to hear first-hand from unions their thoughts on that. It was clear from that discussion that trade unions want more direct dialogue with Scottish Government and the opportunity to shape policies and practise which is outwith their role relating to workforce issues. In that regard I undertook to consider how best to achieve that and to share with them the details of the various renewal groups being set up.

Moving forward, I once again reiterate my offer to attend the WIG at your invitation and appreciate that this will be determined by agreement between COSLA and union colleagues on a needs basis.

AILEEN CAMPBELL

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