

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title: Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date: Monday 20 March 2017
Venue: Rooms A&B, Ground Floor, Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street,
London, EC1M 5LG

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item Decisions and actions

1 Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed the new member of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Councillor Daniel Duggan, and confirmed that Councillor Anita Lower had replaced Lisa Brett as a Deputy Chair of the Board.

Apologies were received from Councillor Jo Beavis and Councillor Nick Worth.

Decision:

There were no declarations of interest.

2 LGA future of community safety services review: summary and draft report

Rachel Duke, LGA Adviser, introduced the item on the LGA's future of community safety services review and outlined the contents of the draft report. She explained that following the SSCB meeting in June 2016, officers were tasked with looking at the challenges faced by councils and their partners when it came to community safety and how best they might respond to these. It was noted that the aim of the item was not to find a particular solution to the issues but to stimulate discussion and support councils and partners to identify how best to work together locally. A survey was sent to all community safety managers in England and Wales, the responses from which were used, alongside previous research to develop a discussion paper outlining key themes and questions. The paper was used to inform two stakeholder workshops and discussions at other meetings.

The key findings were briefly outlined and it was noted that councils and their partners had an important role to play in response to community safety. The issue of localism had been explored during the stakeholder meetings, including where it made sense to work at a very local level, and where it made sense to join up at 'greater than CSP' level. The report concluded that better integration across agencies, mature relationships, strong leadership and local flexibility were all needed to allow local areas to identify and implement what approaches best suits them.

The next steps suggested included supporting areas to have discussions with their partner agencies through developing the discussion paper further, peer support, and

the LGA leadership programme. The LGA officers sought comments from members about the report and proposed next steps.

As part of the discussion, members made the following comments:

- Some members expressed disappointment with the report, noting that they hoped for stronger recommendations, but agreed that it was clear there was a role for councils, and their partner agencies, in keeping communities safe.
- It was agreed that partnerships were better than single agencies in delivering community safety services but that the report needed to say more about how to bring these groups and different partnership structures together. Several members said that there was no 'one size fits all' answer and that the report needs to reflect the fact that areas have different challenges.
- It was mentioned a number of times that councils were keen to lead or work on many community safety issues but that they were limited by a lack of resources and capacity. It was noted that the same issue applied to police forces which were struggling due to a lack of funding.
- A suggestion was made that a further exploration of opportunities for lobbying for longer term funding for service providers could be carried out as part of the review's follow up.
- Members highlighted an issue about links between the local police, community groups and councils. Members said that the police in their areas used to hold regular community engagement meetings but that these seem to have stopped, leaving some community groups feeling that the police were not prioritising continuing engagement.
- Members suggested that it might be useful to include some best practice case studies in the report.
- Some members noted disappointment that the report made limited reference to some of the new community safety issues councils are tackling such as modern slavery, human trafficking, radicalisation, organised crime, prostitution and gun and knife crime. Members wanted the report to acknowledge these issues and the pressure they put on local councils, more explicitly.
- A discussion was had about councils' role in reducing reoffending. It was noted that housing was a particular problem and that while councils had an obligation to offer support with housing, registering with doctors and seeking employment to some specific groups, these obligations do not apply to those who have recently been released from prison. Providing wrap around support to ex-offenders in conjunction with other agencies may help to reduce reoffending rates.
- The Chair referred to an issue raised by the leader of the opposition at Plymouth City Council about the 2015 murder of Tanis Bhandari, and concerns about information sharing between agencies regarding one of those convicted of his murder.
- This led on to a broader discussion about information sharing between agencies and it was noted that it is very difficult for agencies to keep residents safe if there isn't free sharing of information. This issue may be exacerbated

by the two-tier probation system Members felt that every community safety team across the country ought to fulfil a duty to promote and encourage information sharing between partners. Consideration was also given to the frontline staff delivering public services and how improved information sharing could offer them more protection.

- The report stated that the LGA would develop the discussion paper and would commission more detailed case studies for inclusion in the report. Members asked if the case studies would include examples from public service mutuals and social enterprises. Officers said that they would explore this option and would have further conversations with areas with existing mutual models in use, and with areas that had rejected these models.

Decision:

Members noted the report and the recommendation.

Actions:

1. Officers to consider the comments raised by members and discuss this again at the next lead members' meeting in May.
2. Officers to produce an updated report to present at the next SSCB meeting on 5 June.
3. Officers to either arrange a meeting with the Ministry of Justice to discuss information sharing between probation and partners, or draft a letter to the responsible Minister.
4. Officers to liaise with councils who have explored the use of public sector mutuals, and provide feedback at the next meeting.

3 Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) licensing

Ellie Greenwood, LGA Senior Adviser (Regulations) introduced the report, explaining that the Government was planning to respond to the Law Commission's 2014 review of taxi and public hire vehicle (PHV) licensing. It was noted that while the report had been discussed three years ago, a lot had changed since then (such as the awareness of links between taxi/PHV licensing and child sexual exploitation) and further discussion was needed to ensure that the LGA's submission to the Government was reflective of members' current views. Given the ongoing media interest about councils having different standards, this was also an opportune time to be having another discussion.

It was noted that the key point of concern for councils over taxi/PHV licensing was the variation of licence standards applied by different authorities, coupled with the fact that drivers can nonetheless operate in areas other than those in which they are licensed. However, authorities cannot take enforcement action against drivers operating in their area if they have not been licensed by them. Some councils had been heavily criticised for their approaches to taxi and PHV licensing, while recent changes in the Deregulation Act and the advent of app-based booking had made it easier for PHVs to operate in other areas.

The report explained that there were two ways of responding to this challenge; 1)

enforce a single, nationwide standard for licensing conditions or 2) restrict out of area activity. The Law Commission had proposed a national minimum standard for taxis, but a single national standard for PHVs. The suggested response by the LGA was that there should be a national minimum standard for both taxis and PHVs which still allows councils to retain flexibility to impose any local conditions, should they see fit. Alongside this, it was noted that the LGA could call for private hire journeys to start or finish in the area in which the driver is licensed.

A further idea which the LGA was looking at with the Institute of Licensing and others would be a voluntary database to which councils could contribute details of individuals who have lost their license or have had a license application refused.

Members made the following points:

- Acknowledging that the current system is outdated, members welcomed the idea of establishing a national minimum standard for licensing but were clear that councils need a certain level of local determination in setting additional conditions. Members also agreed that starting or finishing a journey within the relevant licensing area would be a positive step forward.
- Councils are responsible for enforcing licensing conditions in their area but are restricted to only taking action against drivers they themselves have licensed. Uber and PHVs do not only operate in one area and can therefore flood a busy area and operate where they are not subject to any particular conditions, which could lead to safeguarding issues.
- A one size fits all system would not work across the country but a base level set of minimum standards is needed and sharing information about drivers would be beneficial.
- On enforcement, members offered examples of the police working with councils' enforcement officers to take cars off the road if they are in a poor condition and suggested that a multiagency approach would be positive.
- A discussion was had about a national database with some members agreeing that it would be helpful to share information about who is licensed, who has been refused a license, and who has had their license revoked, while some were concerned about what this system would look like and who would contribute towards it.
- Members queried whether it was worth trying to put together a Private Members' Bill and taking a proactive approach to reforming outdated legislation.
- Members noted that one key issue on licensing is that public carriage vehicle (PCV) licences are awarded and subject to a completely different set of standards from taxi and PHVs. Members were concerned about taxi and PHV drivers who had their applications refused or their licences revoked subsequently reappearing in the area with a minibuss and a PCV licence. It was agreed that loopholes on PHV drivers obtaining PCV licenses should be closed, particularly as PCVs are often used to transport children – i.e. minibusses.
- There was recognition that Uber is a very popular service with high levels of customer satisfaction but that it needs to be better regulated with better

employment standards for drivers themselves. Officers are due to meet with Uber representatives to discuss various issues including their use of technology, safeguarding, and specific concerns councils have raised about the proliferation of out of area Uber drivers.

- A comment was made about the need to seek legislation with a positive and balanced approach which aims to offer protection for local communities without appearing to be anti-business or introducing too much red tape.

Decision:

Members noted the report and the recommendation.

Actions:

1. At the request of Stockton Council, officers to attend a meeting with Alex Cunningham MP and the Transport Minister to discuss PCV licensing.
2. Officers to consider the possibility of putting together a Private Members Bill in response to current outdated legislation.
3. Officers to use comments made by members to feed into their draft of a formal LGA response to the Law Commission's report.

4 Update Paper

Members noted the update paper and made the following points:

- On body-worn cameras, a suggestion was made that officers seek feedback about police use of the cameras, how well this was working and what the rights of the public were to access the footage.
- The future of the FGM Advisory Board was discussed and a number of questions were asked about funding for the National FGM Centre and what that meant for the future membership and chairmanship of the Board. Mark Norris, LGA Principal Policy Adviser, said that the LGA and Barnardo's were having ongoing conversations with the Department for Education (DfE) about funding for the National FGM Centre both in the short and longer term. Officers would keep members updated of their conversations with DfE and Barnardo's.
- Cllr Morris Bright noted that a multi-agency conference on modern slavery would be held in Hertfordshire on 29 March 2017 and that he would be happy to provide feedback to members. It was noted that the aim is to get the message across that modern slavery was not just a national issue, but one which affected all local areas.
- Further comments were made about modern slavery and the National Referral Mechanism which offers those referred support while a decision is made about whether an individual is a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery over a 45-day period. Concerns were raised about what happens after the 45 days are up and whether there was any ongoing support offered to victims.
- It was noted that the Water Safety Conference run by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents had been postponed until November but that

messages on water safety need to get out to councils as soon as possible. It was also suggested that council encourage school assemblies on water safety.

- Cllr Kate Haigh offered feedback to the Board following her attendance at a conference about gambling related harm hosted by Leeds City Council. It was mentioned that gambling related harm is a big area of work which comes under the remit of the SSC Board but that it is not an issue on the radar of many councils. Members said that it is clear that most communities will experience substantial levels of direct and indirect harm related to gambling abuse but that minimal research has been carried out in the UK about its impact. Members asked if this could be discussed as part of the agenda for the next SSCB meeting.
- Cllr Woodbridge and LGA officers met with the Home Office on 23 January to discuss the Prevent Champions Network (PCN). Following this meeting, regional PCN events will be scheduled later this year. At the meeting it was also discussed whether the Prevent initiative, including its safeguarding role, could be featured at the LGA's annual conference. The Chair confirmed that there would be a session on Prevent and community cohesion at the LGA's annual conference. It was noted that members could offer feedback after the conference about their views of the agenda or to provide suggestions of what they might want to see discussed in years to come.
- Cllr Joy Allen and Cllr Anita Lower also noted that they had met with the Home Office to discuss Prevent and it was agreed that a regional PCN conference would be held in the North East. They also noted the lack of awareness about on-line training courses available for councillors around Prevent.

Decision:

Members noted the update paper.

Actions:

1. Officers to look into the possibility of getting feedback about police use of body-worn cameras.
2. Officers to work with Barnardo's to draft a joint public statement on the future of funding for the FGM Centre and to keep members updated on the future membership and chairmanship of the centre.
3. Mark Norris to attend a meeting about the National Referral Mechanism to discuss what support is available to victims of modern slavery 45 days after their referral.
4. Officers to review the research undertaken by Leeds Beckett University on gambling related harm and produce a report to be discussed as an item on the agenda for the next SSCB meeting.
5. Officers to discuss the design of the Board's session at the LGA annual conference with lead members.
6. Officers to consider ways of promoting the on-line Prevent training courses for members to councils.

5 Notes of previous meeting

Members agreed that the notes from the last meeting were an accurate summary of the discussion.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright	Hertsmere Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Clive Woodbridge	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Members	Cllr Bill Bentley	East Sussex County Council
	Cllr Ian Gillies	City of York Council
	Cllr Keith McLean	Milton Keynes Council
	Cllr Chris Pillai	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Jim Beall	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr Janet Daby	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr Joy Allen	Durham County Council
	Cllr Goronwy Edwards	Conwy County Borough Council
	Cllr Daniel Duggan	Gateshead Council
Apologies	Cllr Jo Beavis	Braintree District Council
	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland District Council
In Attendance	Cllr Barrie Patman	Wokingham Borough Council