

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title: Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date: Monday 11 September 2017
Venue: 5th floor conference suite (South Side), 5th floor, Layden House,
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 members to the first Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting of the 2017/18 cycle, noting apologies from Cllrs Clive Woodbridge, Lisa Targowska and Janet Daby.

The Board was informed that this would be the last meeting held at Layden House, and that future board meetings would be held at Local Government House, which, following refurbishment, has now been named 18 Smith Square.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Terms of reference, membership and outside bodies

Cllr Blackburn took members through the paper, which outlined the Terms of Reference, membership and future meeting dates of the Board. The report also listed the outside bodies the Board appoints members to, and a list of categories for Member Champions.

The following representatives to outside bodies were agreed by the Board:

1. Advisory Board for Female Offenders – Cllr Kate Haigh
2. Criminal Justice Council – Cllr Chris Pillai
3. National FGM Centre Advisory Group – Cllr Anita Lower and Cllr Jo Beavis
4. National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse – Cllr Simon Blackburn

Members also agreed the following Member Champions:

1. Abuse exploitation and modern slavery – Cllr Alan Rhodes
2. Antisocial behaviour – Cllr Anita Lower
3. Bereavement services – Cllr Nick Worth
4. Civil resilience – Cllr Clive Woodbridge
5. Community cohesion and integration – Cllr Janet Daby and Cllr Jo

Beavis

6. Licensing – Cllr Kate Haigh and Cllr Chris Pillai
7. Domestic abuse – Cllr Katrina Wood and Cllr Jim Beall

8. Prevent and counter extremism – Cllr Simon Blackburn and Cllr Colin Spence
9. Regulatory services – Cllr Anita Lower
10. Water safety – Cllr James Dawson and Cllr Jo Beavis

Decision:

Members **noted** the Terms of Reference, membership and **agreed** appointments to both outside bodies and Member Champions.

Action:

Officers to inform outside bodies of the changes or continuation of LGA representatives.

3 County lines exploitation

Lucy Ellender, LGA Adviser, introduced Lucy Capron, Public Affairs Manager, and Sarah Hegarty, CSE Prevention Officer, from The Children's Society. The presentation outlined work The Children's Society is doing on county lines exploitation, which is broadly where children are travelling (being trafficked) out of their homes towns and exploited for criminal purposes in other parts of the country, as well details of how young people were targeted and exploited. Many of the children being exploited in this way already have multiple vulnerabilities, and are subsequently exposed to adult sexual behaviour, drugs and violence. The Society warned that the scale of the problem has been under-reported and is bigger than previous high profile CSE cases, creating huge costs for society in terms of criminal justice, mental health and social care

The Board were told that The Children's Society was working with a number of agencies to tackle this issue and that efforts were being made to raise awareness and influence policy changes. The presentation detailed The Children's Society work to elevate the issue up the political agenda and it was noted that they were working closely with Islington Council in particular to secure a Home Affairs Select Committee debate to discuss the risks association with county lines. The Society provides secretariat support to the APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults. The Board were also advised that The Children's Society had established a working group, which is looking to develop a disruption toolkit offering guidance to agencies, including local authorities, on how to detect and tackle county lines exploitation. It was noted that information sharing arrangements between the police, local authorities, social services and charities are helpful but could be enhanced. In particular, there needed to be greater focus on children who regularly go missing, as these children are sometimes classified as low risk, particularly boys, and on providing support for 16-17 year olds, who don't get as much help because they are seen as nearly adults.

The Chair thanked The Children's Society for their presentation and

invited members to share their views. Members made the following comments:

- Further statistics on the scale of the issue would be welcomed and would be useful in analysing whether incidence rates are disproportionate within any particular demographic. The Children's Society said that while no national mapping activity had taken place, the National Crime Agency's report shows an indication of the scale of the problem. Members were also advised that Islington Council offered a good example of local mapping and they would send interested members further information about the estimated scale of the problem.
- A concern was raised about capacity and awareness as it seemed that crime was moving to more rural areas where police resources are fewer and awareness of the issue was lower. Members felt that increasing awareness amongst local authorities, particularly county and district councils, and police forces was vital. The Children's Society representatives noted that they had regional officers across the country and that they were happy to link members up with their colleagues. Members agreed that they should take up this offer in order to get the message out to authorities, and it was suggested that the Society should also seek to present to the County Councils Network.
- Members felt that in addition to working with local authority boards responsible for children's services, they should also exchange information with community wellbeing, trading standards and district councils who are working closely in their communities. It was noted that those targeted through county lines exploitation were likely to also be affected by both modern slavery and child sexual exploitation, and it is worth making connections between The Children's Society and adult safeguarding teams to discuss any crossover.
- A question was raised about whether this was just a British problem or if similar methods of exploitation were being carried out in other countries. The Children's Society said that they were not looking at this particular issue internationally but that they were working with other countries on international trafficking and criminal exploitation.
- A discussion was had about the need to raise awareness of the subject but also make it more acceptable to talk about it. It was noted that national politicians had sometimes struggled to have this debate and use appropriate language to highlight the problem via the press. It was felt that better awareness across all council services and the public as a whole would be beneficial as the police were generally more successful when the public understood signs to look for and how/when to report to authorities.
- On the suggested next steps, members agreed that a national strategy could be helpful but that a one-size fits all approach would not work. Members felt that a multi-faceted approach would be useful and that while the focus should not solely be on the London,

it would be useful to build on work already being done, largely in London boroughs. Members also agreed that encouraging better links between local agencies would be a positive position for the LGA to take.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report and presentation.

Actions:

- 1) Officers to circulate The Children's Society's presentation on county lines to members, along with a link to the National Crime Agency and APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults reports.
- 2) Officers to share contact details for Lucy Capron, who agreed to be a lead contact for any members wishing to be linked up to their regional CSE/CSA officer working for The Children's Society.
- 3) Officers to put Lucy Capron in touch with the County Councils and District Councils Networks.
- 4) Officers to incorporate the issue into the modern slavery workshops as part of the LGA's awareness raising work.

4 Board Policy Priorities for 2017-18

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced this item and explained that officers were looking for a steer from members, building on the discussion held at the Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting in June 2017. Mark noted that the Cabinet Office is doing a review of civil resilience arrangements and that the Safer and Stronger Communities Board is the lead board at the LGA for emergency planning. Civil servants are looking at how local authorities are organising their emergency planning and whether the government can assure itself that they are fully prepared. This was likely to generate a programme of work to ensure that councils can demonstrate preparedness.

On Grenfell, Mark confirmed that the LGA will want to contribute to the review of building regulations and fire safety, and that while colleagues on the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board would lead on the building regulations side of the review, the Safer and Stronger Communities Board and Fire Services Management Committee would lead on fire safety in high rise buildings. Another board priority related to medical examiners. It was noted that the Department of Health were keen to press ahead with the introduction of medical examiners and that officers would need to look at the timetable of this.

Members made the following comments:

- Members sought clarity on timings for publication of the guidance on modern slavery and the supporting workshops, following the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's presentation to the Board in January. Members noted that as much lead in time as

possible would be helpful in arranging the work. Lucy Ellender, LGA Adviser, confirmed that a draft of the guidance was almost ready to be shared with the stakeholder group supporting the work, with a view to publishing in October/November. On the workshops, members were told that a meeting was scheduled with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to discuss what form they should take and when they would be, with early next year most realistic. As with the taxi/PHV licensing workshops, it is intended to run the same event in a variety of locations, to give councillors multiple opportunities to attend.

- Problem gambling was discussed at an earlier SSCB meeting and members felt that there was a strong desire to have a presentation on the Leeds report. Members expressed concern about the impact problem gambling has on public health and a discussion was had about how far reaching the implications were. Members felt that the gambling industry ought to be funding interventions required for problem gamblers but it was acknowledged that the issue cuts across different boards as well as being under the remit of the SSCB. Ellie Greenwood, LGA Senior Adviser, agreed that this was a priority and that officers would look at future meeting agendas to see if representatives from Leeds Council would be able to attend to speak to members.
- A question was raised about the assistance the LGA will give to FRAs where Police and Crime Commissioners were looking to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services, and where there were bids from Police and Crime Commissioners to take on fire governance. Mark Norris agreed to circulate a note to board members to update them on this issue.

Decision:

Members **noted** the Board's priorities for 2017/18.

Actions:

- 1) Officers to proceed with plans to schedule modern slavery workshops and publish draft guidance for councils.
- 2) Officers to liaise with Leeds Council to see when they could give a presentation at a future SSCB meeting on problem gambling.
- 3) Officers to circulate a note to members in relation to the LGA's position on PCCs' business case submissions relating to responsibility for fire and rescue services.

5 Grenfell Tower and fire safety in high rise buildings

Mark Norris provided members with an update on Grenfell Tower, noting that since the last update, considerable work had been going on at both a local and national level in terms of improving safety in high rise buildings. Members were told that the main focus so far had been on social housing and that 15 local authorities had responded to a DCLG survey which

showed that around 50 blocks across the country used for social housing were considered to have unsafe cladding on their exterior. A letter had also been sent to local authorities asking them about private high rise blocks in their area and asking that they complete a spreadsheet and return it to DCLG.

The LGA had raised issues about the cost of surveying buildings and was working to establish what the Government's expectation was of councils who are able to identify blocks with unsafe cladding. DCLG believed that there were powers under the Housing Act 2004 which would allow or require local authorities to take action when it came to private owners of high rise buildings but a new burdens assessment would need to be carried out. He stated that it was also vital that there is clarity about what unsafe cladding could be safely replaced with, and that there was a need to ensure that decisions made now would be compliant with future requirements following the review of building regulations.

In terms of the public inquiries, members were told that preliminary meetings would take place that week and that the review of building regulations and fire safety in high rise buildings was likely to be undertaken quite quickly. The LGA's work on these issues will cut across a number of Boards.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following comments:

- Concerns were raised about large, private companies with Kitemark accreditation being able to self-regulate as it was apparent that inferior and less safe cladding had been promoted due its lower cost.
- While the review of building regulations is critical, members suggested that if the regulations were adjusted, there needed to be a better way of enforcing them and questions needed to be answered about how this would be funded.
- On building inspections, members said that there was a need to make sure that inspections are regular so that standards were still met after any alterations were made to high rise buildings, including leaseholders' own adjustments to their properties. Members said that inspections ought to include the checking of fire alarms and fire doors as well as changes within properties.
- It was noted that regulations for private landlords are higher than those for registered social landlords (RSLs) so the narrative should reflect the need to increase regulation for RSLs rather than bring private landlords' regulations down to the same level.
- Resources are critical. Current issues cannot be fixed without the resources to do so.

Decision:

Members **noted** the update.

Action:

Officers to circulate the terms of reference for the review of building regulations and fire safety.

6 Impact of Brexit on regulatory services and community safety

Ellie Greenwood, LGA Senior Adviser, introduced the item and provided members with an update on the work the LGA commissioned Cornwall Council to undertake in relation to EU based consumer protection regulations. . It was noted that Cornwall's report bears out many of the principles the Board had already identified, in terms of maintaining existing valuable protections but taking the opportunity to consider ways in which regulations are enforced. The LGA has now asked Cornwall Council to undertake stakeholder sessions to build a business and political perspective into the report and members were told that this was due to happen shortly. .

The following comment was made on this issue:

- This is a great opportunity to make sure regulations are clear to both consumers and the authorities enforcing them. There is a need for clear and concise regulations and it would be useful for EU consumer bodies to work with governments to ensure regulations are effective.
- Changes to the way Port Health authorities regulate goods entering the country may present an opportunity to prevent the spread of invasive plant or animal species (eg, Asian hornets).

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

Action:

Officers to monitor Cornwall Council's work on this report and provide feedback to members as and when any further progress is made.

7 Update paper

Cllr Blackburn introduced the report, which covers issues of interest to the Board not covered in the other items on the agenda.

Decision:

The Board **noted** the update paper.

8 Notes of previous meeting

The Board **agreed** the notes of the meeting held on 26 June 2017 as an accurate record 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 Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Members	Cllr Jo Beavis	Braintree District Council
	Cllr Chris Pillai	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Judith Wallace	North Tyneside Council
	Cllr Katrina Wood	Wycombe District Council
	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland District Council
	Cllr Colin Spence	Suffolk County 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 Carole Burdis	North Tyneside Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Apologies	Cllr Lisa Targowska	Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough
	Cllr Janet Daby	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr Clive Woodbridge	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council