Local Government Association

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title:	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date:	Monday 15 January 2018
Venue:	Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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 meeting, noting apologies from Cllrs Janet Daby, Carole Burdis and Katrina Wood. Cllr Paul Findlow (Con) and Cllr Jane Black (Lab) were both present as substitutes.

The Chair brought members' attention to the New Year's Honours List, which saw Cllr Morris Bright being awarded an MBE. Members of the Board offered their congratulations.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Developing the LGA's position on community engagement and neighbourhood policing

The Chair introduced this item, noting that there had been a discussion at a previous Board meeting about members' relationships with their local police forces and an apparent decline in neighbourhood policing.

Rachel Phelps, LGA Adviser, outlined the contents of the report and thanked members who had sent information from their areas to help inform this work. Rachel noted that HMIC had recently recommended that the College of Policing (CoP) put together more modern guidance on neighbourhood policing and engagement. The CoP was seeking the LGA's views on these guidelines and the toolkit published alongside it. Rachel asked for members' views.

The following comments were made:

- Members felt that while the document provided a good basis as an aspirational document, it could be strengthened and improved. It was not clear who the guidelines were aimed at or how they would be implemented.

- The issue of funding and resources was discussed in some depth. It was suggested that budget cuts had led to a decline in neighbourhood policing and a reduction in the level of engagement between the police, the public and local authorities. Members noted that a number of guidelines in the document would

have associated costs but they were concerned by the lack of information about where this money would come from and how additional engagement activities would impact existing funding.

- Members noted that the introduction of PCSOs was largely welcomed but numbers had since been reduced and it seemed that police officers were reluctant to spend time tackling what was considered low-level crime, such as antisocial behaviour, graffiti and petty crime. It was suggested that the police were too busy tackling crime hotspots and so were less able to engage with communities on a wider or longer term basis.

- Members discussed public perception of the police and were clear that better communication was key to ensuring the public felt protected. In some areas, meetings with the local Police and Crime Commissioner were available via a webcast. Members suggested that this, alongside better communication using the internet and social media would be welcomed by the public. Members suggested that the police needed to be seen to be active in their communities and that neighbourhood policing needed modernising to reflect how policing in the 21st century has changed

- It was suggested that the paper needed a clearer focus on how policing differs between rural and urban areas. Members felt that a one size fits all approach would not work. It was noted that the community safety teams who were being asked by the CoP to complete their survey may have better relationships with the police than local councillors so it was suggested that surveying councillors directly could provide a clearer picture.

Decision

Members **noted** the report.

Action

1. Officers to consider members' comments and draft an LGA response to the College of Policing's consultation.

2. Officers and lead members to discuss how to obtain as many views as possible on neighbourhood policing via a survey at the SSC Lead Members' meeting being held in February.

5 Building regulations interim report and fire safety update

The Chair introduced this report and thanked officers for the work they had put into this. His thanks were echoed by the Vice Chairman and other members who wanted to note the team's efforts over the previous six months.

Mark Norris, LGA Principal Policy Adviser, updated members on the progress which had taken place since the Board's last discussion, noted some of the conclusions outlined in Dame Judith Hackitt's interim review of building regulations and fire safety and summarised the report. Mark noted that nearly all of the points listed in the LGA's submission to the review were picked up in the report findings and recommendations. Members were advised that Dame Judith Hackitt and the review team were seeking response from those who fed into the initial review and Mark noted that the LGA's Grenfell Task and Finish Group was due to meet that week to discuss how to respond

to the review.

Mark asked members for their comments and the following points were made:

- Members wanted to see paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 strengthened to emphasise the need for better consultation with the fire service.

- Members made several comments about the need for additional resources and for clarity on whose responsibility it is to enforce both building regulations and fire safety measures. They said that it was important that councils had a role in ensuring that building regulations are considered as part of the scrutiny process, and that better training on regulations had the potential to reduce the need for enforcement.

- Members welcomed the recommendation that new high rise buildings should be fitted with sprinklers but some felt that sprinklers should also be retrofitted where possible, and that the LGA should take a strong position on this.

- Concerns were raised in response to paragraph 4.5, that it may lead to different interpretations of regulations and standards in different parts of the country.

Mark advised members that their comments would be fed back to the Grenfell Task and Finished Group, and then gave members a brief update on the building safety programme being led by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). MHCLG had collected data from local authorities about privately owned high rise buildings in their area and found around 1,000 buildings, the cladding on which had not been identified. The Ministry had approached the LGA to ask for assistance in gathering this information and working with authorities to identify building owners.

Members thanked Mark for the report.

Decision

Members **noted** the report.

Actions

1) Officers to relay members' comments to the Grenfell Task & Finish Group to inform their formal response to Dame Judith Hackitt's interim review report.

2) Officers to consider whether or not to survey local authorities about tower blocks with external wall rendered insulation on it.

6 Drowning Prevention Campaign

Charles Loft, LGA Senior Adviser, introduced the item, outlining the agenda paper and the suggested next steps, which included an LGA drowning prevention campaign. The proposed campaign would be aimed at members and would attempt to raise awareness of the issue in general, the availability of resources to support drowning prevention, the need to work with partners on this issue, the need to consider councils as duty holders and the importance of including drowning prevention messages in school swimming lessons. Charles was keen to hear members' views on these

proposals.

Members made the following comments:

- It was suggested that there ought to be a stronger focus on the vulnerability of people who are intoxicated and the higher risk of them falling into water and drowning. Members agreed that the LGA campaign should encourage schools to include drowning prevention messages in their swimming lessons but also suggested that this should be extended to universities and colleges, specifically during freshers' weeks. Members suggested involving the National Union of Students (NUS) in this campaign.

- A conversation was had about campaigning for swimming lessons to be made compulsory in schools, though members were clear that even with the ability to swim, people can be vulnerable to cold water shock and other related safety issues. Children are taught to swim in swimming pools and may not be able to swim in different conditions, such as open water, rivers or lakes. Members felt it was important not to blame a lack of swimming education, particularly as the RNLI had been clear that the problem is not people who cannot swim, but people who think they can.

- It was noted that drowning is accountable for more accidental deaths annually than fires in the home and cycling. Members spoke about children being taught about road and fire safety from an early age and they felt there should be an equal focus on water safety and drowning prevention.

- Members were concerned to hear that drowning prevention would not be covered in any of the plenary sessions at the LGA's Annual Conference 2018 and they felt that it was an important enough issue to be discussed in the main conference hall rather than the innovation zone. Charles explained that the plenary sessions had already been agreed for this year's conference but that officers would push ahead with a bid to have this issue discussed in the innovation zone. Members also suggested that there could be a stall dedicated to drowning prevention at the exhibition.

Decision

Members **agreed** that the proposed campaign should go ahead.

Actions

1) Officers to use members' comments to inform the central points of the Drowning Prevention Campaign.

2) Officers to continue with bid for a session on water safety at the Innovation Zone of the LGA's Annual Conference 2018.

7 Update paper

Mark spoke to the Board briefly about the reshuffle which took place on 9 January, noting that there was no substantial impact on the work of the Board but that John Hayes MP had been moved from his position in the Department for Transport. Officers had been working with him on the reform of taxi licensing arrangements but would pursue this with new minister, once the new portfolios had been published.

Members made the following comments on the update paper:

- Members wanted to highlight the paragraphs on modern slavery and encourage other Board members to download the LGA produced guide on modern slavery from the website. They were keen to promote the events being held throughout the UK and felt that this was an opportunity for the LGA to make a big impact. The Chair advised members that a press release was due to go out that day on the Independent Commissioner's attendance at one of the events.
- Members were keen to stress the importance of the launch of the SIGCE and noted that the launch was very positive.
- Support was noted for paragraphs 7 and 8 of the report on public spaces protection orders and the need for a proportionate response where possible.
- On the Crime and Policing Act, Cllr Anita Lower noted that she had attended a roundtable about antisocial behaviour in young people and was following up these issues. Cllr Lower had also attended a dinner to discuss the use of FOBTs and noted that a joint letter would be going to the press from the betting industry, the LGA and the parliamentary committee voicing support for the reduction to £2 stakes.

Decision

Members **noted** the update paper.

8 Notes of previous meeting

Members **agreed** that the notes of the previous meeting were an accurate recording of the conversation had.

Local Government Association

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
Deputy-chairs	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
	Cllr Clive Woodbridge	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Members	Cllr Jo Beavis	Braintree District Council
	Cllr Chris Pillai JP	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Lisa Targowska	Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough
	Cllr Judith Wallace	North Tyneside Council
	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland District Council
	Cllr Colin Spence	Suffolk County Council
	Cllr Paul Findlow (substitute)	Cheshire East 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 Jane Black (substitute)	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Apologies	Cllr Katrina Wood	Wycombe District Council
	Cllr Janet Daby	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr Carole Burdis	North Tyneside Council
In Attendance	Cllr Helen Carr	Brent Council