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## **Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting**

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**Title:** Safer & Stronger Communities Board  
**Date:** Monday 16 January 2017  
**Venue:** Rooms A&B, Ground Floor, Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street,  
London, EC1M 5LG

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### **Attendance**

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

### **Item Decisions and actions**

#### **1 Welcome and Declarations of Interest**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and listed apologies.

Owing to transport issues, it was agreed that the agenda should be revised so that the first substantive item discussed was Modern Slavery, followed by the Food Standards Agency and the Casey Review.

#### **Decision:**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **2 Modern Slavery**

The Chair introduced the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland OBE, who gave a presentation on his work looking into the issue of modern slavery in the UK. The Commissioner's report outlined the scale of the problem and noted that the Global Slavery Index estimates that 45.8 million people across the world are in some form of slavery, with an estimated 13,000 here in the UK.

The Commissioner outlined what his role covers and explained that prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution are all covered by his remit. He highlighted the need for political leadership on this issue and said that the Modern Slavery Act ought to be considered as ground-breaking legislation that many other countries across the world are keen to emulate. The Act had created his role, and also set out new requirements on ensuring transparency in supply chains. It was suggested that 70 per cent of people arriving in Europe show some signs of exploitation and that policy, process and local services need to be brought together for a more coordinated response.

The Commissioner presented a short video on modern slavery, which he is keen for councils to promote as widely as possible. He also spoke of the need to offer more bespoke training to those working in public facing roles about their statutory duty to

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report incidents they believe may indicate modern slavery in action. There were fewer than 500 referrals in the last year so the Commissioner made clear that the response to modern slavery needs to be better coordinated and that includes consideration of what long-term support is needed for victims.

Modern slavery is driven by the demand for cheap goods and services and the Commissioner outlined how this might manifest itself, noting that car washes, nail bars, farms and brothels are some of the organisations most directly involved in modern slavery. The Commissioner made clear that local government has a considerable role to play in tackling modern slavery and he suggested that councils should be working closely with the police, fire and health services, as well as the private sector, to look out for incidents of slavery.

More specifically in terms of local government, the Commissioner is calling on councils to review their tendering documentation and to ensure that all of their contractors sign statements on what they are doing to tackle slavery and human trafficking.

Following the discussion, the following points were made:

- Members asked for further details about how councils can support victims, particularly adult victims, what support already exists for them and effective methods of intervention where indicators of modern slavery are found. The Commissioner highlighted the role of the National Referral Mechanism and noted that action by councils against carwashes for example disrupted organised crime groups and helped make operations based on modern slavery less profitable.
- Members noted that there is already pressure on manufacturing businesses and supply chain management but wondered if additional requirements could be made of investors or banks funding these businesses to publish statements on what they are doing in response to modern slavery. The Commissioner noted the provisions in the Modern Slavery Act to produce a statement about addressing modern slavery in supply chains but noted the statement did not require the business to do anything.
- There were a few comments about victims of modern slavery, particularly those who have been involved in drug trafficking, who have ended up in prison. Members asked what can be done to address this and the following discussion included the suggestion that the police need to be more aware of the possible involvement of modern slavery. The Commissioner also suggested that the National Police Chiefs Council needs to report on how many victims are imprisoned.
- Councils have a duty of care for victims of domestic abuse and violence. Would there be a new duty of councils to also support victims of modern slavery? The Commissioner indicated this option was being explored, but the issue was how it would be funded.
- Members suggested that there is a need to highlight the work local government is doing on prevention of modern slavery as well as greater integration not just between community groups but also between neighbouring councils.

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- It was suggested that there is almost a need for a form of community covenants to explain what is and what isn't acceptable. In line with better integration, questions were also raised about pooled budgeting and whether Police and Crime Commissioners were being talked to about funding. The Commissioner said better integration was the right way forward and noted the resources that some faith groups were making available for training and providing support to victims. He also suggested businesses had a role to play in investing in addressing modern slavery as some practices indirectly supported modern slavery. The Commissioner added that he had also engaged Police and Crime Commissioners on this agenda.

**Decision:**

Members noted the report and the recommendation.

**Actions:**

1. Officers to consider the LGA's contribution towards the production of Statutory Guidance on Identifying and Supporting Victims of Modern Slavery in England and Wales.
2. Officers to seek regular feedback from Lord Porter, who will be attending the Prime Minister's Modern Slavery Taskforce.
3. Officers to consider how best to promote the video aimed at local government on Modern Slavery detection and reporting.
4. Officers to follow up Cllr Morris Bright's invitation for the LGA to attend his council's half-day Anti-Trafficking Conference in Hertfordshire.

**3 Regulating our Future - Food Standards Agency proposals for the future of food regulation**

The Chair introduced Tim Bennett, Deputy Chair of the Food Standards Agency (FSA), who presented the organisation's work on developing proposals to reshape the way food businesses are regulated. The presentation outlined the discussions the FSA is having with stakeholders on establishing a new regulatory model by 2020. The priority is to keep consumers safe over the coming years, but changes to the food industry need to be considered when strengthening food standards regulations.

It was noted in the presentation that changes in the resources available to councils and the impact globalisation and technology have had on the food industry present a new challenge for the FSA which needs to be reflected in any new food inspection system. The FSA has held a number of stakeholder meetings, consumer groups, focus panels and is piloting a new regulatory scheme in Bristol, which the FSA is due to report on at the end of January 2017.

The FSA is clear that consumer trust is their key priority and that the funding of the food inspection system needs to be reviewed. One of the proposals being considered as part of this process is asking businesses to part-fund a new regulatory system, as

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well contributing towards advice services offered by councils' Environmental Health Officers.

The implications of Brexit were also discussed and the FSA would like to see food safety standards having a reasonable level of priority in future trade negotiation given that most of our food legislation is driven by Europe. As a starting point, the FSA has agreed it does not accept the model that some countries have whereby there are different standards for domestic and exported produce, and so is working with other EU countries to increase consistency in food standards across the board.

The FSA is seeking councils' views on the proposals as well as suggestions of good practice from areas in which regulation and enforcement is carried out effectively.

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

- Members asked what role the FSA sees councils having under a new regulatory system and whether devolution would lead to differences to the regulatory system nationwide. There was a lack of clarity about the precise role that councils will have, although a clear statement that there will be a greater role for third party assurance in the new model. Members suggested that the LGA should make clear that they want councils to have a central role but that consideration needs to be given to limited resources and funding available to them.
- Members noted that the public need to have confidence that the proposals put forward by the FSA will lead to a robust regulatory system that isn't over-reliant on self-regulation but is regulated by an accountable body. Concerns were also raised about over-regulation and the fact that this would have a greater impact on smaller businesses over large, multinational corporations.
- In response to suggestions of asking businesses to part-fund a new regulatory system, it was noted that a one size fits all approach would not work and that any contributions from businesses would need to be proportionate to their individual financial situations.
- On intervention, members wanted to make clear that councils need to be given the power to intervene quickly in a way that does not place considerable pressure on their legal teams.
- It was highlighted that there is a need to raise awareness for consumers about what is in their food and where it comes from, and that the focus should not purely be on dietary information. The current rating system for restaurants was also discussed and comments were made about the public's understanding of the star-rating system.
- Members agreed that there is a need for change within the current system and that the FSA will need to be more adaptable in response to technological changes. It was suggested that technology could be used to reduce regular in-person inspections and put a greater responsibility on businesses to report regularly on how they are meeting standards. Members also asked whether the FSA would consider introducing regulations that would require businesses providing food delivery services online to display their ratings in the same way that a restaurant is

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required to.

- A discussion was had about the standards of food being imported into the UK and whether produce coming in through our borders meets the same regulations that we hold British suppliers to, as well as the extent to which the UK seeks to deter individuals from bringing food into the country. A comment was made that the US makes very clear announcements to passengers coming in and out of the country about what they can and cannot travel with. It was suggested that this is an effective and easy to implement idea that would help deter passengers bringing in food that does not meet the UK's standards.
- A number of members felt that they did not gain enough information from the report to take a stance and provide a clear steer on the FSA proposals.

**Decision:**

Members noted the report and the recommendation that the Board provides a steer on proposals being developed by the Food Standards Agency.

**Actions:**

Officers to arrange a subsequent meeting between the FSA and Cllr Simon Blackburn to seek clarification on the role of local authorities under a new system.

**4 Casey Review into opportunity and integration**

The Chair introduced Neil O'Connor, the Deputy Director of the Casey Review, who led a presentation on the contents and conclusions of the review. A discussion was had about some of the criticism of the report and stakeholder reactions, which generally suggested that most were minded to engage with the recommendations in the review, despite having some concerns about it.

The presentation outlined the aims of the review and highlighted some key findings which noted that while there are real community cohesion challenges in some areas, there was also a great deal of evidence showing that Britain is generally a cohesive and integrated society. It was noted that around 50 per cent of the population now live in areas with relatively high migration flows and that some communities, particularly Asian minorities, and faith groups tend to live in much higher concentrations at ward level.

A key finding of the review found that some communities do not fare as well in terms of employment, language and economic inactivity levels and that although children from those communities often appear to do better in terms of education, this is not translated to wider social and economic progress. The review also found that hate crime is on the increase and that there is a consistent pattern of spikes in reports of hate crime following key trigger events – e.g. Brexit.

The Casey Review team concluded that successive Governments have failed to implement a strong or consistent enough approach to community cohesion over the past 15 years and that the steps that have been taken are insufficient to keep pace with the level of change. A comment was also made about issues of political

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representation of minority groups at both a local and national level.

The review outlines 12 recommendations that the team feels are deliverable and practical. The Deputy Director confirmed that the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) will be looking closely at the report and will publish a response in the spring. He also made clear that they will be seeking assistance and support from the LGA and councils in delivering this strategy.

Members made the following points:

- Members had a discussion about cohesion, barriers to integration and political representation, and noted that equal access to knowledge, networks and finance for all were important in increasing community cohesion. The Deputy Director noted some communities were not doing as well as others and that generic strategies in response were not helpful.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of reference to free schools and faith schools in the review and the impact they could have on integration amongst young people, with members noting that the recommendations in the report were not supported by government policy. On schools, it was also noted that alongside promoting British laws and values (including the right to dissent), the curriculum should be broadened so the history curriculum, for example, catered for those with minority backgrounds. The Deputy Director noted the powers of councils in relation to free schools and said the review concluded they should have a greater say in their provision.
- Members noted the fact that the report highlighted failures in this policy area in the past and stressed the important role played by political leadership around issues of cohesion but that none of the recommendations were directed at improvements in leadership. Members asked whether the review intended to explore this further.
- In terms of empowerment, members said that this needs to be done from an early age (e.g. in children's centres), recognising the role of families as much as institutions, and that we should ensure that principles of diversity are promoted from a grassroots level wherever possible.
- Members discussed public concerns around immigration and suggested that tabloids can often be incendiary and shape views of those living in areas largely unaffected by migration or who haven't experienced immigration positively. Members felt that ignoring the fears of the white, working class community is not good enough and that there is a need to tackle the perception that we should be frightened of the unknown.
- The use of the term 'white British' was mentioned and concerns were raised about this term creating barriers when people born in the UK were proud to be British. The Deputy Director explained that the review used existing data sources which list 'white British' as an option to inform their conclusions but agreed that this issue should be debated.
- A point was raised about how councillors can better understand community

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leadership, engage with the communities they represent and work on member development with member peers. Some felt that a discussion needed to be had about community partnerships, what they mean and who will lead them at a time when council budgets have been reduced.

- Members discussed the 12 recommendations listed in the report and noted that there were not many specific or measurable goals in them. They questioned how the outcomes of implementing the recommendations would be measured. The Deputy Director recognised that funding was important and wanted to see measurable recommendations with money behind them when there was a response to the Review's work.

**Decision:**

Members noted the report and the recommendation to provide suggestions of support the LGA can provide on this agenda.

**Actions:**

1. Member Services Officer to distribute a copy of Neil O'Connor's presentation to members.
2. Officers to continue discussions with the Casey Review Team about the LGA's involvement on this agenda.

**5 Update Paper**

Members noted the update paper and made the following points:

- Members requested a discussion with the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners or the Home Office around policing and what councils can expect in terms of ongoing relationships with the police.
- Members noted that police resources are becoming increasingly stretched and certain community services or activities, particularly around soft skills, are no longer being offered.
- Members sought an update on the government's review of gaming machines and social responsibility, and were advised that Councillor Allen would be attending a Ministerial roundtable on the issue the following week.

**Decision:**

Members noted the report.

**Actions:**

1. Officers to take forward the request for a discussion of policing to the next SSC Lead Members' meeting.
2. Officers to update members on progress on the gambling review following the

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Ministerial meeting.

**6 Notes of previous meeting**

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

**7 AOB**

The Chair announced that Cllr Lisa Brett will be standing down from the SSC Board and thanked her on behalf of the Board for all of the work she has done in this role.



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**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 Lisa Brett	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Members	Cllr Jo Beavis	Braintree District 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 Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Apologies	Cllr Bill Bentley	East Sussex County Council
	Cllr Ian Gillies	City of York Council
	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland District Council