

15 January 2018

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title: Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date: Wednesday 22 November 2017
Venue: Smith Square Rooms 1&2, 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 opened the meeting and noted apologies from Cllrs Alan Rhodes and Janet Daby. Substitutes Cllr Vic Pritchard (Con) and Cllr Helen Carr (Independent) attended the meeting as observers.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Gambling issues - update

Having discussed the issue of problem gambling at a previous meeting, the Board had requested a presentation from representatives from Leeds City Council about their work to tackle problem gambling and its wider impact on society. The Chair introduced Jo Rowlands and Dave Roberts from Leeds City Council, who gave members an overview of the progress made so far.

Leeds City Council granted Global Gaming Ventures a licence in 2013 on the condition that they were able to secure a number of economic, social and environmental benefits to mitigate against any negative impacts a large casino may cause. The Council used an associated grant to commission research to assess rates of problem gambling and found that there were around 10,000 adult problem gamblers in Leeds (in percentage terms, double the national average rate), and a further 30,000 'at risk' individuals. The research found that this could affect anyone at any time, and that it was often a hidden addiction which impacted on personal finances, wellbeing and relationships. It was noted that there was often a clear link between problem gambling, existing debt problems and those with mental health difficulties, and links to the council's priority on tackling poverty and reducing inequality. The council had also met with the director of Public Health England, who agreed that this was an issue growing in prominence.

In response to the research, Leeds City Council aimed to deliver three strands of work looking at increasing awareness through marketing and promotional campaigns, increasing awareness of problem gambling through staff development and increasing support to those impacted. Their awareness campaign, Beat the Odds, launched in October 2017 and was advertised in targeted areas such as bus shelters close to

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gambling establishments, pubs, garage forecourts, hospitals and GP practices, and also made use of geo-location advertising which would show pop-up adverts on mobile phones when close to a betting shop. The work to increase staff awareness was focused on staff with direct customer contact, libraries, housing providers, schools, children's centres, advice centres, universities and community based organisations. Where staff had previously identified problem gamblers, they reported that while they recognised the problem, they were not clear where individuals could be referred to for support. This fed into the third strand which focused on increasing the support services available to gamblers, including local counsellors, as well as awareness of the National Gambling HelpLine. The council had been working on this issue for around 18 months and reported that there was clear evidence of enthusiasm for tackling this problem within the city.

The Chair thanked the speakers and invited comments from members of the Board:

- Members discussed whether there was a definition of 'problem gambling' and what the link was between other addictions or crime. Dave Roberts explained that there was national research which suggested co-morbidity and a link between gambling and other issues such as debt, addiction and domestic violence, and he was clear that this was not being looked at as a single issue problem.
- A conversation was had about how little was currently known about the scale of the problem and how beneficial it would be to have sufficient evidence to back up calls to tackle problem gambling. Comments were made about a need not to appear against gambling but to show that for some people, there is a problem which needs tackling and that advertisers needed to be held more responsible.
- Members felt it was crucial to consider the impact problem gambling had not just on the individual but also their wider families and employers. Leeds City Council agreed with this position and confirmed they were looking at how to tease out this particular issue and whether low level screening could work across partnerships. Members were told that screening was not taking place at the moment because there was insufficient local support available for those affected and there was a reluctance to provide false hope when there was only one counsellor available in the city. While the national helpline was good, far more local provision was needed.
- Members supported attempts to work across partners and agreed that the voluntary sector and community organisations should be involved in any efforts to tackle problem gambling.

Ellie Greenwood, LGA Senior Adviser (Regulation), then provided members with an update on the Government's recent announcement on their review of fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs), stake reduction and advertising. The Government had committed to substantially reducing stakes but it wasn't clear if that would go as far as the LGA's calls for a reduction to £2. Members were told that the trade body for amusement arcades had commissioned research looking at the benefits of reducing stakes. It was also noted that the Government was not looking to increase any other stakes and was rejecting calls from casinos to increase the number of machines permitted in their establishments.

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In terms of advertising, the Government had not committed to anything substantive but that there would be a major public information campaign to be funded by the industry and led by GambleAware. Members were told that the Government would also encourage the industry to take voluntary action on promoting responsible online gambling. The Government had confirmed it would consider introducing a statutory levy to fund research, education and treatment if the industry did not voluntarily increase donations. The LGA planned to respond to the consultation on this, which would close on 23 January, and officers were seeking a steer from members on the content of the response.

Members made the following points:

- The LGA should continue to press for a reduction to a £2 stake but should also ask that spin speeds are reduced and that measures are taken to encourage responsible advertising. On stake reduction, it was suggested that research into the benefits of stake reduction in countries where this had already been introduced would be helpful – e.g. New Zealand where the maximum stake is less than £1.
- Members agreed with the suggestion of a levy which would raise funds for the treatment of gambling addictions but expressed concerns that a voluntary levy was unlikely to be as profitable as a mandatory levy. They also suggested that links with the health agenda were considered and more funding was needed for enforcement.
- It was noted that online betting organisations were previously fined £7.8 million for their failure to assist vulnerable customers and members asked where that money had gone. Members suggested that analysis by the LGA of the amount of funding given to local authorities to deal with gambling addiction would be useful.
- Members felt that while a stake reduction would be a positive step, it was not a panacea and it was also important to look at educating people so they understood the odds of winning online gambling so that the problem is not simply pushed from one arena to another.
- It was suggested that the LGA could run a social media campaign to raise awareness of the issue.

Decision

Members **noted** the presentation and update.

Actions

- 1) Officers to develop a new guide for councils on the issue of problem gambling.
- 2) Officers to circulate a link to Leeds City Council's report.
 - [Leeds Council - Executive Report](#)
 - [Leeds Council - Gambling Report](#)

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- 3) Officers to liaise with the LGA's Communications team about a possible social media campaign.

3 Civil resilience

Mark Norris, LGA Principal Policy Adviser, outlined the contents of the report and noted that local authorities were keen to share their experiences of handling civil emergencies after events earlier in the year. Members were told that the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) were undertaking a review of the challenges associated with national resilience and how the Government can be assured that councils are prepared for civil contingency issues. LGA officers had engaged with the CSS at an early stage in their review to inform the recommendations, and had identified measures to provide central government with an assurance process that did not involve a new inspection regime, as well as setting out what central assistance local areas most needed in a civil emergency. Recommendations had been sent to the National Security Council and it was expected that a report on the review would be available by the end of November.

Members were told that feedback from the review suggested one outcome would be a move towards a peer review system which would use the new set of standards being developed on civil resilience. It was noted that the past year had shown strong regional arrangements in terms of mutual aid in both London and Manchester but there were concerns about other areas and the need to increase and strengthen mutual aid requirements.

In terms of next steps, members were advised that a pilot masterclass session was being developed for councillors, that a guide for councillors about civil emergency roles in planning would need updating to include reference to community leadership, and that joint work with Solace was planned to provide guidance aimed at chief executives which would take readers through the life cycle of a civil emergency. Members were asked how they thought councillors should fit into this and what training or support was wanted.

A number of points were raised in the discussion which followed:

- Members stressed the need to develop mutual aid arrangements, as reductions in the number of council staff meant they had less capacity to cope with civil emergencies.
- On training, members welcomed the masterclass offer but wanted to see it expanded to allow backbenchers to benefit as well as leaders and portfolio holders. A discussion took place about how officers and councillors should work together during a civil emergency, whether joint training could be held, and how useful media training would be. Members discussed the use of social media during an incident and how important it was to ensure that both councillors and officers were consistent in the messages they were putting out.
- It was suggested that there was a great deal of focus on cities and urban areas in terms of civil resilience but not enough focus on rural areas. Members also noted that the potential for tragedy is diverse so emergency training needed to cover as many potential threats as possible.

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Decision

Members **noted** the report.

Action

Officers to continue working with Solace and the CCS on guidance on civil resilience.

4 Government response to House of Lords Select Committee post legislative scrutiny of the Licensing Act 2003

LGA Adviser, Rebecca Johnson, spoke briefly to members about the House of Lords Select Committee's scrutiny of the Licensing Act and their proposal for planning and licensing committees to be merged. The LGA's view is that the Act is a good framework which needed small amendments rather than a complete overhaul. In responding to the Select Committee's report, the Government agreed that the Act did not require an overhaul but made no commitment to either of the LGA's key asks around localisation of licensing fees and a Public Health objective. Members were told that the LGA would continue pushing the health objective agenda by promoting the role public health can play in licensing. In terms of fees, the Government felt that the localisation of fees would undermine rate relief given to some licensees following changes to business rates in 2017. The LGA suggested that a flat rate increase, for example in line with inflation, would be a useful interim step whilst continuing to call for the localisation of fees in the longer term.

A brief discussion also took place about training, with the Committee having made recommendations about training requirements for members of licensing committees. The LGA is developing a Licensing Act handbook for councillors which could include a recommendation that councillors should have a minimum level of training before sitting on a licensing committee.

It was noted that the Supreme Court had ruled in favour of the Scottish Government's policy on Minimum Unit Pricing and members were asked if an update on this issue, once an assessment of the policy has been undertaken, would be useful.

Members made the following comments:

- Clarification was requested on what a 'minimum level' of training would consist of and the suggestion was made that a statement of expectation could be developed to set out what this should be. Members agreed that a high level of training is important, but that should be tailored depending on what licensing committee members need. Members asked whether people who had received training on the Act when it was first introduced would now need additional training because of the changes which had been implemented since then. Members also asked whether the LGA had surveyed councils on what level of training they offered and whether there was any correlation between the level of training provided and the number of appeals received.
- Members agreed that it would be interesting to know how minimum pricing per unit would work in Scotland alongside other measures already in place such as views on drinks promotions and a zero tolerance approach to drink driving.

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- Members were very supportive of the proposal to push for a flat rate increase in fees, while continuing to lobby for localisation in the long term.

Decision

Members **noted** the report.

Action

Officers to liaise with the Home Office with a view to lobbying for a flat rate increase of fees.

5 LGA response to Casey review on integration and opportunity

Ellie Greenwood, LGA Senior Adviser, outlined the paper on the LGA's response to the Casey review on integration and opportunity, noting that there were four key issues highlighted in relation to local government. Members were told that Cllr Blackburn had been tasked with working with the Group Leaders to develop an LGA response to the review and he had taken a draft of the response to the Group Leaders' meeting in October. The draft had been circulated to members and they were advised that it would be discussed at the meeting of the LGA Executive on 7 December. The response centred the LGA's calls to devolve powers around skills, growth, housing and education, as helping councils to tackle socio-economic exclusion would help to support local cohesion. Officers expected the response to be published once signed off by the Executive.

More broadly, members were told that the Government was working on an integration strategy which was due in the new year. The strategy would be similar to a green paper and would be subject to a consultation. The SSC Board would need to consider a draft response to the consultation and further guidance would be given on this following the publication of the draft strategy.

Members made the following points:

- Members thanked officers for their work on this subject, noting that it had been a difficult topic to respond to.
- It was suggested that it would be useful for the member champions for community cohesion and integration, Cllrs Jo Beavis and Janet Daby, to get together to discuss the matter.
- The report suggests that local government was lacking in diversity but members noted that the LGA was already working on this particular issue so recognition of this should be noted.

Decision

Officers **noted** the LGA's draft response to the Casey Review.

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Action

Officers to proceed as directed once the response had been signed off by the LGA Executive.

6 Fire safety in high rise buildings update

Mark Norris provided members with an update on the work being carried out post-Grenfell and gave details about the number of social housing high-rise buildings which had already had unsafe cladding removed and those which were in the process of having it removed. He noted the need for clearer guidance for local authorities about what materials could replace the unsafe cladding and support for authorities being asked by insurance companies whether replacement materials had gone through a full safety test by the Buildings Research Establishment (BRE). The LGA was pressing the Government to commit BRE to publish a set of materials which had passed their tests and was also seeking clarity on the test results of those which had failed. Members were told that there were a number of bodies in the industry providing guidance on replacement materials but that the recommendations needed to be consistent. The LGA was also continuing to lobby the Government for additional funding.

In terms of privately owned high-rise buildings, the survey councils had been undertaking for DCLG indicated that there were a larger number of buildings affected than there was in the social housing sector. Some building owners had already sent materials off for testing and a number had been cleared as safe, but it was thought that there was a group of around 2000+ buildings awaiting inspection to identify whether they have cladding for a variety of reasons including reduced capacity and resources. Discussions with the Government about local authorities' legal powers were ongoing and legal advice was being sought to clarify these powers. Once established, guidance would be made available to the sector on what powers they had and where responsibility would lie for funding remedial work should private owners not be able to afford to pay.

Members were told that Dame Judith Hackitt's interim report on the review of building regulations was expected in early December and initial indications suggested that she viewed the system as not being fit for purpose. The LGA would be looking at the report in detail and would provide a further update at the next Board meeting in January.

Members made the following comments:

- Members felt it was important that the list of buildings which had failed the ACM cladding tests was published.
- Members liked the idea of updating building regulations but expressed concern that competition between local authorities and private sector building regulations operators could lead to a lowering of standards. The KiteMark accreditation scheme was discussed at the previous meeting but it wasn't covered in the LGA's submission to the review. Mark said he would look at that and ensure it was included as part of the submission into the inquiry into the cause of the Grenfell fire.

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- Members discussed sprinklers and asked how many of the social housing blocks which had had cladding removed would have sprinklers retrofitted. Mark explained that the LGA had some anonymised indicative figures on council blocks that would have sprinklers retrofitted but the approach between councils varied due to the particular circumstances of each block, where the need to move people out while work was done, and the presence of asbestos could all complicate the process.
- Concerns were raised about there being an insufficient number of qualified building inspectors to carry out all of the inspections required and there were not enough fire engineers to deal with fire safety requirements. Members felt that the LGA needed to make sure that recommendations coming out of the review included an improved inspection regime for tower blocks, ensuring there were enough qualified individuals to deal with demand and better training for new inspectors. It was suggested that building owners should pay for ongoing inspections to reduce the burden on local authorities.

Decision

Members **noted** the update.

Action

Officers to consider points raised by members when writing the LGA's submission to the public inquiry into the cause of the fire at Grenfell Tower.

7 Update paper

The following comment was made in response to the section in the update paper on taxis/PHV licensing:

- Some drivers who had been refused a licence or had had their licence revoked subsequently received public carriage vehicles licences and returned to an area to drive minibuses. The Chair had written to the Minister about the issue and it was noted that one option to tackle this was to establish a register of refusals and revocations which could be shared with the DVLA. Officers committed to raise this again through the current taxi and PHV working group.

Decision

Members **noted** the update paper.

8 Notes of previous meeting

Members **agreed** the notes of the previous meeting as an accurate summary of the discussions which took place.

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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 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	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Lisa Targowska	Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough
	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 Jim Beall	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
Apologies	Cllr Carole Burdis	North Tyneside Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
In Attendance	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Janet Daby	Lewisham London Borough Council
In Attendance	Cllr Vic Pritchard (observer)	Bath & North East Somerset Council
	Cllr Helen Carr (observer)	Brent Council