

25 January 2018

Safer & Stronger Communities Board – report from Councillor Simon Blackburn (Chair)

Domestic Abuse

1. In October, I attended a meeting of the Home Office's National Oversight Group on domestic abuse, a group chaired by the Home Secretary to oversee improvements to police responses to domestic abuse. In November, I met again with Home Office officials to discuss the Government's outline proposals for new domestic violence and abuse legislation ahead of a formal consultation, to outline the potential implications for councils.

Safer communities

2. SSCB members have been speaking to councils about the findings from our recent work on the future of council community safety services. In October, Cllr Morris Bright spoke at an event on 'Delivering community safety through effective local policing', and Cllr Anita Lower presented at an event on 'Community safety and policing under the new government'. Cllr Lower also attended a community scrutiny day at Bath and North East Somerset Council to talk about the outcomes from the review.

Counter-extremism and Prevent

3. I co-chaired a third LGA leadership essentials course on countering extremism in Coventry in November, attended by 14 elected members from a range of authorities. A new leadership essentials programme on Prevent was also launched in the autumn; I co-chaired two courses running in Leeds and Crewe in November and December respectively, attended by a total of 31 councillors. All courses have been very well received and a third Prevent course is scheduled for March.
4. On 23 November, Cllr Colin Spence chaired the ministerial launch event for the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE) at Smith Square. The SIGCE is a local authority led network co-chaired by Cllr Hazel Simmons (Leader of Luton Council) and Cllr Debra Coupar (Executive Member for Communities, Leeds City Council). The network will bring together councils in England and Wales to share learning and experience, and promote good practice on countering extremism beyond terrorism. The launch was very successful, attracting over 100 elected members and officers. Attendees heard from Baroness Williams, Minister of State for Countering Extremism, and Lord Bourne, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Faith.

Violent crime

5. Following concerns from some councils about increases in violent crime over recent years, Cllr Clive Woodbridge chaired a free LGA conference at Smith Square in November for local authorities to explore further recent trends and showcase practice from councils and local partners. Around 40 elected members and officers attended.

Taxi/PHV licensing

6. In November, Cllr Clive Woodbridge met with the Chairman of Gett, Geoffrey Reisel, to discuss the LGA's work to lobby for reform to taxi and PHV legislation. Gett were supportive of the LGA's ask around the need for drivers to operate in the area where they are licensed, and for

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the introduction of national minimum standards in taxi/PHV licensing which retain local flexibility for licensing authorities.

Gambling

7. Following the launch of the Government's consultation on stakes and prizes, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Fixed-Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) held two events in November. Cllr Morris Bright MBE gave evidence to the APPG on the LGA's position on the Government's proposals, including our call for FOBT stakes to be reduced to £2. Cllr Anita Lower also attended a rally in Parliament to show the LGA's support for a £2 stake.

Trading standards

8. In December, Cllr Anita Lower and I met with Lord Harris, Chair of the National Trading Standards (NTS) Board. Lord Harris provided an update on NTS's work around consumer protection and outlined the key priorities for the organisation around door step crime and 'e-scams'. Lord Harris also noted that the reduced capacity in local authority teams is having a knock-on impact on the amount of intelligence coming through to NTS and is a continuing challenge.

Brexit and regulatory services

9. In November, Cllr Anita Lower and officers visited the London Gateway port to observe the port health functions undertaken by the City of London. The visit helped to inform our work to assess and highlighted the potential implications of different types of Brexit agreement on councils' regulatory services functions.

Health and safety enforcement

10. In January, LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd and I met with the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), along with Martin Esom, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, and a member of the HSE's Board. The meeting discussed local health and safety enforcement in the context of austerity and Brexit.

Neighbourhood Watch and Citizens Advice

11. In November, I met with David Huse, the new Chair of Neighbourhood Watch, and Barbara Bowers, Market Development Manager for Citizens Advice. We discussed partnership working, prevention strategies and whole-place approaches to improving outcomes for residents.

Modern slavery

12. In October, I attended the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Modern Slavery to discuss the reform of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The Government are looking to reform the NRM in a number of ways, including longer move on support for confirmed victims, government funded places of safety for adult victims to give them assistance prior to entering the NRM and a new digital system to support the NRM process. The role of local authorities in supporting victims as they transition out of NRM support was discussed at the meeting. The Home Office will be looking to work with local authorities to come up with best practice for victims to transition into a community and access local services. The Government's full announcement on NRM reform can be found on their [website](#).

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Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

13. Cllr Ian Stephens, Chair of the Fire Services Management Committee, attended the HMICFRS introductory event in October. The event included presentations from HMICFRS and others, as well as time for delegates to discuss operational and governance issues, share practice and experiences, and offer views on HMICFRS's early proposals for an inspection regime of the fire and rescue service.

Contact officer:	Mark Norris
Position:	Principal Policy Advisor
Phone no:	020 7664 3241
Email:	mark.norris@local.gov.uk