

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title: Safer & Stronger Communities Board

Date: Monday 19 March 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
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1 Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies from Cllrs Morris Bright, Chris Pillai and Lisa Targowska. Cllr Vic Pritchard attended the meeting as a substitute.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Operation Dovetail update

The Chair introduced Matt Collins, Director of Prevent at the Home Office, who gave members an update on Operation Dovetail.

Matt explained that officials in Whitehall had worked with the police and various other partners to review the UK's counter-terrorism strategy and that the new Contest strategy (3.0) was awaiting sign off. Members were told that the emerging themes of the review included a new Counter Terrorism Bill, a new operating model to help align national and local work, relationships with Communication Service Providers and data.

Matt outlined the overall objectives for the Prevent element of the strategy; to safeguard and support vulnerable people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. He told members that the Home Office was looking at quality assurance across the country and that a new desistance and disengagement rehabilitation programme is being piloted to work with those known to have engaged in terrorist activity, including those in prison and coming back from Syria, providing greater emphasis on early intervention and reintegration.

Matt gave members an update on Operation Dovetail and was clear that a key focus of the project was to look at the balance of responsibility between the police and local authorities, and that relevant parties fulfil their appropriate roles. He noted that while the Dovetail pilots, carried out in nine areas, had been generally good, the evaluation had identified some issues, including vulnerability assessment framework training, CMIS database access, the commissioning process and managing counter terrorism risks. Following further feedback from the LGA identifying concerns about the proposals for national roll out, members were told that the Home Office had now

decided to undertake further piloting, including testing the regional model, with an extended timeline for roll out. This will start in the North West with opportunities to learn further lessons before the model is introduced nationally.

Matt also updated members that a Prevent toolkit is being developed, as well as a self-assessment tool. The Home Office was keen to see elected members having greater involvement in Prevent peer reviews and was looking at providing more dedicated elected member support and training.

Members made the following comments:

- Members were encouraged by the feedback provided but had some concerns about the regional model, including a concern about working across different police and health service boundaries. Matt acknowledged these concerns and noted that this was why national roll out plans had been scaled back.
- Members briefly discussed the nature of and responses to different terrorist threats.
- It was noted that elected members already engaged in prevention work in other areas such as health, and that the models for this already exist. Matt agreed that it was vital to draw lessons from models which already worked well and that it was important to demystify the national security aspect of the project to ensure that effective measures being taken locally work across a range of areas.
- Members noted that there was an existing Prevent Champions Network but that it would welcome further direction from the Home Office.
- A conversation was had about resources, training and funding. Members said that authorities were keen to play their role but were concerned about the lack of additional funding available to deliver what they were being asked to.

Decision

Members **noted** the update.

3 Integrated Communities Strategy

The Chair introduced Peter Fenn and Penny Hobman, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, who gave members an overview of the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper which had been published prior to the meeting.

The Integrated Communities Strategy builds on the Casey Review and sets out the Government's thinking on the main drivers of integration and how to tackle the causes of poor integration. The draft strategy sets out a national framework of policy proposals, but acknowledges the need for a localised approach to implementing them. The Government was keen to work with local authorities to try new, innovative approaches to integration, building on existing expertise and work already being carried out. The strategy focuses on the following eight themes:

1. Strengthening leadership

2. Supporting new migrants and the communities into which they arrive
3. Education and young people
4. English language skills
5. Places and communities
6. Economic opportunities
7. Rights and freedoms
8. What works and how it is measured

Members were advised that the consultation on the proposals was now open and would run until 5 June.

The following comments were made:

- Councils have lots of experience in delivering around this agenda. The Syrian Resettlement Scheme was highlighted: this was and co-designed with local authorities and had therefore been very successful; whereas the Asylum Seekers Dispersal Programme, was not developed cooperatively and was not perceived to have worked in terms of cohesion.
- Some of the building blocks of community integration - such as youth centres, children's centres, libraries, community centres – have been closed as a result of basic cuts to funding. Councils want to be innovative but the levers to do so are not necessarily there. Peter and Penny from MHCLG acknowledged the funding pressures authorities were under but noted that the Government wanted authorities to think about how to use existing money effectively in delivering integration within other services like health and social care.
- Members voiced some concern about area-based programmes, noting that a larger regional approach might not work in addressing more local issues. Peter noted that the team would be co-designing strategies with five local authorities and would keep this in mind.
- Members wanted to see information about the strategy being published in Councillors' News magazine. Peter and Penny agreed, noting that they were keen to get the message out through a variety of means.
- The impact of home schooling was discussed and members were keen to see a register of home schooled children, as well as greater transparency and guidance on the requirements parents taking this decision needed to meet. The Chair noted that he had discussed home schooling at his ministerial meeting the previous week.
- Members mentioned a need for additional training around unconscious bias and the impact it had on the employment of particular groups.
- There was some discussion about what good integration looks like, how it is evaluated and from whose perspective. Penny responded that the consultation will explore what measures of integration should look like.

Decision

Members **noted** the presentation.

Rachel Phelps, LGA Adviser, outlined the report on the joint Home Office and Ministry of Justice consultation on the draft Domestic Abuse Bill. Rachel noted that four key themes run throughout the consultation: awareness, protecting and supporting victims, pursue and deterrence, and improving performance. The Government had committed to additional funding for this work and the consultation sought views on how this money would be distributed.

Members made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the Government's commitment to tackling domestic abuse and violence.
- Members felt that there ought to be an emphasis on victims remaining in their own homes and that funding should contribute towards sourcing adequate refuge provision.
- Members emphasised the need for funding to be ringfenced and sustainable. Members welcomed some of the proposed changes to housing benefit and supported housing but also made a plea for further additional resources and funding.
- A discussion was had about the definition of domestic violence and members raised concerns about the approach being framed within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy in case it alienates some victims. It was also noted that there was no clear reference to disabilities or the immigration status of victims. Members also wanted to ensure that male victims were not alienated.
- Members discussed the need for better awareness and understanding of relationships to be taught in schools. It was noted that parents of some faiths did not want their children being included in sex and relationship education so a conversation about how to address that challenge was needed. The Chair noted that there was an ongoing consultation on sex and relationship education on the Department for Education website and he encouraged members to contribute.

Decision

Members **noted** the report.

Action

Officers to draft LGA response to the consultation.

5 Fire safety in high rise buildings

Mark Norris, LGA Principal Policy Adviser, gave members an update on the work around fire safety in high rise buildings. He noted that the LGA had a place on two of the six working groups established by Dame Judith Hackitt and that the leads from each of these groups were due to report on their draft recommendations. Mark explained that part of this work included looking at who the regulator might be going forward and whether it would replicate the Health and Safety Executive by there being

a national lead with local partners responsible for delivery.

MHCLG officials said there were around 1,000 buildings which had not had their cladding identified and that additional funding was being provided to councils to conclude this work. A discussion was being had about how best to use that money but it was broadly decided that the money should support authorities with the longest list of buildings. Mark gave a brief update on the impact identification and cladding replacement work would have on leaseholders and advised members of the results of two tribunal cases in which the judge ruled that costs could be passed onto leaseholders. The LGA's position was that some leaseholders would struggle to pick up the costs of remedial work and that financial support needed to be offered to those individuals; however, members were clear that councils should not be expected to lend leaseholders money then claim it back from the sale of properties as the cost of this could run to billions. Mark also noted that the replacement of fire doors might become an issue over the next few months.

Decision

Members **noted** the update.

6 Update paper

The following comments were made in response to the update paper:

- A press release had been issued in response to the Gambling Commission's recommendation that the maximum stake on certain types of FOBTs should be reduced to £30 or less. The LGA's position was that this did not go far enough. Cllr Lower was due to attend a meeting in the House of Commons with the campaign group calling for reduced stakes.
- Cllr Rhodes thanked officers for the work that went into the regional modern slavery events and he noted that Vernon Coaker MP, who chairs the APPG for Modern Slavery, was keen to work with the Board. Members were concerned that there were no modern slavery sessions planned for the LGA Annual Conference. It was noted that officers had asked for a session on the subject but were not successful.
- Cllr Lower told members that she had attended a meeting with the FGM Centre and that the toolkit had been launched and was available online. Members were encouraged to attend the FGM Centre's half day training event.
- Members asked if Sara Khan, the new Commissioner for Counter Extremism, could speak at a future Board meeting.

Decision

Members **noted** the update paper.

Action

Officers to invite Sara Khan to a future Board meeting.

7 Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

The notes of the previous meeting were **agreed**.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool 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 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 Vic Pritchard (sub)	Bath & North East Somerset 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 Carole Burdis	North Tyneside Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Apologies	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
	Cllr Chris Pillai JP	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Lisa Targowska	Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough
In Attendance	Cllr Helen Carr	Brent Council