

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title:	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date:	Monday 19 November 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 meetings.

Apologies were received from Deputy-Chair Cllr Hannah Dalton (due to on-the-day transport issues), and Cllr Nick Worth.

One Declaration of Interest was made:

- The Chair declared he was a director of a company that supplied accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse. This declaration was made in relation to item three.

2 Food Standards Agency 'Regulating our Future' Programme Update

The Chair invited both Rebecca Johnson, Adviser, and Ellie Greenwood, Senior Adviser to introduce the item. This introduction included details pertaining to the 'Regulating our Future' programme undertaken by the Food standards Agency (FSA), and confirmed that the Chair of the FSA, Heather Hancock, would be arriving to the board presently to deliver a presentation to members.

The introduction also focused on different aspects of the project and their various timeframes; an overview of the proposal for national inspection strategies, which included a number of pilots at different local authorities; as well as reflections made by the Welsh Local Government (WLGA) who have raised concerns over the programme and how national inspection strategies could impact the mandatory Welsh Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

An update on the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) was given by Ellie Greenwood, who stated that initial relationships between NFCU and trading standards officers have not started well. Ellie made reference to a letter sent from the Association of Chief National Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) to the Chief Executive of the FSA, outlining these concerns.

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Heather Hancock was then invited to present to members (the presentation was subsequently circulated following the Board's meeting). Heather's presentation included the following points:

- The importance of maintaining public trust in food safety.
- The current period of the programme, from 2016 to 2020, is completely focused on modernising the whole of the food safety standards and structures currently in place. This included details on the FSA's open policy making approach, which is based on evidence gathering from stakeholders.
- The impact of Brexit, including the robust regulatory structure that has to be in-place by the end of March 2019 and the different work-streams within the organisation. Heather discussed current vulnerabilities in relation to food safety, which includes putting together a rapid response team to alleviate any issues for imports into the UK to avoid any delays.
- Heather stated the programme has adopted a pre-planning rather than a crisis-reactive approach.
- Heather discussed the reliance of the system on local government and the vital role it plays in ensuring food safety, emphasising that she did not see how the system could be run without the involvement of councils.
- The FSA's new online food business registration system is currently being rolled-out across the local government network; 40 councils are expected to be using the system by the end of March 2019, and others will follow after that. Heather described the system as very user-friendly and easy-to-use, quoting the feedback received from the first businesses that have registered.
- There is cross party support for a mandatory FHRS system.
- There is a shortfall of funding to support the regulatory system, and a new sustainable funding model is needed. However, the FSA feel there is a joint case to be made on this with other regulators.
- There are worrying trends in work on food standards, with council resources very stretched. The FSA is working to design a model for the future, but it was again emphasised that councils would have an integral role on this.
- An overview of the NFCU and the recent increase of staffing (from 19 to 82), following an increase funding from central government. Heather confirmed that the power of the NFCU is not a replacement for local government powers or responsibilities.

Following the presentation, the Chair invited members to comment, where the following was discussed:

Members held discussions over the new online system, including:

- questioning if there was a charge for businesses to register;
 - Heather stated that that the system was completely free for businesses.
- which countries within the UK this system is being implemented;
 - the system will be rolled out in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; Food is a devolved matter in Scotland, which has its own food-standards structures in place.
- any timescales in place for registration for existing food business rather than just new ones;
 - Heather confirmed that no final deadline had been set.

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- Environmental Health Officers' reactions to the new system.
 - Heather concluded that the FSA had received positive feedback from the Environmental Health Officers who had used the system, and that the system had been set up to work alongside local government in-house systems.

Members held discussions with Heather over so-called 'pop-up' kitchens; Heather confirmed that these are a slight vulnerability but work is being undertaken through the FSA's open-policy making to address this.

Members discussed the increase of staff at the NFCU in relation to serious food crime numbers. Heather stated there were hundreds of serious food crime violations, and gave examples such as the sale of diet pills. Members and Heather discussed the collaborative work of different bodies, and gave an example of a restaurant which was not advertising allergens in their products, which resulted in prosecution via a three-pronged approach: the local authority, the FSA and police.

Members discussed environmental issues, including food waste, over-food production, and use of plastic. Heather confirmed that these responsibilities lie with different organisations - mostly the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – but are not lead by the FSA. However, the FSA champions good practice.

Members discussed the proposed differences in and the approach to inspections of food businesses under the RoF programme. Heather stated that a pragmatic approach had to be taken, and gave the example of an art gallery selling chocolate. Heather confirmed that technically the gallery is a food business but there would be no need for inspection providing no issues were being reported. This led on to a discussion around pre-packaged food.

Members held discussions over the risks lowering food standards to get trade deal with other countries – such as the United States – following Brexit. Heather stated that not a single change is being made in food law or regulatory powers, and the FSA is actively trying to convey this message to the public. Heather confirmed that the FSA will try to be consulted during any international trade deals.

The Chair concluded the discussion with the FSA's relationship with the WLGA, and how this is currently going. Heather stated that the FSA continues to work closely with the WLGA, but admitted that there are differences of opinion.

The Chair also brought up the letter sent by ACTSO to the FSA. Heather stated that this was the first time she had sight of the letter, and could not respond to it directly. However, Heather did state that the NFCU do not want to impact any of the work undertaken by National Trading Standards.

The Chair thanked Heather for attending.

Action

- Members noted the update.

3 Domestic Abuse Accommodation Services Review

The Chair invited Rachel Phelps, Adviser, to introduce the item.

Rachel gave an overview of the paper, which sets out the models the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is considering for the future funding of accommodation-based domestic abuse services, and what the implications of these are for councils and the future delivery of domestic abuse services.

The Chair then introduced Hannah McNamara, Head of Housing, Health and Domestic Abuse at MHCLG. Hannah delivered her presentation to members, which included: an overview of her role, the current review being undertaken of funding for refuges and domestic abuse accommodation services, the current review of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) locally-led strategies, as well as touching on the different types of accommodation currently available, which takes into account different needs and circumstances of survivors of domestic abuse, including those who are at low-high risk.

Hannah also discussed the Ipsos Mori survey undertaken with local authorities in England. The survey asked local authorities about the types of domestic abuse services that were offered in the local area, how these services were funded and which victim groups were supported. The survey had a good response rate (over 60 per cent), and a good mixture of geographical areas, including urban and rural authorities responded.

The survey found a number of councils had robust domestic abuse strategies in place, which demonstrated strong partnership work with the local police, education and health partners.

Following the survey, MHCLG held a number of workshops with local authorities and police and crime commissioners to discuss proposals about how domestic abuse accommodation services should be funded. Hannah explained the workshops focused on what is and what is not working with domestic abuse services, improvements that need to be addressed and risks to victims. The workshops also touched on partnership working (with adult and child social care, schools and the education sector (including the need to treat children as victims), health and housing. Hannah stated that the main issues that domestic abuse accommodation services is facing is long term funding. She explained the current funding model does not allow for strategic decisions to be taken, which has led to short-term commissioning. MHCLG will be taking forward this work on domestic abuse accommodation-based services and will continue to consult with local authorities and wider partners on this important issue.

The Chair thanked Hannah and invited members to discuss:

Members greatly welcomed this work and that this will be led at a local-level, by the best-placed, extremely skilled, professionals. Members stated that there are systems and governance structures in-place already that this work can be built into; members gave examples of Health and Wellbeing Boards as an example. Members also held discussions over proper scrutiny of the work at local-level.

Members held discussions over funding, and agreed that this work needs to be fully funded in order for it to succeed. Members and officers also held discussions over the various funding streams and ring-fenced and non-focused funding pots. Members questioned Hannah over a submission to the Spending Review (SR), and what happens if

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this work does not get fully funded; Hannah stated that like every other government department, their funding is being looked at and they would be submitting a bid for consideration at the next Spending Review.

Members greatly welcomed multi-agency joint working, agreeing that the police, public health professionals, probation, housing and education will all play vital roles in this. Some members specifically mentioned education as a key sector in this work and held discussions over prevention and preventative measures.

Members discussed the key need for continuation of services, if survivors are placed outside of their immediate area, including support for children. Members made the point that it was not fair for survivors of domestic abuse to be placed-outside of the immediate area, stating the importance of the family keeping links in their community. Some members stated the perpetrators of domestic abuse should be forced to leave their local area.

The Member Champions for Domestic Abuse also offered their time to consult and advise Hannah's team. Hannah stated that her team would be very keen to work closely with both the Member Champion and the wider Board.

Action

- Members noted the update.

5 Fire Safety in High Rise Buildings

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the item, the report of which updates members on the LGA's building safety related work since the last meeting. This included updating members on new guidance on partial cladding and discussions with MHCLG over the establishment of the Joint Inspection Team. While it has progressed significantly, this proposal is facing some challenges due to insurance related problems.

The Chair opened the discussion out to members:

Member raised concerns over the slow progress of all fire-safety work, and stated that residents are still living in high-rise buildings with combustible materials. Members stressed that actions from the discussions on fire safety need to be actioned quickly. Members did thank officers for their rapid response to this work and their constant pressure to speed the government up, however.

Members questioned the statistic referred to in paragraph five of the report (the number of unknown buildings with ACM cladding on) and questioned where this was figure came from. Mark stated this was an estimation from MHCLG.

Discussions turned to fire doors and the Board requested an update on this work; members' discussions also included the use of fire doors and how whilst useful when properly used, they are often left open (due to their heavy weight). In response to this, Mark stated the LGA is working closely with MHCLG to seek clarity on which types of doors haven't passed safety tests. Mark confirmed that MHCLG had informed building owners that glass reinforced plastic composite fire doors had consistently failed fire safety tests.

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The Chair concluded that some progress still needs to be made, and agreed with members that the government was not moving at an appropriate speed, despite the hard work of officers.

Action

- Members noted the update.

6 Update Paper

During this item, Member Champions updated their relevant areas of priority, which included:

Member Champion for Licensing, Cllr Haigh's positive with meeting with Chief Constable Harrington of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) regarding LGA-NPCC joint working to develop a consistent approach to the management of large events. This includes the LGA representation for the NPCC National Working Group on Event Safety.

Member Champion to Tackle Abuse, Exploitation and Modern Slavery, Cllr Rhodes updated members on the Safe Car Wash App and its progress. Members' discussions turned to local authorities taking appropriate inspections and actions when risks or cases are reported. Cllr Rhodes reminded the board that everyone has a duty to report suspicions, even if they turn out to be false, and that this is a significant issue for local government.

Members also discussed the recent debate in the House of Commons in relation to Private Hire Vehicles that took place on 13 November, and how this was a positive step forward. Deputy-Chair Cllr Lower, Member Champion for Regulatory Services, also stated that the meeting referenced in paragraph 19 in the report was extremely positive.

The Chair updated members on the Serious Violent Crime Task Force, where he was due to present on County Lines.

Members discussed the work in relation to children and young people's access to gambling (highlighted in paragraph 12). Members agreed that local authorities need encouragement to include this during inspections of licensed premises. Some members stated that should also be a call to stop serving alcohol before 11.00 am.

The Member Champion for Drowning Prevention, Cllr Dawson, also updated members on the recent meeting with the National Fire Chiefs Council water safety meeting, which indicated a desire for more joint-work with the LGA and wider local government sector.

Members discussed paragraph nine in the report and work on issues relating to unauthorised encampments. Members stated that the LGA needs to highlight this issue, noting the risk of pushing encampments into neighbouring areas and that councils cannot bollard all their land to prevent access.

Action

- Members noted the update.

7 Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Members agreed to the note of the last SSCB meeting on Monday 3 September 2018.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Members	Cllr Eric Allen	Milton Keynes Council
	Cllr Keith McLean	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr John Pennington	Suffolk County Council
	Cllr Colin Spence	North Tyneside Council
	Cllr Judith Wallace	Wycombe District Council
	Cllr Katrina Wood	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr Jim Beall	North Tyneside Council
	Cllr Carole Burdis	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Redbridge London Borough Council
	Cllr Farah Hussain	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Borough of Poole
	Cllr Mohan Iyengar	
Apologies	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland District Council
	Cllr Hannah Dalton	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council