

## **Safer & Stronger Communities Board– Councillor Simon Blackburn (Chair)**

### **Serious Violence Taskforce**

1. I presented at the Serious Violence Taskforce meeting in November, to provide members with a 'deep dive' account of how Blackpool has taken steps to tackle county lines issues. At the taskforce, I touched upon a number of successful police operations, which had uncovered and disrupted county lines activity, with the help of local partners and council officers. The next Taskforce meeting in January focused on the Department for Education review of schools exclusions, the National Crime Agency's Assessment of County Lines activity and the Voluntary and Community Sector perspective of serious violent crime.

### **International Violent Crime Symposium**

2. Deputy-Chair Cllr Anita Lower attended the International Violent Crime Symposium in November. The symposium was organised by the Home Office to bring together best practice and guidance from other countries who have taken steps to tackle serious violent crime. There was a presentation from the World Health Organization on taking a public health approach to tackling serious violence, which the LGA has been supportive of in recent briefings.

### **Counter-Extremism**

3. In November I met with Baroness Williams, Minister of State for Countering Extremism, to discuss national and local efforts in tackling extremism. The meeting explored the evolving nature of extremist threats, particularly from far-right extremism, and the need for adequate support for local authorities to respond effectively, particularly those councils who do not currently receive specialist Home Office funding for counter extremism work.
4. Also discussed was the work of the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE) - the local authority led network chaired by Leeds and Luton councils and partnered by the LGA, which is bringing councils together to develop and share good practice - in particular, its proposals for a new Far-Right Working Group to develop and test new resources to help tackle far-right extremism.
5. In November, I Chaired the SIGCE's seminar on effective leadership in countering all forms of extremism, and the challenges for local leaders in particular around this agenda, hosted at the LGA. The event was very well received, attracting around 50 delegates from a range of different councils. We are continuing to support the development of the SIGCE's future seminars, including the forthcoming [February event](#) on proactive responses to far-right extremism.

### **Community Cohesion**

6. Today, Cllr Farah Hussain, Member Champion for Community Cohesion, is delivering the keynote address at Inside Government's event on Improving Social Cohesion and Integration Across Local Communities.

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### **Modern Slavery**

7. In November, Cllr Allan Rhodes, the Member Champion on tackling modern slavery, chaired a conference on how councils can help disrupt modern slavery in their areas. Delegates heard about the important role that community safety, housing teams and wider regulatory services can play, as well as hearing from the National Crime Agency (NCA) and Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.
8. In December, Cllr Rhodes also met with officers from the National Crime Agency to discuss partnership working between councils and law enforcement bodies to tackle modern slavery.

### **FGM**

9. In early December Cllr Anita Lower chaired the most recent National FGM Advisory Board meeting. The meeting included a presentation from Dr Deborah Hodes, Paediatrician from University College Hospital London, who gave a presentation on the medico-legal issues relevant to FGM.
10. Following Cllr Lower's letter to the APPG on Safeguarding in Faith Settings regarding the work of the National FGM Centre, Cllr Lower was invited to meet the Chair of the APPG Sarah Champion MP in early December. As a result the National FGM Centre has now been invited to present ahead of a parliamentary event in February where there will be a screening of a new BBC documentary on FGM called 'Defying the cutting season'.
11. The National FGM Centre was invited to attend the TJ Awards where its FGM digital toolkit received a Bronze award in the Technological Innovation category.

### **Fire Services Management Committee**

External Reference Group, Her Majesties Inspectorate for the Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

12. In October, Cllr Ian Stephen attended the HMICFRS External Reference Group meeting. The group considered the plans for publishing the inspection results for the first tranche of Fire and Rescue Services.

Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Interoperability Board

13. In December, Cllr Nick Chard attended the JESIP Interoperability Board on behalf of members of the Fire Services Management Committee. The Board focused on the progress of the adoption of the interoperability principles and in particular on the rollout of the online systems.

Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)

14. In early January, members of the Fire Services Management Committee, including Cllr Ian Stephens, Cllr Nick Chard and Cllr Nikki Hennessy, attended a Home Office workshop to provide political oversight to work around a submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review for the Fire Sector. A second workshop is expected to take place in February.

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## Diversity and Inclusion Masterclasses

15. On the 9 and 18 January the LGA hosted two Diversity and Inclusion Masterclasses for members in London and in West Yorkshire. Fiona Twycross, FSMC Diversity Champion chaired the events, which included key speakers like Dany Cotton, Commissioner for London Fire Brigade. Three further Masterclasses are due to take place in Exeter, Lancashire and Birmingham in late January and February.

## Civil Resilience Masterclass

16. In November the LGA hosted a further masterclass for elected members on civil resilience. The session heard from councillors who have experience of responding to different types of emergency, as well as from emergency planning officers, and provided an opportunity for delegates to share their experience and learning on this issue.

## National Trading Standards

17. In November, Cllr Judith Wallace, the SSCB's Scambassador, met with the National Trading Standards Scams Team to discuss trading standards' work on fraud, and how the LGA can support the team's Friends Against Scams initiative.

## Public Safety and Festivals

18. In December Cllr Kate Haigh attended the second meeting of the National Event Security Group. The meeting, chaired by Chief Constable BJ Harrington the NPCC lead for National Events was also attended by representatives from government, police and the events industry. The focus of the meeting was on counter-terrorism, with discussion around how security is currently managed at events and how greater consistency could be provided in this area.

## Media Roundup

19. Since the last Forum, I have given comments in the following press releases on behalf of the Board:

- 19.1 [Christmas shoppers warned against dangerous, fake "must-have" toys](#)
- 19.2 [LGA responds to ONS annual figures on domestic abuse](#)
- 19.3 [Fake car mileage equivalent to travelling to the moon, some councils said](#)
- 19.4 [LGA responds to Gambling Commission report on children using 18-plus pub gaming machines](#)
- 19.5 [LGA responds to bringing forward of stakes reduction on fixed odds betting terminals](#)
- 19.6 [Avoid dangerous illegal fireworks, councils and fire authorities warn](#)
- 19.7 [LGA responds to launch of Serious and Organised Crime Strategy](#)
- 19.8 [LGA responds to Home Affairs Committee report on domestic abuse](#)
- 19.9 [Eight in ten retailers selling knives to children in some areas, councils reveal](#)
- 19.10 [Response to government launch of FGM awareness campaign](#)
- 19.11 [LGA responds to RSPCA call for more council funding](#)

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