

## **Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting**

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<b>Title:</b>	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
<b>Date:</b>	Monday 18 March 2019
<b>Venue:</b>	Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### **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 meeting. Apologies were noted (which can be found at **Appendix A**). No declarations of interest were made.

#### **2 Multi-agency Centre Programme**

The Chair invited Nick Kelly of the Home Office, and DCI Simon Day from the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to introduce item two.

Nick and DCI Day gave a confidential presentation to the Board, giving members an overview of the Multi-Agency Centre programme (MAC).

Following the presentation, a confidential discussion took place between members of the Board, LGA officers and colleagues from the Home Office and the MPS.

#### **3 Female Offender Strategy**

Rachel Phelps, Adviser, introduced item three to members. Rachel updated members on the Government's Female Offender Strategy (published in June 2018), and the strategy's new programme of work for female offenders. Rachel's presentation made particular reference to the implications the strategy has for local government. She explained that the LGA had previously produced a 'Going Straight' guidance document on the issue of offenders, but that as this was now seven years old, the Board may wish to consider how the LGA could best support councils on this issue.

Following the presentation, the Chair invited members to comment:

Members discussed the 70 per cent re-offending rate, and conveyed disappointment at how high this figure was. Members also made particular reference to paragraph 8.3 in the

report, and communicated concerns over further cuts and closures of prisons given existing levels of overcrowding. Member agreed that they were keen for the SSCB to be involved in this work.

Members then stated that this was an example of central government pushing out to local government a strategy that has a blanket, 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Members agreed that central government should look at individual authorities and how vastly different they are when considering this strategy, including geography, local economies, personal economic circumstances and different types of crime pertaining to local areas.

Members also conveyed their frustration over how central government expect the local government sector to be ready to go to implement this strategy, despite the extensive cuts the sector has faced in recent years. Members suggested a re-draft of the guidance and to continue to talk with the Ministry of Justice.

However, members praised some elements of the strategy – particularly how the strategy takes a more holistic approach in this area of policy, and praised that government were now looking at the symptoms. However, members re-addressed cuts to funding – specifically support services – and the wider implications that lead to females re-offending.

The Chair thanked members for their comments. The following **actions** were noted:

- Members noted the update.
- Members agreed to paragraph 19 of the report; the LGA refreshing its policies and work around reducing re-offending.

#### **4 Fire Safety in High Rise Buildings**

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced agenda item four. Mark's presentation for members on building safety included an update on the issues leaseholders are experiencing in progressing remedial work in private buildings; the Joint Inspection team (JIT) and the continuous talks with MHCLG, an update on Approved Document B and the Joint Regulators Group (JRG).

Following the presentation, the Chair invited members to comment:

Members raised concerns that there is still no document that encompasses all of the issues raised, and that at the end of this process, there are still going to be lots of documents, containing lots of different guidance, with no clear instructions. In response to this, Mark Norris stated that Wales are going to be implementing a straightforward, 'simple one document' that England may be able to duplicate. However, Mark stated that to implement this is going to be an uphill struggle.

Members made particular reference to fire doors and paragraph 14 in the report. Members stated that there is still no recommendation from London Councils regarding fire doors. Charles Loft, Senior Adviser, responded that the situation is still in flux, and the LGA are working closely with the industry that targets the most serious cases, with the aim to bring a robust product to the market quickly.

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Discussions then turned to smoke and toxicity, and made particular reference to paragraph 3.7 and 3.8 in the item's Appendix (**Appendix A**), and requested an update around the LGA's position. Mark Norris stated that the LGA continues to press for this; at a recent appearance at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Fire and Safety, the LGA's Chairman, Lord Porter, raised this issue.

Following the discussion the Chair thanked members for their contributions, and the following **action** was noted:

- Members noted the update.

## **5 Community Engagement**

Abigail Gallop, Senior Adviser, introduced item five. The presentation focused on establishing an LGA position around the role of communities and the voluntary sector in local decision-making, following the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) publishing their Civil Society Strategy in August 2018. Abigail updated members that MHCLG is now developing a 'Communities Framework' that is similar to the Civil Society Strategy.

Following the presentation, the Chair welcomed members comments:

Members stated that it was imperative that local councillors become involved in this area of work, to ensure accountability. Members raised concerns over voluntary groups being overtaken by political motivation and messaging, and the importance of avoiding the voluntary and community sector (VCS) becoming politics through the back door. Members raised concerns over the meaning of the sector having more control and whether this could undermine the democratic process.

Members gave examples of voluntarily sectors having representations at cabinet meetings in some places, and how this ensures that these groups are heard within the communities. Members stated this ensures that elected members still make difficult decisions without undermining the democratic process, whilst still gathering grassroots perspectives

It was recognised that the VCS have invaluable knowledge, but members also noted that voluntarily sector organisations are not local councillors or authorities, and can be interest groups that only represent a small group of people. On numerous occasions, members agreed that this was a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, given the voluntary sector works differently across the UK. Members raised questions over the motivation of these strategies.

The discussion then turned too hard to reach residents within communities, who are not represented by the voluntarily sector (particularly in rural areas). Local government does represent these people.

Members then discussed the role of town and parish councils in terms of offering an effective, community level sounding board and input.

Following members comments, Abigail thanked members for the helpful, strong

responses, and stated that both DCMS and MHCLG are still not clear of their approach or direction with these strategies. Abigail stated that MHCLG's consultation is due out in the spring, with no clear dates given, but will feedback the response to this at the next lead members meeting.

### **Actions**

- Members noted the update.
- An update of this work will be presented at the next lead members meeting, with a consultation response (depending when the consultation is published).

## **6 Update Paper**

For item six, the Chair invited members to update the Board on the areas of work they lead on.

The Member Champion for Water Safety updated members on the latest developments of the MCA Review. The Member Champion also updated members on his recent speech at the LGA's Costal Special Interest Group, which fed in to the MCA review. Finally, the Member Champion discussed the fringe meeting for drowning prevention with the NFCC at the LGA's Fire Conference in Brighton.

Members then brought the discussion to the recent rise in knife crime and if the Board should give more focus to address the dramatic increase of knife crime incidents. Members discussed the cuts in funding to local government and youth services and the direct link this has had to the rise of knife crime. The Chair agreed with this, and fed-back on a recent visit to the Ben Kinsella Trust, and the amazing work they are undertaking to tackle knife crime. The Chair went further to state that the government's response so far has been heavily focused on preventative measures (such as stop and search), rather than holistic, early intervention measures. The Chair concluded that he believed the Board could provide a great deal of input on this area and it was agreed this would be discussed at the next meeting.

The Member Champion for Licensing updated the Board on a recent licensing event at city hall to tackle gambling addiction. He had met the Gordon Moody Association and Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Tust.

Member Champion to tackle scams – the "Scambassador" – updated members on a new email for reporting scams, which can be forwarded by officers after the board.

Members discussed the appointment of the new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Sara Thornton. Members requested an invite be extended to a future board meeting.

Following the discussion, the following **actions** were identified.

- Representative from the Ben Kinsella Trust to be invited to the next Board.
- Scam reporting email to be sent to members by officers.
- Sara Thornton to be invited to a future meeting of the SSCB.

## 7 Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Members agreed to the notes of the previous Safer and Stronger Communities Board, held on Monday 14 January 2019.

### 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
	Cllr Hannah Dalton	Epsom and Ewell Borough 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	South Holland District Council
	Cllr Nick Worth	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	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	
Apologies	Cllr Jim Beall	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
Substitutes in observation	Cllr Becca Thackray	Lambeth London Borough
	Cllr Mohan Iyengar	Borough of Poole
	Cllr Eric Carter	Telford and Wrekin Council