

## Queen's Speech

### Purpose of report

For information.

### Summary

The Queen's Speech on Thursday 19 December 2019 set out the Government's legislative agenda for the next session of Parliament. This report sets out an overview of the Bills and announcements contained within the speech which will be of specific interest to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board.

### Recommendation

Members are invited to note the Bills and announcements in the Queen's Speech of interest to the Board.

### Action

Officers to incorporate members' comments in future work on these areas, and to use members' comments on the priority of Bills relevant to the Board's work to inform the LGA's Leadership Board's and Executive's discussions on future lobbying priorities.

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## **Queen's Speech**

### **Background**

1. Following the General Election on Thursday 12 December 2019, the Queen's Speech took place on 19 December.
2. Since the previous Queen's Speech took place just a couple of months beforehand, a number of the Bills included within it will already be familiar to the Board, with key Bills such as the Domestic Abuse and Serious Violence Bills retained within the Government's legislative plans. This paper provides a detailed overview of the key proposals from the Board's perspective, linked to its 2019-2020 work plan, as well as of other Bills and announcements which may impact the council services within the Board's remit. The LGA's full briefing on the Queen's Speech is available to view [here](#).
3. This paper also includes for background reference a summary of manifesto commitments made by the Conservative Party during the General Election relevant to the work of the Board. This is drawn from a summary of the local government related manifesto commitments made by all the main parties during the General Election campaign, which was published by the LGA's public affairs team.

### **Domestic Abuse Bill**

4. The Queen's Speech included the Domestic Abuse Bill, which looks set to be unchanged from the previous version of the Bill introduced to Parliament earlier in 2019.
5. As the Board will recall from the [paper](#) for its November meeting, the Bill will for the first time create a statutory definition of domestic abuse; provide for new domestic abuse protection notices and orders to help better protect victims; place a duty on tier one councils (county councils, metropolitan and unitary councils and the Greater London Authority) to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation; and create a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal courts. The Bill will also establish in law the post of Domestic Abuse Commissioner, following the appointment of Nicole Jacobs as Designate Commissioner last summer.
6. Our response to the announcement echoed the points made about the Bill in the November board paper, emphasising that tackling domestic abuse is a high priority for councils and that we support the clarity and focus that the new legislation and Commissioner will bring. However, we also emphasised the need for a greater focus on prevention and early intervention measures to tackle the root causes of domestic abuse and support more victims, including more funding and investment for evidence-based perpetrator programmes.
7. Officers have engaged with the Home Office and other stakeholders throughout the development of the draft Bill, and will continue to do so as the Bill is re-introduced to

Parliament. A focus going forward will be ensuring the costs to councils of providing safe accommodation to victims of domestic abuse are full funded.

### **Serious Violence Bill**

8. The Serious Violence Bill was also re-introduced, with the key elements of the Bill intended to:
  - 8.1. Place duties on relevant public agencies and bodies (including councils) to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. The Government has said it will provide sufficient flexibility so that organisations can engage and work together in the most effective local partnership for any given area, whether that be through a Community Safety Partnership or other multi-agency partnership such as local safeguarding arrangements. Statutory guidance will also be published that will set out the likely implications on a sector-by-sector basis.
  - 8.2. Amend section 6(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which sets out the strategies Community Safety Partnerships must formulate and implement, to explicitly include serious violence.
  - 8.3. Provide for new court orders to target known knife carriers, to make it easier for the police to stop and search those convicted for knife crime offences. The power will apply only to those convicted of a knife related offence.
9. Again, the LGA's response to the inclusion of the Bill in the Queen's Speech echoed our previous comments on the Bill, which have supported a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, but emphasised the need for properly funded early intervention and prevention work in order to support this. This means that cuts to key services such as local youth services, youth offending teams and public health budgets must be reversed; additionally, new duties placed on councils, including those linked to knife crime orders, must be fully funded.
10. Officers expect to work with officials from the Home Office on the development of the Bill, and in particular the proposed statutory guidance, and meetings are already in the process of being arranged.

### **Police Powers and Protections Bill**

11. A Police Protections Bill was announced in the October 2019 Queen's Speech to provide police officers with additional support and protection as they undertake their duties. The Police Powers and Protections Bill will include many similar measures including the establishment of a Police Covenant on a statutory basis. The details of what the Police Covenant covers have still to be developed, but if it is modelled on the Armed Forces Covenant there may be implications for local authorities. The other area of interest for councils in this Bill are the measures to criminalise the act of trespassing when setting up an

unauthorised encampment in England and Wales, and the introduction of new police powers to arrest and seize the property and vehicles of trespassers who set up unauthorised encampments.

12. Our response to this Bill highlighted that the vast majority of travellers are law-abiding citizens, but noted the inconvenience caused to communities and significant costs created for councils when encampments are clearly breaching the law and local authorities have a duty to take action to ensure the law is upheld.
13. We therefore welcomed the proposed measures to strengthen police powers when dealing with unauthorised encampments, but emphasised that it will be important for these measures to be matched with practical and financial support for local authorities, particularly to help with the availability of transit sites and other issues of concern, such as clean-up costs which can occur following an unauthorised encampment.
14. The Home Office is currently consulting on the proposed measures, and officers will develop a draft response for sign off by the Board's lead members.

#### **Building and Fire Safety legislation**

15. The Queen's Speech announced legislation intended to create an enhanced safety framework for high-rise residential buildings. Further detail on the Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill are set out in the paper on the Board's agenda on building safety.

#### **Other Bills and announcements of interest**

16. Alongside these key Bills, the Queen's Speech included details of a number of other Bills and announcements which also fall within the remit of or will otherwise be of interest to the Board.

#### ***Online Harms Bill***

17. The Queen's Speech reintroduced the Government's proposed Online Harms Bill, which will include a range of measures to try to improve internet safety, including introducing a new duty of care on internet companies in relation to their users and an independent regulator to oversee the framework.
18. The LGA has previously [responded](#) to a consultation on the online harms white paper, supporting measures to tackle online harm and abuse and the establishment of an independent regulator. Our response to the Queen's Speech announcement reiterated this support, noting councils' wide ranging interest in preventing online harms, in terms of their statutory responsibilities for the safeguarding, protection and wellbeing of children; their responsibilities to protect local residents from radicalisation, terrorism and crime; and the fact

that many councillors have themselves been subjected to online intimidation, abuse and threats.

19. We also responded to an additional announcement linked to the Bill, with Government committing to review the Gambling Act, with a particular focus on tackling issues around online loot boxes and credit card misuse. The changing nature of gambling since the Act was introduced and the local impacts of gambling related harm have been a particular focus for the Board, so a comprehensive review would be welcome.

### ***Animal welfare legislation***

20. The Queen's Speech restated the Government's commitment to introducing animal welfare legislation which will: set out a clear statement in domestic law that animals are sentient beings, and a duty on Government to have all due regard to the welfare of sentient animals in policy formulation and implementation; extend the current maximum penalty for animal cruelty offences, specified under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, from six months imprisonment to five years imprisonment, and include measures to deliver on commitments to end excessively long journeys for slaughter and fattening, on primates as pets, cat microchipping, and on the import of trophies from hunting of endangered animals.
21. Our response welcome the announcement of new legislation to increase maximum sentences for animal cruelty from six months to five years and improve the welfare of live animals on journeys once we leave the EU. We noted that councils will always do what they can to respond to animal health and welfare concerns, to actively promote animal health and take forward prosecutions, but highlighted that local government needs proper resources to ensure a consistent, long-term approach to animal health and welfare, issues in which it has an inconsistent mix of both duties and powers and lack of adequate funding.

### ***Environment Bill***

22. The Queen's Speech also retained the proposed Environment Bill, which will include measures to establish a new Office for Environmental Protection, increase local powers to tackle air pollution and introduce charges for specified single use plastic items.
23. Although outside the remit of the Board, members may need to be aware of this Bill, since recent experience suggests that a number of local regulatory services which play a key role in supporting safer and stronger communities work will be expected to pick up additional enforcement duties placed on local government as a result of these new measures. The Board's lead members have previously written to the Secretary of State for Local Government to highlight concerns about the additional demands being placed on services such as trading standards, and this is an issue we will continue to highlight.

### ***Victim's Law Reform***

24. The Queens Speech announced that the Government will consult next year on a Victims' Law that guarantees victims' rights and the level of support they can expect. A revised

Victims' Code, to be consulted on in early 2020, will set out the minimum level of service victims can expect from criminal justice agencies, and the Government will explore how to strengthen the support offered to survivors of terrorism and their families.

25. The LGA's response agreed that there should be clarity about victims' rights and the level of support they can expect, and that support for victims of terrorism and their families should be strengthened.
26. However, we also noted that it is also important that a revised Victims' Code continues to reflect the breadth of different offences (including a range of different regulatory issues) that fall within the scope of the criminal justice system and take an appropriate, proportionate approach to them, an issue we have previously engaged with the Ministry of Justice on in relation to the Victim's Code.

### **Implications for Wales**

27. Policing matters are not devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government so we will be engaging as necessary with the WLGA around the Domestic Abuse, Police Powers and Protections and Serious Violence Bills and the extent to which any changes in animal welfare legislation may apply to Wales.

### **Financial Implications**

28. There are no financial implications for the LGA arising from this report, though a number of the Bills included in the Queen's Speech will have financial implications for councils.

### **Next steps**

29. Members are asked to note the Bills and announcements in the Queen's Speech of interest to the Board. The LGA's Leadership Board and Executive will be considering the priority given to the Bills and measures included in the Queen's Speech in the LGA's future lobbying activity, and any comments members have on the priority that should be given to those Bills relevant to the Board will help inform the Leadership Board's and Executive's discussions.

## **Appendix A: summary of Conservative Party General Election manifesto commitments of relevance to SSCB and Fire Services Management Committee**

1. This appendix summarises those manifesto pledges made by the Conservative Party ahead of its victory in last month's General Election which are of relevance to the Board's work. The headings used reflect areas of work for the Board rather than the topic areas in the Conservative manifesto. Some, but not all of the pledges have now been incorporated within the legislative programme set out in the Queen's Speech.

### **Extremism**

1. We will combat extremism and do all we can to ensure that extremists never receive public money.
2. We will keep our country safe from terrorism. We will invest in the police and security services and give them the powers they need to combat new threats. In the wake of the terrible events in Manchester in 2017, we will improve the safety and security of public venues.
3. We will ensure that those who work in countering extremism are protected from threats and intimidation.
4. The ability of our security services to defend us against terrorism and organised crime is critical. We will update the Human Rights Act and administrative law to ensure that there is a proper balance between the rights of individuals, our vital national security and effective government. In our first year we will set up a Constitution, Democracy & Rights Commission that will examine these issues in depth, and come up with proposals to restore trust in our institutions and in how our democracy operates.

### **Serious crime**

5. New laws will require schools, police, councils and health authorities to work together through VRUs to prevent serious crime
6. Police will be empowered by a new court order to target known knife carriers, making it easier for officers to stop and search those convicted of knife crime. Anyone charged with knife possession will appear before magistrates within days not weeks. Those who use a knife as a weapon should go to prison.
7. We will counter the growing threat of serious and organised crime. We will strengthen the National Crime Agency so it can tackle the threats we face, from fraud, county lines gangs and child sexual abuse to illicit finance, modern slavery and people trafficking.
8. Safer streets, safer towns. A new Safer Streets Fund will invest in preventative measures like new CCTV or community wardens.

### **Cohesion and hate crime**

9. We will protect people from physical attack or harassment whether for their sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or disability, and expand funding for and protect

places of worship. We will vigorously combat harassment and violence against all religious groups, and against LGBT people.

10. We will champion freedom of expression and tolerance, both in the UK and overseas.
11. Through the Cultural Investment Fund we will also support activities, traditions and events that bring people together.

## **Policing**

12. We will strengthen the accountability of elected Police and Crime Commissioners and expand their role. People must have an accountable local leader delivering on their crime and justice priorities, who they can vote out.
13. Recruit 20,000 new police officers and use these additional resources to tackle rural crime.
14. Backing the increased use of stop and search as long as it is fair and proportionate
15. We will back our police by equipping officers with the powers and tools they need to keep themselves and all of us safe, including tasers and body cameras.
16. We will put the Police Covenant into law to ensure they have the support they need.
17. We will back all those who put their lives on the line to keep us safe – police and prison officers and emergency service workers. We will pass the Police Protection Bill and consult on doubling the maximum sentence for assaulting workers in emergency services such as police officers, firefighters and paramedics.

## **Cyber crime**

18. We will embrace new technologies and crack down on online crimes. We will create a new national cyber crime force and empower the police to safely use new technologies like biometrics and artificial intelligence, along with the use of DNA, within a strict legal framework. We will also create a world-class National Crime Laboratory.
19. We will legislate to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online – protecting children from online abuse and harms, protecting the most vulnerable from accessing harmful content, and ensuring there is no safe space for terrorists to hide online – but at the same time defending freedom of expression and in particular recognising and defending the invaluable role of a free press.

## **Domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls**

20. We will support all victims of domestic abuse and pass the Domestic Abuse Bill. We will increase support for refuges and community support for victims of rape and sexual abuse. We will pilot integrated domestic abuse courts that address criminal and family matters in parallel.
21. We will continue to fight crime against women and girls, including rape, Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage. Our support for the main carer receiving Universal Credit will help give greater independence to individuals, most often women, trapped with coercive partners.



## **Drugs**

22. Tackle drug-related crime and take a new approach to treatment to reduce drug-related deaths and break the cycle of crime linked to addiction.

## **Criminal Justice System**

23. A fair justice system
24. Create a prisoner education service focused on work-based training and schools
25. Improve employment opportunities for ex-offenders, including a job coach in each prison
26. Improve prison security to protect staff, stop drug smuggling and reduce violence
27. We will introduce tougher sentencing for the worst offenders and end automatic halfway release from prison for serious crimes. For child murderers, there will be life imprisonment without parole.
28. We will use our new freedoms after Brexit to prevent more foreign national offenders entering our country. We will cut the number of foreign nationals in our prisons, and increase penalties to stop them returning.
29. We will expand electronic tagging for criminals serving time outside jail, including the use of sobriety tags for those whose offending is fuelled by alcohol.
30. We will toughen community sentences, for example by tightening curfews and making those convicted do more hours of community payback to clean up our parks and streets.
31. We will add 10,000 more prison places, with £2.75 billion already committed to refurbishing and creating modern prisons.
32. We will maintain the ban on prisoners voting from jail.
33. We will conduct a root-and-branch review of the parole system to improve accountability and public safety, giving victims the right to attend hearings for the first time, and we will establish a Royal Commission on the criminal justice process.
34. We will pass and implement a Victims' Law that guarantees victims' rights and the level of support they can expect.

## **Licensing and regulation**

35. Action to tackle gambling addiction as part of a national strategy to tackle addiction
36. Also, given how the online world is moving, the Gambling Act is increasingly becoming an analogue law in a digital age. We will review it, with a particular focus on tackling issues around loot boxes and credit card misuse. The review will include looking at:
  - prize and stake limits;
  - the misuse of credit card payments;
  - putting the voluntary levy on a statutory footing and;
  - new ways of raising revenue for problem gambling support
  - The number of NHS gambling clinics will be increased from 2 to 14 in order to provide support for problem gamblers and ensure they get the help they need.
  - The progress made by local community-based treatment services and how they are funded and commissioned will be reviewed

37. We will work with fans and clubs towards introducing safe standing in football stadiums.
38. Good regulation is essential to successful businesses: we will strive to achieve the right regulatory balance between supporting excellent business practice and protecting workers, consumers and the environment. Through our Red Tape Challenge, we will ensure that regulation is sensible and proportionate, and that we always consider the needs of small businesses when devising new rules, using our new freedom after Brexit to ensure that British rules work for British companies.
39. Freeports: We will aim to ensure that our new freeports benefit the people in each of the four nations. We believe that there are many places across the United Kingdom that have the opportunity to be successful innovative hubs for global trade.
40. Alcohol Duty Review: Scotch whisky is a national export that supports 42,000 jobs across the UK. Yet the tax on each bottle of Scotch sold in this country represents almost three quarters of its price. That is why over the past two years we have frozen the duty on spirits, cutting the price of a bottle of Scotch by 30p. Now, we want to do more, which is why we will review alcohol duty to ensure that our tax system is supporting British drink producers.
41. As we end the supremacy of European law, we will be free to craft legislation and regulations that maintain high standards but which work best for the UK. We want a balance of rights, rules and entitlements that benefits all the people and all the parts of our United Kingdom.
42. High standards of animal welfare are one of the hall marks of a civilised society, so we will:
  - introduce tougher sentences for animal cruelty
  - crack down on the illegal smuggling of dogs and puppies.
  - bring in new laws on animal sentience
  - ban keeping primates as pets
  - bring the ivory ban into force and extend it to cover other ivory-bearing species and ban imports from trophy hunting of endangered animals
  - bring forward cat microchipping, giving cat owners piece of mind and increasing the measures we have available to tackle cat theft.

## **Building safety**

43. Following the Grenfell tragedy there has rightly been a focus on building safety. No report or review can truly capture the heartache, sorrow, anger, and grief that many people feel. We have already committed to implementing and legislating for all the recommendations of the Hackitt Review and the first phase of the Independent Inquiry. We will continue to work with industry, housing associations and individuals to ensure every home is safe and secure. And we will support high-rise residential residents with the removal of unsafe cladding, and continue with our rigorous process of materials testing.

## **Travellers**

44. We will tackle unauthorised traveller camps. We will give the police new powers to arrest and seize the property and vehicles of trespassers who set up unauthorised encampments, in order to protect our communities. We will make intentional trespass

a criminal offence, and we will also give councils greater powers within the planning system.