

## Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

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<b>Title:</b>	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
<b>Date:</b>	Monday 23 February 2015
<b>Venue:</b>	Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, 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	Action
1	<p><b>Working with Solace</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced John Barradell OBE, Town Clerk and Chief Executive of the City of London, who had been appointed as Solace's lead spokesperson on civil resilience and community safety issues. John provided a background to Solace's work and stated that the focus was on implementation rather than policy, and also to provide tools and support for Chief Executives and managers in local government.</p> <p>The Board asked a number of questions, with a focus on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How Solace would liaise with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners: It was explained that Solace had previously worked directly with Chief Constables and Chief Fire Officers in the past, but there was an opportunity to extend these arrangements.</li><li>• How councils worked with other statutory bodies to work on community cohesion and engagement with hard to reach communities: Solace had responded to the Government's consultation on the draft statutory guidance for the new Prevent duties and the responsibilities which may arise. John Barradell commented that the LGA supported councils on this and Solace supported local authority managers.</li><li>• How reduced staff numbers would affect response to emergencies such as flooding: It was commented that in the recent flooding events of 2014, the availability of staff was the biggest concern for local authorities.</li><li>• How councils could protect themselves against denial of service attacks: Solace was working with local authorities on this issue, particularly on procurement. It was noted that catastrophic failure of ICT was not always in the local authority's capability to manage.</li><li>• The lack of local member representation on local resilience fora: John Barradell commented that he was the Deputy Chair of the London Resilience Forum, but that he was the only council Chief Executive on that body and there were no local members. This was an area which should be and could be progressed as, in view</li></ul>	

of cuts to services, communities were concerned on how events would be responded to and how they would be supported afterwards.

Helen Murray, Head of Programmes, commented that the LGA had provided input to joint Solace and DCLG guidance on resilience. The joint guidance would be circulated to Board members for information.

The Chair thanked John Barradell for attending, and commented that she hoped that the LGA would have a very productive relationship with Solace going forward.

**Actions:**

- Joint Solace / DCLG guidance on resilience to be circulated to the Board.

**Decision:**

- Members noted the report and thanked John Barradell for attending.

## **2 The Rotherham Report: Implications for Licensing**

Ian Leete, Advisor, highlighted that Louise Casey's independent report into Rotherham Council's handling of child sexual exploitation cases had been published on 4 February 2015. The LGA had a comprehensive action plan for CSE which was progressing well, but the Board was invited to consider in particular the taxi licensing areas of the Casey report, and identification of any further actions if required.

The findings of the report with regard to taxi licensing, as well as the actions already undertaken by the LGA on this matter, were summarised.

In the discussion on the report, the following points were raised:

- There was unanimous consensus that the LGA should recommend that councils take a default approach that anyone convicted of an indecency offense should not normally be considered a fit and proper person to be a taxi / PHV driver. Officers agreed to draw up wording to reflect the Board's view.
- Information sharing should be increased so that councils are aware of who has been convicted prior to application for a licence.
- Some councils insist that all taxi / PHV drivers receive safeguarding training before they were issued with a licence.
- There should be a focus on passenger rights and passenger safety rather than trade rights. The public should know where to go to complain, and taxi operators should have a responsibility to make sure their employees are fit and proper after they have received a licence.
- There is a need for a taxi reform bill, as legislation on the matter is extremely out of date. The next Government after the General Election in May 2015 should be lobbied on the matter. An action plan should be drawn up and sent to members for comment prior

to the next Board meeting.

- Although the police are asked to respond on every licensing case they often did not respond. There should be greater co-operation between local authorities on taxi licensing enforcement.
- Local authorities should engage in ongoing safeguarding and inspection, potentially through the use of mystery shoppers.
- There should be joined up work plans between community safety partnerships and local authorities. Community safety partnerships should be informed of what powers they have available regarding licensing.
- When considering reforms and mandatory training for councillors, legislation should be as broad as possible and not just on CSE and safeguarding.

#### **Actions:**

- Officers to continue to progress the LGA's wider CSE action plan.
- Training of staff and elected members on licensing issues to be explored in depth with the LGA Licensing Forum. The Licensing Forum would also act as a conduit for sharing progress, best practice and any sector-wide issues with councils.
- Officers to liaise with councils to encourage them to take a default approach that anyone convicted of an indecency offence should not normally be considered a fit and proper person to be a taxi / PHV driver.
- Professional bodies to be encouraged to provide comprehensive training programmes for officers and members.

#### **Decision:**

- Members noted the report and requested that an action plan be drawn up for lobbying the next Government for a taxi reform bill following the General Election in May 2015.

### **3 Counter Terrorism**

Mark Norris, Senior Advisor, explained that the Government had recently published draft statutory guidance on implementing the new Prevent duties set out in the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 which included sector specific guidance on what organisations were required to do. Local authorities had concerns on the draft guidance and a response to the consultation was submitted following approval of the Board's lead members. Members noted that there were concerns that the cost to local authorities was a low estimate, and that London Councils had come back with what they thought the cost would be for London and that the LGA could undertake a similar exercise for member councils. Members were asked to provide a steer on any issues the LGA should raise with the Government regarding implementation of the new Prevent duties.

Following the Paris attacks in January 2015, members were also invited to comment on any issues related to community cohesion required to counter extremist ideology which the LGA should be pressing for Government action on.

During the discussion on the report the following points were raised:

- There should be a greater focus on multi-agency partnership working to co-ordinate Prevent activity. Given the number of existing local multi-agency panels it would not be necessary for local authorities to establish a new panel to assess the extent to which individuals were vulnerable of being drawn into terrorism.
- The London Councils Counter Terrorism conference had highlighted that a number of Black and Asian young people had no sense of identity or belonging to their community.
- Individuals could be drawn into terrorism from any area or background, and so it was unwise for the Home Office to concentrate efforts just on priority areas.
- Many local authorities did not know what was expected of them with regard to the Prevent duties.
- A meeting with relevant civil servants and Ministers should be sought after the General Election in May 2015 so as to be clear on how compliance with the duties would be assessed and what success would look like.
- The LGA should highlight the difficulties in delivery where there was a risk activity would lead to extremists becoming more covert, there was a lack of clarity around what success looks like, and there needed to be greater flexibility in the processes.
- Information should be shared between local partner organisations / authorities during and after terrorism events.

**Actions:**

- Officers to seek meetings with relevant civil servants and Ministers following the General Election to discuss Prevent duties and provide clarity to local authorities.
- Councils should be asked to estimate the costs of implementing the new duties to provide an evidence base to respond to the Government.

**Decision:**

- Members noted the report.

## **4 FGM**

The Deputy Chair updated the Board on the LGA's lobbying in respect of the Serious Crime Bill and expressed her thanks to the team for their hard work on FGM legislation. Despite the LGA lobbying for an amendment to the Bill which would make it offence to encourage or promote FGM, Ministers had concerns about the necessity and proportionality of the offence and it was not taken forward. The Deputy Chair also noted the funding the LGA had been awarded jointly with Barnardo's by the Department of Education to establish a centre to improve councils' response to FGM.

**Decision**

- Members noted the report.

## **5 Regulatory Services Update**

Ellie Greenwood, Senior Advisor, updated the Board on LGA policy work and developments affecting regulatory services since the previous meeting. Members noted that the Government had accepted licensing reform proposals for a single online application process which should be in place by 2018.

It was explained that minor amendments had been made to the LGA guidance on Reducing the Strength schemes to reinforce key points about the competition law risk. Guidance had been circulated to all councils along with a letter highlighting the need to ensure schemes comply with competition law.

It was also highlighted that Cllr Evans had launched the LGA's discussion paper 'Remodelling Public Protection' which had been amended following the Board meeting in September and subsequent approval by lead members. The report aimed to prompt further discussions regarding the future of environmental health, trading standards and licensing services. Further updates to the document would be made in due course.

Members discussed the title of the document, observing that 'public protection' would imply that the report covered community safety, police and fire and rescue services, whereas the focus was on environmental health, licensing and trading standards. It was suggested that a reference to 'regulatory services' be made in the subtitle of the document.

In response to a request by the Deputy Chair of the Fire Services Management Committee, it was confirmed that the document would be included in an update paper to the next meeting in March 2015.

In response to a question on the Hemming v Westminster case, it was confirmed that there is ongoing legal activity relating to the case, but a verdict was not imminent. Another court hearing would take place in March 2015 and the Board would be updated again at the next meeting.

### **Actions:**

- 'Remodelling public protection' document to be updated following members' comments.
- FSMC to be updated on 'Remodelling public protection' at the next meeting.
- Further update on Hemming v Westminster to be provided at the next meeting.

### **Decision:**

Members noted the report.

## **6 Notes of the Previous Meeting**

Regarding minute 2, concerning gambling regulation, one member

highlighted that the Board had agreed at the previous meeting that the number of fixed odds betting terminals per betting shop should be limited and that government should be lobbied on the issue. The minutes of the previous meeting would be amended to reflect this.

Subject to this amendment members agreed the notes of the meeting held on 1 December 2014 as correct.

**Action:**

- Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2014 to be amended as detailed above.

## **Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Ann Lucas OBE	Coventry City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Joanna Spicer MBE	Suffolk County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Lisa Brett	Bath & North East Somerset Council
	Cllr Philip Evans JP	Conwy County Borough Council
Members	Cllr Janet Daby	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Tony Page	Reading Borough Council
	Cllr Sophie Linden	Hackney London Borough Council
	Cllr Richard Chattaway	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Nick Daubney	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
	Cllr Joanna Gardner	Kensington and Chelsea Royal Borough Council
	Cllr Thomas Fox	Scarborough Borough Council
	Cllr Ian Gillies	City of York Council
	Cllr Jo Beavis	Braintree District Council
	Cllr Jeffrey Milburn	South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Apologies	Cllr Mike Connolly	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling Borough Council
	Cllr Morris Bright	Hertsmere Borough Council
	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland District Council
	Cllr Colin Mann	Caerphilly County Borough Council
In Attendance	Nathan Elvery	London Borough of Croydon
	John Barradell OBE	City of London
LGA Officers		
Helen Murray		
Mark Norris		
Ellie Greenwood		
Ian Leete		
Lucy Ellender		
Paul Goodchild		