

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	Action
1	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest	
	<p>The Chair Welcomed members to the meetings.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Deputy-Chair Cllr Hannah Dalton (due to on-the-day transport issues), and Cllr Nick Worth.</p> <p>One Declaration of Interest was made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">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	
	<p>The Chair invited both Rebecaa 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.</p> <p>The introduction also focused on an update on the programme; with different aspects of the project moving at different paces; an overview of the Inspection Strategies, which included a number of pilots at different local authorities; and reflection made by the Welsh Local Government (WLGA) regarding their concern that they the programme will significantly impact their inspection service.</p> <p>A update on the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) was given by Ellie Greenwood, who stated that initial relationships between NFCU and National Trading Standards (NTS) have not started well. Ellie made reference to the letter sent to Board members (that was not included in the main agenda), sent to Heather by the Association of Chief National Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO), outlining these concerns.</p>	

Heather Hancock was then invited into the room, and delivered a PowerPoint presentation to members (which were circulated following the Board's meeting). Heather's presentation included:

- The FSA's approach to public trust and the importance of gaining this.
- 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, which is based on evidence gathering from stakeholders.
- The impact of Brexit, including the robust 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 described the programme as crisis-avoidance and needing to act ahead of any crisis, rather than a reactive approach.
- Heather discussed the reliance of local government and the vital role they play in food safety.
- The FSA's new online system currently being rolled-out across the local government network by end of March 2019, which aims to register all food businesses. Heather described the system as very user-friendly and easy-to-use, giving examples of the first businesses that have registered.
- An overview of the NFCU and the recent increase of staffing (from 19 to 82), following 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; Scotland, as a devolved country, has its own food-standards structures in place.
- verification of new registrations;
 - Heather stated that this verification was confirmed by postcode and National Insurance Number, with reports being sent to both the FSA, the relevant local government and Companies House.
- any timescales in place for registration for existing food business;
 - Heather confirmed that no final deadline had been set – the FSA believe that this will be in the region of three-to-four years – and can be advised by Environmental Health Officers during routine inspections.
- Environmental Health Officers reaction 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-place, 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 to 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 set of regulatory bodies, and gave an example of an 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 this lies with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – and is not lead by the FSA. However, the FSA champions good practice.

Members discussed the differences in food business and inspections. Heather stated that a pragmatic approach had to be taken, and gave 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 between members and Heather.

Members held discussions over the risks lowering food standards to get trade deal with other countries – such as the United States and chlorine-dipped chicken – 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. Discussions were also had over imports into the UK, via the EU, and if their place of origin is not within the EU. Heather stated that there are check-marks by the EU whereby import officers in the UK will know if it meets EU, and therefore UK, standards.

Members held discussions over the role of local government and if any of their regulatory, inspectorate or structures will be impacted. Members made particular reference to the dedicated and extremely competent staff in the sector. Heather made it clear that the FSA can only advise in circumstances that are needed.

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 stated that the NFCU do not want to impact any of the work undertaken by NTS.

The Chair thanked Heather for attending.

Action

- Members noted the update.

3 Steve Thomas letter to Heather Hancock (FSA)

4 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 introduce Hannah McNamara, Head of Housing, Health and Domestic Abuse of MHCLG. Hannah delivered her presentation to members, which included an overview of her role, the current review being undertaken to funding 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 survey undertaken with local authorities in England, which had a good response rate (over 60 per cent), and a good mixture of geographical areas, including urban and rural authorities.

- Discussed headlines of iPsos mori work

Hannah also discussed working with the teams work with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC's) what is and what is not working, improvements that need to be addressed and risks to victims. This 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, however, Hannah confirmed that the best-placed organisations to lead on this are local authorities, having a locally-led strategy in place, with a clear accountable lead in regards to commissioning.

This work is currently in development phase, but forms part of the Domestic Abuse bill and is a manifesto pledge by the Prime Minister. Hannah stated that forming these multi-agency local partnerships, led by a commissioning lead at a local level is currently being developed with Combined Authorities', County Councils, the greater London Authority (GLA), and Metropolitan District Councils. Hannah stated the importance of not adopting a one-size-fits-all approach; that this work is about assessing needs of survivors and the best support they receive in their

community.

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 Community Wellbeing Boards (VWB) 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 officer also held discussions over the various funding streams and ring-fenced and non-focused funding pots. Members questioned Hannah over the works submission to the Spending Review, and if this work doesn't get fully funded; Hannah stated that like every other government department, their funding is being looked at and her team will be in a very difficult position if there is a funding deficit.

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 member 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 should be forced to leave their local area.

Members discussed the role of the lower tier authorities, and the responsibilities they have in housing, and ways this could aid the work. Hannah agreed, and discussions were held over pushing funding down from county to a district level.

Members brought up the work with the GLA, and raised concerns that London is too big and diverse to create one strategy for all boroughs. Hannah stated that this work will be undertaken with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), as well as London Councils, in order to create bespoke strategies to cover London's diversity.

The Member Champion for Domestic Abuse prevention 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 SSCB.

Action

- Members noted the update.

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the item, the report of which updates members of the LGA's building safety related work since the last meeting. This included updating members on the joint LGA-MHCLG Inspection Team, which while has progressed significantly with MHCLG, but is facing some recruitment issues due to insurance related problems.

The Chair opened the discussion out to members:

Member raised concerns over slow progress of all fire-safety work, and stated that while there is benefit of meeting various stakeholders, residents are still living in high-rise buildings with combustible materials. Members stressed that actions from these meeting 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 and questioned where this was figure came from. Mark stated this was an estimation from MHCLG.

Discussions turned to fire doors and requested an update on this work; members discussions also included the use of fire doors and how whilst useful when properly used, these cause significant risk when left open (due to their heavy weight). In response to this, Mark stated the we were working closely with MHCLG the National Housing Federation over clarity on which types of doors haven't passed safety tests. Mark confirmed that doors that were manufactured outside of the UK often failed.

The Chair concluded that expect 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 Car Wash App and it's progress. Members discussion turned to local authorities tacking 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 big 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 Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles, 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 they were 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 their recent meeting with the NFC, who have expressed more joint-work with the LGA and wider local government sector.

Members discussed paragraph nine in the report, including the three month ban on unauthorised encampments, which will in-turn pushing this issue into bordering areas.

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	

Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Gloucestershire County Council

Apologies

Cllr Nick Worth
Cllr Hannah Dalton

South Holland District Council
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

In Attendance

LGA Officers