Local Government Association

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title:	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date:	Thursday 18 March 2021
Venue:	Westminster Room, 8th 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 Apologies and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed members to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Philip Evans with Cllr Jo Beavis attending as substitute. The chair reminded substitute members that in order to maintain political balance, only those who are formally substituting for a full member of the Board should make comments, although all were welcome to listen in to the meetings.

No declarations of interest were made.

2 Notes of previous meeting

Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board agreed the notes of the last Board meeting, held on Thursday 14 January 2020.

3 Update Paper

The Chair introduced the report which outlines issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda, including our work on COVID-19 and ongoing work in relation to the Domestic Abuse Bill.

Alongside the report the Chair highlighted that earlier on in the week she had met with Lord Toby Harris, Chair of National Trading Standards and discussed the following:

- The range of NTS's activities and some of the major cases it has prosecuted.
- Challenges councils had faced with resources especially

during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The relationship with NTS and the police, regarding fraud cases and understanding the tangible link to serious organised crime and serious violence.
- A future white paper expected to seek to address NTS's unique constitutional status.
- That she proposed to invite Lord Toby Harris to attend a future Board meeting to provide an update for all members.

Additionally, the Chair raised that in light of the recent Sarah Everard case, the Home Office had decided to reopen its consultation on Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. The LGA would circulate their original response and invite Board members to submit additional comments by close on Monday 22 March, to provide a revised and updated submission. The Chair raised that earlier on she had sent around a call for action to Lead Members, to gather an agreement from Board members to the principals of the call to action.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- The issue of Male Violence against Women and Girls needed to be addressed at the next or a special meeting, to discuss practical measures councils can take to protect women and girls further. This was supported by members; the Chair responded in agreement and asked officers to include this as an item for a future meeting.
- The prevalence and normality of sexual violence against women in the media is concerning. More work needed to be done with the media to address what was and wasn't acceptable and how making these stories/scripts feel everyday was damaging to society.
- Further clarity was needed from government on the perpetrator programmes, as local authorities needed to understand the expected outcomes from them and how they fit into the wider criminal justice system, and that funding for these programmes needs to be separate to victim support programmes The role local authorities play needed to be recognised including how using community enforcement as well as police powers would be valuable.
- It was important to consider that men also suffer from domestic abuse and that this may be difficult for men to address.

Members agreed on the proposals put forward by the Chair on the consultation on Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

The Chair introduced Cllr Kate Haigh to address the Board. Cllr Haigh informed the Board that as a Licensing Champion on behalf

of Safer and Stronger Communities Board she chaired the Licencing conference in February and most recently supported work on the Gambling Act 2005. Alongside this, she had also worked with the All-party Parliamentary Group and attended a number of peers for gambling reform group meetings and concluded that:

- A radical reform was needed on gambling and what we think is gambling, particularly addressing loot boxes.
- The role of local authorities and public health needed to be strengthened.
- Gathering a strong set of data was needed to establish how much harm is being done within our communities.

Cllr Haigh also informed the Board that she would be stepping down at the forthcoming election and this was therefore her last Board meeting. The Board agreed that Cllr Jeanie Bell should take on the role from Cllr Haigh as licensing champion alongside Cllr Allen, pending the appointment of new champions in September.

Finally, Cllr Rhodes noted the update on modern slavery transparency in supply chain statements and that this was an important area of work for councils.

Decision:
Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board noted the report.

Actions:

- Officers to prepare a response to the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy consultation.
- Officers to invite Lord Toby Harris to the next Board meeting.

4 Protect duty

The Chair introduced the report which covered the government's published consultation document on a new Protect duty, aimed at helping to protect public venues and spaces from terrorist attacks.

The Chair invited Debbie Bartlett Deputy Director, Home Office and Georgia Jackson Publicly Accessible Locations – Strategy and Engagement, Office for Security and Counter Terrorism, Home Office, to present an overview of the Protect Duty proposals.

Georgia introduced the presentation and highlighted that attacks in recent years have demonstrated the continued threat the UK faces from terrorism. In February 2020, the Minister for Security first

announced plans to consult on a protect duty but due to the COVID-19 pandemic this was temporarily paused and relaunched in February 2021 with an 18-week consultation period.

Georgia emphasised that the consultation sought views of organisations across four key themes:

- Scope – who a duty would apply to?
    - The duty would apply to public venue owners and operators of venues with a capacity of 100 persons or more
    - Large organisations employing 250 staff or more
    - There is also consideration of responsibilities at public spaces that have no clear boundaries or well-defined entrance or exit points, e.g. city centre squares, bridges, parks and beaches; it was recognised that there are more issues to discuss in relation to these places, including overlapping ownership.
- Impact – what would stakeholders be required to do?
    - Consider terrorist threats and methodologies
    - Assess the potential impact to the public and staff
    - Consider and take forward 'reasonably practicable' and appropriate protective security and organisational preparedness measures.
    - It was noted that this wouldn't always be about costly physical measures, although they may be required for larger venues – how would government support those affected by duty?
    - Through providing a significant amount of advice and guidance on, e.g. terrorist threat and attack methodologies, risk assessment, reasonably practicable mitigating measures, and security processes.
    - Developing something that can be built into existing mechanisms and is easy to understand and implement. Inspection and enforcement – how would compliance work?
    - The health and safety regime offers a good model, with HSE setting out core principles but additional sector specific guidance available too.
    - Primary aim for an inspection and enforcement regime is to advise and educate on improving security systems, processes and culture
    - Sanctions will be deployed for repeated non-compliance
    - Consideration of an inspection and enforcement regime and who would enforce this.

Georgia then addressed the key issues which were:

- Getting scope, criteria and threshold right
- Consideration of public spaces element
- How the Protect Duty would work in practice
- Developing requirements and guidance
- Development of Inspection and enforcement regime and delivery resource.
- She emphasised that there will be several impacts for councils as large organisations with public buildings, spaces and events. As public spaces will be the most complex issue the Government is keen to hear from councils, so Georgia encouraged members to promote the consultation.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- Concerns were raised around the responsibilities that could fall on smaller venues managed by local charities and volunteers. Debbie responded that they were aware of the concerns raised around smaller venues but were looking to make the protect duty proportionate.
- The term 'reasonably practicable' did not address the fact that local authorities would not have the capacity to monitor all public spaces and venues to ensure that procedures were being followed and met. Debbie responded that venues currently undertake health and safety and fire regulations which could align with the protect duty requirements.
- Members asked how this would be inspected, recognising that licensing and planning have lots of experience but this would be an additional burden to enforce and would need to be funded. It was noted that numerous temporary events notices for one off events in open spaces are granted by local authorities daily. How would the protect duty impact this and what would be the expectations as it would pose a considerable burden on multiple events, e.g. Community fun days. Debbie replied that as part of enforcement it was important to educate people before penalising as this was a new structure being put in place. The protect duty would seek partnership work with local police to help people understand the nature of threat and risk and what could be done to mitigate this. For many venues, the impact would mainly be at the lower end of the scale, in terms of understanding and awareness.
- Privately owned public spaces were more prevalent now than ever before, e.g. shopping centres, gardens and squares. These are open to the public but not managed by local authorities.
- Members recognised the overlaps with other issues of

interest to the Board, including counter extremism and funding of the SIGCE and responsibilities for beach ownership and oversight.
- Debbie confirmed that no organisation was the obvious choice for inspection and enforcement, and that this would be informed by the consultation.

The Chair thanked Debbie and Georgia for their thorough and detailed presentation on the consultation document of the new Protect duty.

Decision:
Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board noted the report.

Action:
- Officers to consider comments made by members to feed into the development of the LGA's consultation response.

5 Serious Violent Crime

The Chair introduced the report which provided a brief overview of the serious violent crime duty, as proposed in the forthcoming Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

The Chair invited Sara Featherstone, Policy Lead for the Serious Violence Duty, Home Office and Sarika Spagnulo, Serious Violence Unit, Home Office, to present an overview of Serious Violence Duty.

Sarika introduced the presentation and informed the Board that on 1 April 2019, the government published a consultation on a legal duty to support a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence. The majority of respondents favoured a legislative approach to support multi-agency working and the intention to legislate for a new Serious Violence Duty was therefore announced in the Queen's Speech in December 2019. The Home Office expect the Duty to come into force no sooner than 2022.

Sarika highlighted that the following authorities will be subject to the duty; the police, local authorities, youth offending teams, probation, fire and rescue and health authorities. The duty would require specified authorities to work together and to share data and intelligence to establish the local problem profile and strategic needs assessment. This work would inform a published local strategy which would outline the collective action they intended to take, including:
- A summary of the local problem profile;

- How the chosen partnership will work together;
- Actions including specific interventions / preventative action;
- Engagement plans with voluntary and community organisations and young people; and
- Identified funding streams or resources.

Sara informed the Board that the effectiveness of local partnership working would be monitored by:

- Local strategies will need to be published and subsequently reviewed on an annual basis. Partnerships will be expected to be able to self-monitor and collectively evaluate the impact of the local strategy.
- Police and Crime Commissioners will also have a discretionary role in supporting local partnerships with the development and implementation of their strategies and monitoring their effectiveness and impact.
- CSPs already have a statutory requirement to keep the implementation of their strategies under review for the purposes of monitoring effectiveness and make any changes to such strategies where necessary and to publish the outcomes of each review; that approach will be mirrored for the SV Duty.
- Routine inspection programmes undertaken by individual inspectorates may also consider the organisational response to local serious violence issues.

Concluding the presentation, Sara commented that guidance on the duty would be subject to a formal Government consultation once the legislation had successfully passed through Parliament and would provide advice on:

- Planning and collaboration including producing a problem profile and strategic needs assessment, developing a strategy and data and information sharing;
- Effective engagement with PCCs, VRUs, the voluntary and community sector and children and young people;
- Sector specific guidance for duty holders;
- Monitoring and compliance, including what makes a successful partnership and how to monitor effectiveness and a summary of the Secretary of State powers;
- Role of CSPs in serious violence strategies.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- In relation to two-tier areas, were the duty would lie for district and county councils? Sarika responded that it would apply to both district and county councils and would be up to the partnership to decide at what level they would like to

operate to meet the requirements of the duty.

- The map of CSPs can be fragmented, which can make it harder to ensure democratic input; it would be useful to look at CSPs to see how they are working. The Home Office stated that CSPs will have a role to play, and that the legislation will allow partnerships in a combined format to meet the duty.
- As many local authorities are under lot of financial pressure, would there be adequate funding for implementing the statutory duty? Sarah replied that they have had discussion with the LGA about the burden the duty would have on local authorities alongside other duty holders. The Home Office are required to produce a burdens assessment for MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) and will formally discuss the cost on local authorities.
- How can collective trust be built with partnerships to address key issues e.g. additional powers for police to carry out stop and search. Sarika responded that within the guidance for duty they would make clear the importance of partnerships drawing in useful insight and knowledge.

The Chair thanked Sara and Sarika for their insightful and detailed presentation on the overview of the Serious Violence Duty.

Decision:
Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to consider comments made by members.

6 Building Safety Update

The Chair introduced the report which covers on the LGA's building safety related work since its last meeting.

Charles Loft, Senior Advisor informed the Board that:

- Progression on remediation remained slow compared to the scale of the issue.
- The Joint Inspection Team have resumed inspections and MHCLG has confirmed that the JIT will continue working next year with a remit that expands to cover non-ACM dangerous cladding.
- The Building Risk Review programme remained ahead of its target schedule to ensure all residential buildings over 18m in height had been assessed or inspected by the end of 2021.
- Waking Watch relief fund had been going well and MHCLG were pleased with how well councils have delivered this.

- RICS have published updated information on the EWS1 form.
- The key Government announcement since the previous meeting had been on leaseholder costs. The LGA had some concerns about how the low interest loans will work, including that potentially half of buildings which need remediation due to non-cladding fire safety issues may not be covered by it. On the social sector, if the Government does not fund remediation this could push rents up.

Following the brief discussion, Members made the following comments:

- Following from the last Board meeting members commented that private building owners applying to government funds were being silenced with gagging clauses, stopping them from speaking to the press or other parties without government approval, an update on this remained outstanding. Charles responded that he would raise this issue at the Grenfell Task and Finish Group and update Board members with a response.
- There were some issues with notifications relating to fire service issued notices, as these had sometimes been handed out without a collaborative approach to producing an action plan for short and long term solutions to fire safety issues. Charles responded that the LGA, NFCC, Home Office and MHCLG were working on building effective mechanisms between local authorities and fire services to ensure a holistic approach is taken.

Decision:
Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board noted the report.

Action:
- Officers to update the Board on gagging clauses at the next meeting.

Date of the next meeting: Thursday, 17 June 2021, 11.00 am, TBC

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Nesil Caliskan	Enfield Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Katrina Wood	Buckinghamshire Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Bridget Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Hannah Dalton	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Members	Cllr Eric Allen	Sutton London Borough Council
	Cllr Andrew Joy	Hampshire County Council
	Cllr Mohan Iyengar	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
	Cllr John Pennington	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Dave Stewart	Isle of Wight Council
	Cllr Lois Samuel	West Devon Borough Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Mayor Damien Egan	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr Farah Hussain	Redbridge London Borough Council
	Cllr Johnson Situ	Southwark Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Apologies	Cllr Philip Evans	