



**Government**  
Association

# Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Agenda

Thursday, 17 June 2021  
11.00 am

Online via Microsoft Teams

**To:** Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board  
**cc:** Named officers for briefing purposes

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Safer & Stronger Communities Board  
17 June 2021

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There will be a meeting of the Safer & Stronger Communities Board at **11.00 am on Thursday, 17 June 2021** Online via Microsoft Teams.

**Political Group meetings:**

The group meetings will take place in advance of the meeting. Please contact your political group as outlined below for further details.

**Apologies:**

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting.

<b>Conservative:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3223	email: <a href="mailto:lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk">lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk</a>
<b>Labour:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3263	email: <a href="mailto:LABGP@lga.gov.uk">LABGP@lga.gov.uk</a>
<b>Liberal Democrat:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3235	email: <a href="mailto:libdem@local.gov.uk">libdem@local.gov.uk</a>
<b>Independent:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3224	email: <a href="mailto:independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk">independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk</a>

**LGA Contact:**

Tahmina Akther  
tahmina.akther@local.gov.uk | 0207 072 7444

**Carers' Allowance**

As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme a Carer's Allowance of £9.00 per hour or £10.55 if receiving London living wage is available to cover the cost of dependants (i.e. children, elderly people or people with disabilities) incurred as a result of attending this meeting.

**Social Media**

The LGA is committed to using social media in a co-ordinated and sensible way, as part of a strategic approach to communications, to help enhance the reputation of local government, improvement engagement with different elements of the community and drive efficiency. Please feel free to use social media during this meeting. **However, you are requested not to use social media during any confidential items.**

The twitter hashtag for this meeting is #lgassc

## Safer & Stronger Communities Board – Membership 2020/2021

Councillor	Authority
<b>Conservative ( 7 )</b>	
Cllr Katrina Wood (Vice Chairman)	Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Eric Allen	Sutton London Borough Council
Cllr Andrew Joy	Hampshire County Council
Cllr Mohan Iyengar	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Cllr Lois Samuel	West Devon Borough Council
Vacancy	Conservative Group
Vacancy	Conservative Group
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Paul Findlow	Cheshire East Council
Cllr James Gartside	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Labour ( 7 )</b>	
Cllr Nesil Caliskan (Chair)	Enfield Council
Mayor Damien Egan	Lewisham London Borough Council
Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
Cllr Alan Rhodes	Bassetlaw District Council
Cllr Farah Hussain	Redbridge London Borough Council
Cllr Johnson Situ	Southwark Council
Vacancy	Labour Group
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Daniel Francis	Bexley Council
Cllr Tim Roca	Westminster City Council
<b>Liberal Democrat ( 2 )</b>	
Cllr Bridget Smith (Deputy Chair)	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council
<b>Independent ( 2 )</b>	
Cllr Hannah Dalton (Deputy Chair)	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Cllr Philip Evans JP	Conwy County Borough Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Jo Beavis	Braintree District Council
Cllr Helen-Ann Smith	Ashfield District Council
Cllr Nicola Dillon Jones	North Kesteven District Council

## Agenda

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### **Safer & Stronger Communities Board**

Thursday 17 June 2021

11.00 am

Online via Microsoft Forms

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<b>Item</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>2. Notes of previous meeting</b>	1 - 10
<b>3. Social Cohesion and Resilience</b>	11 - 16
<b>4. Update Paper</b>	17 - 22
<b>5. Queen's Speech</b>	23 - 36
<b>6. Building Safety Update</b>	37 - 48
<b>7. End of Year Report and Work Plan 2021-22</b>	49 - 60

**Date of Next Meeting:** Tuesday, 21 September 2021, 11.00 am, TBC

## Note of the last Safer & Stronger Communities Board

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Title:	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date and time:	Thursday 18 March 2021
Location:	Videoconference via Microsoft Teams

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note.

Item	Decisions and actions
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### 1 Welcome, 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 the 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.

17 June 2021

- 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:

17 June 2021

- 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?

17 June 2021

- 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 [that operate at publicly accessible locations?]
- 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:

17 June 2021

- 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.

17 June 2021

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:

17 June 2021

- 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, where 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 a 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:

17 June 2021

- 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.

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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

17 June 2021

**Appendix A – Attendance**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Authority</b>	
Chair	Cllr Nesil Caliskan	London Borough of Enfield
Vice Chairman	Cllr Katrina Wood	Buckinghamshire County Council
Deputy Chair	Cllr Bridget Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Deputy Chair	Cllr Hannah Dalton	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Committee Member	Cllr Eric Allen	London Borough of Sutton
	Cllr Mohan Iyengar	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
	Cllr Andrew Joy	Hampshire County 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	Gloucestershire 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 JP	Conwy County Borough Council
Substitutes	Cllr Jo Beavis	
	Cllr Jeanie Bell	
	Cllr Tim Roca	
	Cllr Nicola Dillon Jones	
	Cllr James Gartside	
	Cllr Daniel Francis	
	Cllr Paul Findlow	
LGA Officers	Mark Norris	
	Ellie Greenwood	
	Lucy Ellender	
	Charles Loft	
	Rachel Duke	
	Rachel Phelps	
	Jessica Norman	
	Jade Hall	
	Joe Difford	

17 June 2021

Jonathan Bryant  
Tahmina Akther

In attendance

Debbie Bartlett  
Georgia Jackson  
Sara Featherstone  
Sarika Spagnulo

Home Office  
Home Office  
Home Office  
Home Office

Press

Jonathan Knott

LGC

17 June 2021

## **Social cohesion and resilience**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion.

### **Summary**

Sara Khan has recently been appointed as the government's Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience. Sara will be attending the meeting to update members on her plans for her role, and explore members' concerns about extremism and cohesion issues.

### **Recommendation/s**

That the Board notes the update and discusses councils' concerns on cohesion and extremism.

### **Action/s**

Officers to follow up as directed.

**Contact officer:** Rachel Duke  
**Position:** Adviser  
**Phone no:** 07464 652612  
**Email:** rachel.duke@local.gov.uk

## **Social cohesion and resilience**

### **Background**

1. Sara Khan has recently been appointed as the government's Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience. Previously, Sara was the lead Commissioner at the Commission for Countering Extremism (the Commission is continuing with its work, with Robin Simcox recently appointed as Interim Commissioner).
2. It is expected that Sara will work to understand and build resilience against the negative impact of extremism in local communities. This will include working with frontline experts to develop recommendations on how to better support and protect victims of extremism, those working to tackle it, and communities affected by it; and explore the role of national and local government, public bodies and civil society in this space.
3. Sara will provide an update to the Board on her new role and her plans for the coming year. She is also keen to understand more about councils' concerns about cohesion and extremism issues.

### **Policy context**

4. Over recent years counter-extremism, counter-terrorism (including Prevent), and wider cohesion and integration work have each been framed at a national level by separate government strategies. Councils effectively have a number of statutory obligations as part of the Prevent duty, however there are no duties for councils specifically to tackle extremism or cohesion concerns more broadly.
5. The 2015 Counter-Extremism strategy was supported by work under the government's Building a Stronger Britain Together (BSBT) programme, part of which funded a number of dedicated counter-extremism posts in around 35 local authorities up until March this year. We anticipate that an announcement on the future direction of counter-extremism will be made by government shortly, but do not expect any further central funding to be made available to councils for specific work in the counter-extremism space.
6. We have long argued that understanding, responding and building resilience to extremism requires a joined-up approach across cohesion, counter-extremism and counter-terrorism, both locally and nationally. Counter-extremism work plays an important dual role; both as an early intervention tool in preventing terrorism through countering ideology and activists that might begin to draw people into radicalisation; and in addressing the wider harms caused at local level from activity which stokes division

17 June 2021

and sows mistrust between communities (even where this does not cross a legal threshold). Councils understand the need to: take a broad strategic approach to both tackling incidents and tensions as they emerge; invest in measures to build resilience and cohesion; and to prevent issues from coming to fruition through counter-extremism (and sometimes Prevent) work.

### **The extremism challenge**

7. The threats from extremism continue to change, presenting new and evolving challenges for local authorities. In our response to the [Commission for Counter Extremism's call for evidence](#) we noted how local extremist campaigns can have a far-reaching impact in local areas, including disruption to the life of local communities, affecting businesses and deterring residents and visitors from going into their town centres; a rise in local tensions; threats, intimidation and harassment; a diminished sense of safety amongst residents; and a deepening polarisation between different groups.
8. Recent years have seen the emergence of a number of cohesion and extremism concerns. This has included activists seeking out opportunities to stir tensions and to exploit otherwise mainstream concerns to garner support, such as CSE and sexual assault; immigration and the housing of asylum seekers; changes to RSE curriculum in schools; and local planning applications. Extremists have a track record of misrepresenting issues in order to either blame a particular community for a particular issue, or to alienate a group within society.
9. We have also been made aware of a number of councillors and council officers who have been victims of concerning levels of abuse, threats and harassment, both online and offline. This includes specific examples of distressing threats and receiving graphic imagery, for instance in response to supporting a local planning application for a Mosque, and holding a public meeting to discuss the housing of asylum seekers in local accommodation. During recent local elections there have been incidents where councillors have been subject to verbal and physical abuse whilst canvassing, and reports of misinformation campaigns against candidates.
10. COVID-19 has provided further opportunities for extremists to exploit, with narratives blaming certain groups for introducing, spreading the virus and breaching control measures. There have been concerns about younger people in particular spending more time online during this time, with possible increased risks of radicalisation. Many areas have reported concerns about rising community tensions during 2020, with a number of councils seeing significant increases in levels of hate crime, and racialised/racist narratives surfacing on a variety of matters in a way not seen for many years. The period also saw an unprecedented mainstream circulation of conspiracy theories and misinformation about the pandemic and measures to control it, as explored by SSCB members at the Board's January 2021 meeting.

11. We anticipate that extremists will continue to try and use the post-COVID landscape to further support their narratives. Councils are increasingly concerned about the need to respond effectively and build resilience to extremism across communities.

### **Supporting councils**

12. The LGA has been providing significant support to councils on counter-extremism and building cohesion through our work with the LGA-funded [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism](#) (SIGCE). Over the last year alone this has included developing and delivering a series of practitioner roundtables; three thematic webinars on online extremism and gaming, conspiracy theories and COVID-19, and monitoring local extremist activity; bespoke advice and guidance to councils facing issues; elected member network meetings in the North of England and East of England; coordinating working groups on Far-Right Extremism and Faith-Based “Islamist” Extremism, including developing approaches to improve community engagement; training courses for practitioners; and facilitation of the online Knowledge Hub.
13. We have recently committed to funding the SIGCE this financial year and are now firming up our work programme.
14. The LGA has also been undertaking work to support councillors facing intimidation. In December 2019, the LGA, Welsh LGA (WLGA), the Confederation of Scottish Authorities (COSLA) and the Northern Ireland LGA (NILGA) launched a campaign called ‘[Civility in Public Life](#), with the aim of curbing the public intimidation of councillors. The LGA has produced a [toolkit for councillors on handling abuse and intimidation](#). This is also being developed by the LGA into an e-learning course for councillors.

### **Discussion**

15. Sara is keen to hear from councils about their extremism and cohesion concerns and emerging trends or themes. Board members may also wish to explore the following issues:
- 15.1. The importance of retaining national and local focus on preventing extremism and building cohesion, particularly in the context of diminished resources and capacity
  - 15.2. Opportunities for linking up Sara’s work with the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism
  - 15.3. The challenges and potential opportunities presented by the post-COVID landscape; how extremists might look to exploit economic decline and rising inequality (or perceptions of these), and how reassessing and rebuilding local places after the pandemic might impact on social cohesion

17 June 2021

- 15.4. How we can best ensure work across national and local government on countering extremism, hate crime and building cohesion is joined-up; what support do councils need from central Government?

**Implications for Wales**

16. Sara's role will cover England only. The SIGCE's support offer extends to councils in both England and Wales.

**Financial Implications**

17. As noted above, councils do not currently receive national funding for dedicated counter-extremism work. The LGA has been funding the SIGCE's support for councils since last autumn and this has now been extended until March 2022.

**Next steps**

18. Officers are exploring with Sara's team how to facilitate further conversations with council practitioners to better understand local challenges from extremism.



## Update Paper

### Purpose of report

For information.

### Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda.

### Recommendation:

That members of the Board note and comment on the update.

### Action:

Officers to action any matters arising from the discussion as appropriate.

**Contact officer:** Mark Norris  
**Position:** Principal Policy Adviser  
**Phone no:** 0207 664 3241  
**Email:** mark.norris@local.gov.uk

## Update Paper

### Counter-Extremism

1. Lord Walney, Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption, recently opened up a call for evidence as part of his review into political violence and disruption. Our submission set out a number of councils' concerns about extremist activity, both on- and off line. We drew a distinction between protest activity which is disruptive only, and acts which are violent and/or target certain communities or those with particular characteristics, that can stoke division and mistrust between communities. Our response also set out concerns about the prevalence of violent language in online political discourse, highlighting the LGA's work on civility in public life, and emphasised the need for investment in long-term measures to build resilience and help prevent extremism and cohesion issues from emerging.
2. In March we concluded the delivery of two training courses for local authority practitioners on engagement and communication strategies to counter far-right extremism. The courses were very well received and explored audience segmentation; the issues that far-right actors use to mobilise support; strategies to build greater resilience to far-right mobilisation; and how communications and community engagement might be applied locally to diffuse and contain far-right narratives.

### **CIEH Workforce Survey report: local authorities in England / regulatory services**

3. In April, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health published its first [workforce survey](#) for 6 years. With environmental health (EH) teams having been at the frontline of the response to COVID, the survey is a useful illustration of some of the challenges facing the profession. The survey estimated that there are around 3300 full time equivalent EH professionals working within English councils, but also that a number of councils were struggling to recruit to vacant positions, with the use of agency staff widespread in response to this.
4. The findings of the survey mirror the findings of the resources, capacity and qualifications workstream of the regulatory services task and finish group, which the LGA has been supporting. The key feedback from that work is as follows:
  - 4.1 An ageing workforce that is shrinking due to both retirement and retention issues, with the loss of officers to other sectors and agencies common and exacerbated by COVID-19.
  - 4.2 Challenges in recruitment, with a limited pool of professional capacity available and an increasing gap between filled and advertised posts.
  - 4.3 Difficulty in bringing in new officers through available routes such as apprenticeships, with a lack of funding for training posts meaning these roles taking up a post in core staffing teams; alongside this, councils reported challenges in ensuring available management time for mentoring new

officers. However, there is wide recognition of the impetus that new and younger officers can bring.

- 4.4 Concern about the loss of specialist expertise in a number of areas, with many officers now taking on generalist roles as councils are unable to carry specialist posts within their headcounts, and/or concern about the predominance of food work over other areas of regulation.
  - 4.5 Mixed feedback on the varying entry and qualification routes for the different services, but a recognition that this was not the primary challenge facing the services.
5. The task and finish group is considering options for addressing these challenges, including building the future pipeline of officers and strengthening regional networks.
  6. A full report on the work of the task and finish group will be shared with the Board once it has reported, and we expect to build many of its recommendations into our updated regulatory services spending review submission.

### **Shisha premises**

7. Officers recently attended a discussion convened by Westminster Council regarding issues linked to shisha premises. This followed a roundtable hosted by then Minister Jake Berry in 2019, and ongoing campaigning on this issue by Birmingham MP Shabana Mahmood MP due to issues linked to shisha premises in her constituency. We understand that that MHCLG are looking into this issue.
8. Councils raised concerns about the lack of effective powers to tackle ongoing nuisance, anti-social behaviour and criminality issues with many shisha premises, as well as about health issues linked to the use of shisha. There has been significant feedback over the previous year of some shisha premises being persistently non-compliant during lockdown.
9. The LGA has previously supported calls for the introduction of an adoptive (i.e not universal) licensing scheme for shisha premises and has offered to help support work on this issue. We would welcome feedback from any Board members about whether they have experienced related issues in their areas.

### **Pavement licensing**

10. The Government has published regulations that will extend the provisions in the Business and Planning Act 2020, which created an expedited process for securing a pavement licence for tables and chairs. The provisions will now be in place for a further year, to 30 September 2022. Measures in the Act to provide default permission for off sales of alcohol alongside on sales have also been extended for a further the year. Alongside this, the government has also published regulations which for two years will increase the number of temporary event notices (TEN) which alcohol licensed premises are entitled to apply for on an annual basis, from 15 to 20.

With the statutory fee for a TEN significantly underestimating the actual costs to councils of processing the TEN, we are concerned that this will add to the financial impact of this package of measures.

11. We plan to raise these concerns with government officials in the coming weeks, and emphasise that any long term changes will need to be fully consulted on and cost neutral for councils.

### **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill**

12. On 18 May, Cllr Nesil Caliskan gave [oral evidence](#) to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee for the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill](#). During the session, Cllr Caliskan emphasised the importance of taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, investing in prevention and early intervention, as well as identifying the risk factors and drivers of youth violence. She highlighted our LGA ask for the Government to extend funding for Violence Reduction Units (VRU) to all areas and commit to funding VRUs for five years. MPs also raised questions about unauthorised encampments, youth custody, Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews, and the right to protest. We have submitted written evidence to the Committee, which will be published on the Committee website in the coming weeks. The Bill is expected to progress through House of Commons Committee Stage, until 24 June 2021, before moving to Report Stage.

### **Draft Serious Violence Guidance**

13. The Home Office has published [Draft Guidance](#) for responsible authorities on the serious violence duty. It sets out information on effective partnership working, advice on data sharing, information on monitoring and inspection and advice on working with the voluntary and community sector and young people.
14. The serious violence duty is being discussed as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently in Committee Stage in the House of Commons. Our House of Commons Second Reading briefing is [available here](#).

### **Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews**

15. The LGA has been invited to join the Home Office's Offensive Weapons Homicide Review Cross-Government design and pilot board. As observing members of the Board, LGA officers will continue to provide feedback to Government officials on the reviews, and put forward any local government queries or concerns.

### **Domestic Abuse Act**

16. On 29 April, the Domestic Abuse Bill reached [Royal Assent](#) and became an Act of Parliament. The commencement schedule of the provisions in the Act is [available here](#).

17. The LGA held a series of workshops with local authorities in preparation for the new statutory duty to deliver accommodation-based support and services for domestic abuse victims and children. We will continue to hold workshops throughout the year, and work closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to support local authorities in setting up local domestic abuse partnership boards.
18. The LGA is also working closely with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office on the mapping of community-based support services. As part of the Commissioner's role, her office will now assess the current provision of community-based domestic abuse support services. We hope this will help to make a case for increased investment in these vital services, particularly those that focus on early intervention and prevention.

#### **All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Domestic Abuse**

19. On 24 May, Cllr Caliskan spoke at the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Domestic Abuse, following the Domestic Abuse Act receiving Royal Assent. During the session, Cllr Caliskan spoke about the new statutory duty placed on local authorities to deliver accommodation-based support and services for domestic abuse victims and children, and she highlighted some of the progress that has been made to set-up Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards and conduct needs assessments. She also welcomed the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's commitment to reviewing the need for community-based services and make provision for this vital support for domestic abuse victims. We continue to work with the Commissioner, the Government and councils to help implement the provisions outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act and help to improve the response to domestic abuse overall.

#### **LGA webinar on transforming the response to economic abuse**

20. In April, the LGA ran a webinar with the organisation 'Surviving Economic Abuse' to raise awareness about the indicators of economic abuse, and how to respond and ultimately prevent it. Our guest speaker Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Surviving Economic Abuse, outlined the recent changes to the Domestic Abuse Act, which include recognition of economic abuse as part of the new statutory definition of domestic abuse, and important changes on post-separation abuse. Over 200 delegates joined the session. Surviving Economic Abuse also provided a series of bespoke training sessions for local authorities to learn more about economic abuse, directly following the webinar. The full presentation is [available here](#).

#### **Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2021 – 2024)**

21. The LGA submitted a [response](#) to the Government's [consultation](#) on the development of the next Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG), highlighting the need for this to align with other strategies and legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Bill. We also reflected on the terrible news about Sarah Everard, and the wider concerns about public safety. The Government is expected to provide further information on the VAWG Strategy in the coming months.

### **Violence Against Women and Girls inquiry – Home Affairs Committee**

22. The LGA has also submitted [written evidence](#) to the Home Affairs Committee [inquiry](#) into Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The Committee has held an initial oral evidence session with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, and will continue to hear evidence over the coming weeks, before producing a final report and recommendations for Government.

### **Tackling anti-social behaviour**

23. On 8 June, the LGA published a series of [case studies on tackling anti-social behaviour \(ASB\)](#), highlighting how councils have been working in partnership to deliver support for victims and tackle perpetrator's behaviour. Left unchecked we know that ASB can have a devastating impact on communities and individuals. We have also sign-posted to the [Home Office's guidance on the Community Trigger process](#), the formal Anti-social Behaviour Case Review putting victims at the centre of responses, and helpful resources and support from [ASB Help](#).

### **Safer Streets Funding**

24. The Home Office has announced that [some councils and Police and Crime Commissioners will share £18.3 million](#) to pay for projects to tackle crimes like burglary, vehicle theft and robbery, for example by increasing street lighting and CCTV. The Home Office has also announced the third round of the Government's Safer Streets Fund has also opened for local authorities to bid for a further £25 million for 2021/22 which will focus on projects to help women and girls feel safer on the streets.

### **Unauthorised encampments webinar**

25. In June, Cllr Katrina Woods is chairing an [LGA webinar on unauthorised encampments](#). The aim of the session is to provide an opportunity to discuss the response to unauthorised encampments and share the approaches that work well and examples of best practice from across local government. The virtual event is free for all councils.

17 June 2021

## **Queen's Speech / legislative update**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

This report provides a summary of the announcements of relevance to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board in the Queen's Speech on Tuesday 11 May.

### **Recommendation/s**

That the Board note the report and the impact of the Queen's Speech on the future work programme.

### **Action/s**

Officers to ensure that this work is incorporated within the draft 2021-22 work programme.

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## Queen's Speech / legislative update

### Background

1. On Tuesday 11 May, the Queen's Speech set out the Government's forward programme of legislation and other activity. This paper includes a summary of the Bills and other announcements of relevance to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board. For ease, these are summarised in the list below:

- 1.1. Building Safety Bill
- 1.2. Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill
- 1.3. Animal Welfare Bills
- 1.4. Online Safety Bill
- 1.5. Victims Bill
- 1.6. Criminal Justice catch up and recovery plan (including coroners)
- 1.7. Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy
- 1.8. Immigration Plan (including recommendations on modern slavery)
- 1.9. Regulatory Reform
- 1.10. Integrated Review

2. The **appendix** to this paper includes an overview of each of these announcements and our initial response to the announcement, extracted from the LGA's comprehensive 'On the Day Briefing' paper. In the short paper below, we provide a summary of the programme of activity, and the likely implications for our work and that of councils.

3. The Queen's Speech followed the passing of the Domestic Abuse Act at the end of the last Parliament in April. This is a landmark piece of legislation, and a key development for the Board following nearly four years of discussion since the Bill was originally introduced in 2017!

### Issues

4. The Queen's Speech included two Bills which the Board has already had some engagement with; the draft Building Safety Bill and Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. It also included the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy, which the Board discussed and responded to in January and again following the reopening of the consultation.

5. As the Board are aware, the LGA has been closely involved with work relating to the draft Building Safety Bill and this will continue to be a key priority for us over the course of this Parliament. The Board also heard a presentation on aspects of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill at the last meeting in March. This is a wide ranging Bill, with a number of implications for councils, and we expect this to be a significant area of work as

the Bill is developed. Also at the last meeting, the Board emphasised its desire for the VAWG to continue to be a key priority area of work.

6. Cllr Caliskan gave evidence to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee for the PCSC Bill on Tuesday 18 May. During the session, Cllr Caliskan emphasised the importance of taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, investing in prevention and early intervention, as well as identifying the risk factors and drivers of youth violence. The session was also an opportunity to highlight the LGA's ask for the Government to extend funding for Violence Reduction Units (VRU) to all areas and commit to funding VRUs for five years. MPs also raised questions about unauthorised encampments, youth custody, Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews, and the right to protest.
7. We have since followed up the oral evidence session by submitting written evidence to the Committee, which will be published on the Committee website in the coming weeks. The Bill is expected to progress through House of Commons Committee Stage, until 24 June 2021, before moving to Report Stage.
8. A less high profile programme of legislation that was announced, but which will also have significant implications for councils, is the [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#) and associated legislation. Three Bills are expected, of which the [Animal Welfare \(Kept Animals\) Bill](#) and [Animal Welfare \(Sentience\) Bill](#) have already been introduced to Parliament. The overall plan includes a range of proposals which councils are likely to have a role in enforcing, including in relation to farmed animal welfare, puppy imports, and smuggling, zoo standards, pet microchipping and the advertisement of low welfare elephant experiences.
9. We are concerned at the potential capacity implications for already stretched regulatory services absorbing these additional responsibilities without new resources, with many councils struggling to effectively resource animal welfare activities among their many other responsibilities. The cross-government regulatory services task and finish group is looking at mechanisms for achieving an holistic view of the demands on regulatory services, as well as on measures to increase capacity, and this package of work highlights the importance of the group actually delivering meaningful change.
10. The Queen's Speech also included the Online Harms Bill. The Board has previously contributed to the consultation leading to the development of this Bill, which will place a duty of care on companies to improve the safety of their users online and designate Ofcom as the online safety regulator. The Bill will include harms linked to online radicalisation and the spread of misinformation; the LGA has also supported calls for the Bill to include the financial harm that can arise from growing numbers of fraud cases perpetrated online.

17 June 2021

11. The Victim's Bill will enshrine in law the 12 key rights in the new Victims Code, including the right to keep victims informed and updated about their case and when an offender is released. We have yet to have discussions with the Government about this legislation, but there are a number of points that will be of interest, including victims' entitlements to support and the need for sustainable long-term funding for this. In previous discussions on the victims' code several years ago, discussions also centred on the breadth of application of the code, recognising the very wide range of offences (such as consumer protection cases) which could potentially come within the definition of being a victim of crime.
12. The criminal justice catch up and recovery plan will include the work of coroners, with proposals to move the coronial system on to the same footing as other courts and tribunals in terms of virtual hearings and streamlined processes for non-contentious cases. We welcomed proposals to rationalise how coroners' work and suggested that the review should also include consideration of whether coroners' courts should be a local or centrally run service.
13. The Government's recently published Immigration Plan included a section on modern slavery, and this was also included within the Queen's Speech. The plan's proposals for modern slavery are to: provide further training for first responder organisations, including councils, which can refer victims of modern slavery to the National Referral Mechanism; prevent fraudulent claims and clarify the basis on which people may be excluded from receiving support from the NRM on public order grounds; create an expectation that all relevant information about an immigration case (including experience of modern slavery) should be provided at the outset; and of most relevance to councils, a commitment for Government to clarify its obligations to victims of modern slavery within UK law as soon as possible.
14. Finally, the Queen's Speech also briefly referenced two other areas of work of relevance to this Board; a programme of regulatory reform and the integrated review.
15. There is scope for councils and the LGA to contribute to regulatory reform, although experience of previous initiatives of this nature suggests a tendency to focus on elusive quick wins rather than the comprehensive reform of outdated frameworks which is harder to implement but could deliver substantial benefits to both businesses and councils as regulators.
16. The Board may recall that the LGA submitted a response to the integrated review last summer. The published review included a commitment to consider strengthening the role and responsibilities of local resilience forums (LRFs) in England, which councils are a

17 June 2021

core part of; we are already engaging with the Government on how the LGA can contribute to this review.

### **Implications for Wales**

17. We will work with colleagues in the WLGA to confirm which elements of the Queen's Speech will apply to Wales in order to establish how we can work together on non-devolved issues.

### **Financial Implications**

18. There are no expected financial implications of the Queen's Speech; responding to the Government's legislative programme forms part of the team's core activity.

### **Next steps**

19. Officers to reflect the Queen's Speech within the forward work plan.

## **Appendix: Relevant announcements from the Queen's Speech**

### **Building Safety Bill**

#### **The main elements of the Bill are :**

- Create the Building Safety Regulator, with a duty on council regulators and fire and rescue authorities to cooperate with it.
- Introduce new duties for those responsible for residential buildings over 18 metres or seven storeys, including stock-holding councils.
- Establishing a new framework to provide national oversight of construction products and strengthen the powers of the Office for Product Safety and Standards in this area.
- Establishing a new homes ombudsman and simplifying the process to log complaints to the Housing Ombudsman for social housing tenants.
- Making provisions for a levy on developers.

#### **LGA view:**

- This Bill cannot come soon enough as our broken building safety system needs reforms to be enshrined in tough new legislation. Residents have a right to be safe and to feel safe in their own homes, and the construction industry and those with legal duties now need to step up and deliver the cladding remediation work required.
- The Government has yet to respond to the points raised by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee's scrutiny of the draft Bill or to provide adequate funding to protect leaseholders. No leaseholder should have to pay the costs of making their home safe. Action should be taken to force developers and product manufacturers to meet the costs they have imposed on the country through decades of failure and prevent wider economic damage that could result if the cladding scandal continues to impact the housing market.
- Social housing providers will also need to be protected from these costs if they are to provide the housing the nation needs and improve the existing housing to the standards Government wants.
- Building safety is not only an issue for buildings over 18 metres which is why a risk-based approach, which considers the vulnerabilities of residents, is required.
- Councils and fire services will have a vital role to play in delivering the new regime. The government needs to ensure this role is fully funded.

### **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill**

#### **The main elements of the Bill are:**

- Introducing tougher sentences for offences such as rape, manslaughter and wounding with intent to cause Grievous Bodily Harm by ending the automatic release at the halfway point for serious sexual and violent offenders sentenced to a standard determinate sentence of between 4 and 7 years. This will bring their release point in line with serious violent and

sexual offenders sentenced to seven years or more, following the secondary legislation we introduced in April last year.

- Increasing the maximum prison sentence for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to two years and creating a statutory requirement for the Home Secretary to report annually on progress made against the Police Covenant.
- Strengthening community sentences to cut crime by providing appropriate punishment addressing drivers of offending.
- Placing a duty on local authorities, the police, criminal justice agencies, health and fire and rescue services to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, and the introduction of Serious Violence Reduction Orders. These will be used to prevent serious violence by equipping the police with new powers to stop and search those convicted of knife and offensive weapons offences.
- Reforming pre-charge bail so that bail conditions, such as prohibiting contact, are used more effectively to better protect victims and witnesses.
- Extending the scope of offences in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 relating to the abuse of positions of trust legislation to capture additional roles, such as sport coaches and religious leaders.
- Balancing the rights of protesters with the rights of others to go about their business unhindered, by enabling the police to better manage highly disruptive protests.
- A new criminal offence to target trespassers using vehicles to reside on land who are causing significant damage or significant disruption to local communities. Creating the necessary basis in legislation for the providers of Secure Schools to operate this new form of youth custodial institution that is designed to place education at the heart of youth custody in order to cut crime.

#### **LGA view**

- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill covers a broad range of community safety issues and seeks to introduce measures which aim to have an impact on victims of crime, those who perpetrate crimes, and wider community safety.
- Councils will continue to play their important role, alongside the police and other partners, in protecting our communities and ensuring they are safe places to live.
- We would like to see further formal consultation on several measures in the Bill, particularly the Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews, imposing conditions on public protests, and the youth justice measures.
- The Bill seeks to place a new statutory duty on local authorities and wider partners to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence. We support taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime and emphasise the importance of investing in early intervention and prevention measures. Any new duties in the Bill must be fully funded. We are also calling on the Government to extend funding and support for Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) to all areas.
- Effectively tackling unauthorised encampments will require a multi-agency response and the resources to support this. It is important the Government moves quickly to bring forward the

good practice guidance it has committed to publish as this will support councils in dealing with unauthorised encampments.

- It will be important for this Bill to complement the measures outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act, the forthcoming Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, the Draft Victim's Bill, as well as wider legislation and guidance, to ensure that simultaneous changes to the local government community safety landscape are considered collectively and carefully.

### **Animal Welfare Plan and Legislation**

#### **The main elements of the plan and legislation are:**

- Deliver on the Government's commitment to the highest standards of animal welfare by creating an Action Plan for Animal Welfare and legislation.
- Recognise animal sentience in law through the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill.
- Increase protections for pets, sporting animals, and farm animals by ending the export of live animals for slaughter, banning the keeping of primates as pets, improving standards in zoos and cracking down on puppy smuggling, and enhancing conservation through a Kept Animals Bill.
- Ban the import of hunting trophies from endangered animals abroad and end the advertising for sale of low welfare experiences abroad through an Animals Abroad Bill, as well as considering steps to limit the trade and sale of foie gras.
- Introduce mandatory cat microchipping and review current microchip databases.

#### **LGA view**

- We support the objective of increasing animal welfare standards and eradicating cruel practices both domestically and internationally. However, the Government should balance the need to educate consumers alongside the need for enforcement, particularly in terms of poor welfare overseas, and it must ensure councils can practicably take action in response to new regulations.
- The elements outlined in the announcement are likely to mean a significant amount of additional work for councils' regulatory services which are already under significant pressure. New responsibilities will need adequate resourcing in order to deliver the Government's ambitions.
- The cross-government regulatory services task and finish group is already considering the challenges facing local regulatory services. These new responsibilities around animal welfare demonstrate the importance of the group's work to secure sustainable funding for regulatory services and a long term cross-government view of the demands being placed on them.

### **Draft Online Safety Bill**

#### **The main elements of the Bill are to:**

17 June 2021

- Place a duty of care on companies to improve the safety of their users online. This will require them to tackle illegal content on their services and to protect children from harmful content and activity online. They must seriously consider the risks their services pose to users and take action to protect them.
- Require major platforms to set out clearly in their terms and conditions what legal content is unacceptable on their platform and enforce these consistently and transparently.
- Requiring platforms to have effective and accessible user reporting and redress mechanisms to report concerns about harmful content, and challenge infringement of rights (such as wrongful takedown).
- Designating Ofcom as the independent online safety regulator and giving it a suite of robust enforcement powers to uphold the regulation. This will include very large fines of up to £18 million or 10 per cent of annual global turnover - whichever is greater - as well as business disruption measures. The Government expects Ofcom to prioritise enforcement action where children's safety has been compromised.
- Boosting public resilience to disinformation through media literacy and supporting research on misinformation and disinformation.

#### **LGA view**

- Abuse online or offline should not be tolerated. We look forward to working with government to build a thriving digital economy that is trusted by and protects everyone in the UK while ensuring users' rights, including freedom of expression.
- Appointing Ofcom as an online safety regulator is a step in the right direction. We hope it will go some way to reducing online harms, including of children and vulnerable adults.
- We are concerned about the increasing spread of mis- and disinformation, and incidents of intimidation and abuse of elected representatives. Both pose significant threats to local democracy, as well as public health and community safety, and we welcome measures to tackle these issues.
- We are pleased that the Bill requires platforms to take responsibility for what is on their website and those who use it. In addition, we support calls for the Bill to include consideration of financial harms through scams, as well as other types of harm.
- Councils' trading standards teams play a vital role in tackling fraud, including online, and additional funding would allow councils to support the Government's ambitions to tackle a greater number of online scam cases. In addition, it is vital that online platforms take responsibility for fraudulent activity taking place on their sites.

#### **Draft Victims Bill**

##### **The main elements of the Bill are:**

- Enshrining the 12 key rights in the new Victims' Code into law. Those key rights include being:
  - Kept informed at key stages of the case.
  - Provided with regular updates on the progress of their case.

17 June 2021

- Referred to organisations supporting victims of crime.
- Given the opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement and be informed how it was used in court.
- Informed when an offender is released, where eligible under the Victim Contact Scheme.

### **LGA view**

- We welcome the Government's commitment to enshrine victims' rights into law, as this will help to ensure victims are more consistently supported and thereby enable them to deal with and recover from the impacts of crime. The proposals should also improve victims' experiences within the criminal justice process.
- It will be important for the Bill to recognise that 'victims of crime' will apply to a broad range of crimes – including those where the victim is also a perpetrator, such as in cases of child criminal exploitation – and there will be different prosecuting authorities involved in these cases. Listening to and engaging with victims of crime, and understanding more about their lived experience, will be vital in helping to achieve meaningful change and reform. We are also keen to work with the Government to ensure child victims of crime receive suitable support.
- The LGA has long called for greater investment in domestic abuse community-based support services, as well as early intervention and prevention services, and perpetrator programmes. It is therefore positive to see the Government has committed to consult on the provision of community-based domestic abuse services and will set expectations for the standard and availability of victim support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Current funding for victim support services is short-term and piecemeal. This does not allow for long-term strategic planning, nor provide any consistency for much-needed specialist support services and the victims that need to access these services. There needs to be greater collaboration across Government departments on this important issue, as well as comprehensive, multi-year funding provided to commissioners.
- To accompany this Bill, we would also like to see a greater focus on tackling perpetrators of crime, and a clear ministerial lead focusing on this important issue. There needs to be an integrated approach to identifying and responding to perpetrators, to help change their behaviour and address the risks posed by them.
- This new Victims' Bill should align and complement the provisions outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act, the Police Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Strategy, and the forthcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, as well as wider guidance and legislation.

### **Criminal Justice Catch-up and Recovery Plan**

#### **The main elements of the Plan are:**

- To put the running of the coronial system on the same footing as other courts and tribunals, with efficiency increased through virtual hearings, the holding of inquests without a hearing

17 June 2021

in non-contentious cases, discontinuing investigations where the cause of death is natural without first requiring a post mortem, and allowing coroner areas to merge across local authority boundaries.

- By ensuring the coroners' jurisdiction is in line with other courts and tribunals, delays in progressing cases will be reduced and will therefore reduce the distress of bereaved families.

#### **LGA view**

- Councils are keen to ensure that coronial inquests minimise the distress to bereaved families, and welcome measures that allow coroners' courts to operate more effectively by working in the same way as other courts and tribunals.
- The ability to rationalise coroner areas will assist councils in making coroners' services operate more efficiently. Government should fully fund the costs associated with these proposals as councils may need to invest in new technology and systems to deliver these new ways of working.
- As part of the plan, the Government should also review whether coroners' courts should continue to be a locally managed service, or whether it would be better for the coronial service to be run, managed and funded by central government.

### **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy**

#### **The main elements of the Strategy are to:**

- Tackle crime and this includes tackling violence against women and girls.
- Take action to toughen sentences, protect the public and improve support for victims and investing in support for victims.
- Publish a new VAWG Strategy and increase the ability to tackle emerging crime types such as 'upskirting' and revenge porn.
- Conduct an end-to-end review of the criminal justice response to rape, due this summer, looking at how every stage of the criminal justice system handles rape cases, from police report to the final outcome at court.
- Also to publish a Domestic Abuse Strategy focusing on prevention, accompanied by £25 million of investment which will more than double the amount being spent on programmes to work with perpetrators.

#### **LGA view**

- Councils are determined to help tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), working alongside the police and criminal justice services, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), health and education services, the voluntary and community sector and wider support services, to help ensure women and girls are protected from all forms of abuse.
- It is right the Government's VAWG strategy (2021 – 2024) should focus on all forms of violence against women and girls, including rape and sexual violence, domestic abuse, forced marriage, so called 'honour-based' abuse, female genital mutilation (and other

17 June 2021

culturally specific forms of abuse), stalking, sharing of personal intimate images without consent and online harassment, which have devastating consequences.

- We welcome the new strategy's ambition to drive forward improvements in the effort to target perpetrators; to respond to the changing nature of these crimes; and, to place victims and survivors at the heart of the approach. It is particularly important that the Government's strategy captures the lived experience of those affected by VAWG, to help improve the response to these crimes. We also welcome the Government's commitment to carrying out an end-to-end Rape Review.
- Increased investment in the Safer Streets Fund is positive, but it will not, on its own, address systemic VAWG issues. There needs to be a comprehensive and long-term approach focused on achieving culture change and preventing VAWG issues arising in the first place, spanning across education, health, housing, families, and communities through to policing and criminal justice measures.
- This approach must be accompanied by comprehensive, multi-year funding made available to local commissioners to allow for long-term strategic planning and delivery of VAWG services. This should include Government funding the National Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Centre. There also needs to be greater co-ordination across Government departments, to make this a cross-departmental work-stream that focuses on both support for victims and tackling and preventing perpetrators' violent or abusive behaviour.

### **New Plan for Immigration Legislation**

#### **The main elements are to:**

- Clarify government's role in both tackling trafficking networks and supporting victims of modern slavery.

#### **LGA view**

- Modern slavery is a heinous crime and councils want to play their part in both working to eradicate it and supporting victims to recover but need the resources to enable them to do so.

### **Regulatory reform**

The Prime Minister has established a Better Regulation Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Chancellor, to ensure the Government is driving an ambitious programme of regulatory reform that enables and supports growth and innovation.

#### **LGA view**

- COVID-19 has highlighted the important and versatile role of councils' frontline regulatory services teams in protecting the public and supporting businesses.

17 June 2021

- It will be important to ensure any short-term regulatory easements introduced in relation to the pandemic are fully consulted on before they are made permanent, and that councils are not impacted financially by them.
- The LGA and councils have previously put forward a series of proposals for streamlining and improving our outdated licensing frameworks. We would welcome the opportunity to take forward these proposals with Government as part of this programme of work.

### **Integrated Review**

The Government will implement the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

#### **LGA view**

- The Government's commitment to taking forward its recent Integrated Review is positive. It will include looking at the role of Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) in preparing for and responding to emergencies.
- It will be important for the review to take into account the learning from councils' and LRFs' experiences of responding to the pandemic, as well as considering the steps necessary to taking a whole society approach to building resilience.



## **Building Safety update**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion.

### **Summary**

This report updates the Board on the LGA's building safety work since its last meeting.

#### **Recommendation**

That members note and comment on the LGA's building safety related work.

#### **Action/s**

Officers to incorporate members' views in the LGA's ongoing building safety related work.

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## **Building Safety update**

### **Remediation**

#### *Progress*

1. [MHCLG statistics](#) show that by 30 April 2021 92% (433) of all identified high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England had either completed or started remediation work to remove and replace unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding (95% of buildings identified at 31 December 2019) – an increase of two buildings since the end of March.
2. The pace of ACM remediation continues to be slow – 2 buildings were added to the total above in March and over 100 residential buildings still have ACM cladding. One of these, New Providence Wharf, experienced a serious fire on 7 May.
3. The [interim report of the investigation into the fire](#) was published on 1 June by London Fire Brigade (LFB). The initial findings from Senior Brigade Fire Investigators show that the smoke detectors on the 8th floor communal corridor failed to operate both the Automatic Opening Vent (AOV) and the cross corridor fire doors.
4. The spread of fire on the outside of the building from floors 8 to 11 is believed to have been facilitated by timber decking on the balconies.
5. The fire raises questions as to whether Responsible Persons (RPs) are doing enough to ensure that interim measures are fit for purpose, including whether they are based on assumptions about the building's behaviour in a fire that are wrong. Given that buildings have interim measures because they have not been built properly, RPs need to ensure that these assumptions have been checked.
6. The LFB is asking:
  - 6.1. all building owners and managers to check the materials used on external balconies and consider whether they could contribute to the spread of fire, and if necessary modify them as soon as possible; and
  - 6.2. all those responsible for high rise buildings, especially those in charge of properties that no longer support a stay put strategy, as was the case at New Providence Wharf, to check their fire safety measures including smoke ventilation systems (such as AOVs) as a priority. These should be regularly inspected and any issues acted upon.

7. [Registrations for the Building Safety Fund](#), which funds the remediation of non-ACM dangerous cladding on private blocks (and potentially covers the cost to leaseholders of remediation is social blocks) are also proceeding slowly. Around a third of the £1 billion funding announced in the 2020 budget has been allocated. Of nearly 3,000 registrations only 668 have been approved to apply for funding and only 70 full applications have been approved. Over 800 registrations have either been rejected or withdrawn.
8. The above means that the £3.5 billion additional funding for cladding remediation over 18 metres announced in February is not yet being spent. We have yet to hear the details of how it will be allocated. The loan scheme for buildings 11-18 metres has also yet to be fleshed out.
9. The [Waking Watch Relief Fund](#) roll out has completed with applications in London closing at the end of April. Analysis of the figures for London has not been undertaken. We are not aware of any applications that could not be funded.
10. On 26 May 2021 the Waking Watch Relief Fund re-opened to applications for a 4-week period using unallocated funding from the initial £30 million. The application period will close on 24 June 2021. This tranche of the funding will be administered by MHCLG more details can be found at the link above.

#### *Joint Inspection Team*

11. The parliamentary process for extending the indemnity for Joint Inspection Team's work has now been completed. The wording of the revised indemnity and funding agreement between the LGA and IDeA on one side and MHCLG on the other have been finalised and the IDeA Board has approved the signing of both documents. These changes will extend the team's inspections to cover buildings with dangerous non-ACM cladding and expand its training programme for councils. This should help to maximise its impact.

#### *Fire Protection Board*

12. The Building Risk Review programme overseen by the Board, remains slightly ahead of its target schedule to ensure all residential buildings over 18m have been assessed or inspected by the end of 2021.
13. The LGA has raised the need to ensure liaison between council housing enforcement and fire and rescue service enforcement. This has resulted in some work to adapt the protocol attached to the LACORS fire safety guide to cover liaison over high rise residential buildings. This is being carried out under the Fire Protection Board.

## Reform

14. Although MHCLG was due to respond to some of the Public Accounts Committee recommendations in relation to the department's building safety programme by the end of January, it has still not done so.

15. The Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCLG) select committee published its [report on cladding remediation](#) on 29 April. The LGA gave evidence to this inquiry. Recommendations include a call for a Comprehensive Building Safety Fund for full remediation works of affected buildings that:

- 15.1. applies to all high-risk buildings of any height, irrespective of tenure;
- 15.2. covers all fire safety defects, including combustible insulation; and
- 15.3. covers all associated costs.

The report goes on to say that the 'Comprehensive Building Safety Fund should be fully funded by Government and industry, and the Government should establish clear principles regarding how the costs should be split between the two. Total contributions should not be capped. Social housing providers should have full and equal access to government funds for remediation'.

### *Building Safety Bill*

16. The Government has yet to respond to the HCLG Select Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill. This was supposed to be done in January. The Bill was included in the Queen's Speech (see **Annex One**) but no new detail was provided. We understand it is hoped to publish the Bill before summer recess.

### *Gateway One*

17. Planning Gateway One, the first stage of the building safety regime, should commence in August. Developers of residential buildings over 18m will need to provide a Fire Statement and the Health and Safety Executive's Building Safety Regulator will become a statutory consultee on planning. The Government has published [more details](#), which will be of interest to planning authorities, fire authorities (although it should not require fire authorities to do additional work, beyond very occasional requests from the regulator) and developers.

18. We raised with MHCLG concerns about the shortcomings of regulations introduced over the Christmas period that apply where a developer wants to use a Permitted Development Right (PDR) to extend a block of flats upwards to create new flats.

17 June 2021

*Product safety*

19. On 21 April the government [announced the lead reviewers conducting the Independent review of the system for testing construction products and published the Terms of Reference](#).
20. The review will answer the question: ‘How should the UK system for testing the safety of construction products and the use of data from the system be strengthened, to inspire confidence that those products are safe and perform as labelled and marketed when incorporated into construction work?’
21. It will do this by:
  - 21.1. Mapping the system for testing, certifying, marketing, selling, re-testing and recalling construction products, including the legal framework under which this happens.
  - 21.2. Considering evidence from a variety of sources and assess what does/ could go wrong within this system.
  - 21.3. Recommending how this system should be strengthened, taking into account wider government and industry reforms and any economic or practical implications of implementing the recommendations
22. The independent review will be led by a panel comprising Paul Morrell OBE (Chair of the review) and Anneliese Day QC, supported by MHCLG and Office of Product Safety and Standards officials. It is to report in the summer and the Government will publish the review and its response (as soon as practicable). The LGA has submitted informal evidence to the review.

*Fire Safety Bill*

23. The Bill finally received Royal Assent at the last possible moment after the House of Lords backed down and abandoned amendments designed to protect leaseholders from remediation costs. Work on everything else seemed to grind to a halt at the Home Office in the last weeks of the Bill’s passage and as a result we have yet to see the outcome of its latest work on the risk based guidance that must accompany the Bill. The Act’s commencement – slated for June – is further complicated by the fact that there is no current guidance on completing fire risk assessments (see below).

*Fire Safety in Purpose-Built Blocks of Flats*

24. This guide was commissioned from fire safety experts by the LGA at the Government’s request in 2011. The LGA is no longer hosting this guide (although the government now is) as changes in government policy and regulation mean that it is now out of date and the LGA does not have the inhouse expertise to amend the document. The LGA warned

the government in 2019 that this might happen and has not taken the decision lightly. We cannot however host advice to our members that could leave us or then open to legal challenge.

25. The Government is currently producing a new version which we anticipate will be available later this year. Until this guidance appears, or the Government provides interim guidance it will be difficult to complete the fire risk assessments envisaged in the Fire Safety Act. Article 50 of the Fire Safety Order 2005 requires the Secretary of State to ensure that guidance is available to responsible persons on their duties under the Order.

#### *Fire Safety Consultation*

26. The Government published its [response to the Fire Safety Consultation](#) on 17 March. This covered proposals designed to:

- 26.1. strengthen the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the FSO) and improve compliance in all regulated premises;
- 26.2. implement the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Report recommendations that require a change in the law; and,
- 26.3. improve the effectiveness of consultation between Building Control Bodies (BCBs) and Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) on planning for building work and the arrangements for the handover of fire safety information.

27. The response says the Government's will introduce measures that include:

- 27.1. improved competence requirements for fire risk assessors;
- 27.2. a requirement that all Responsible Persons under the FSO must record their completed fire risk assessment; their contact information, including a UK based address, cooperate with other RPs in the building and ensure they pass information on to new RPs;
- 27.3. increased fines for various offences under the Order;
- 27.4. improvements to the coordination of fire and building control
- 27.5. delivery of the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations that require legislation through regulations introduced under Article 24 of the FSO before the second anniversary of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase One Report (this timetable may have slipped following the delay to the Fire Safety Bill and we think September is the new target). The recommendations on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and fire door inspections will subject to further consultation, before then. The regulations will impose new

17 June 2021

requirements in relation to signage, Premises Information Boxes and lift inspections, as well as PEEPs, fire door inspections and evacuation more widely.

28. Further work will be carried out to develop policy in relation to fees and charges, false fire alarms, maintenance, the provision of information to residents and higher-risk workplace buildings.

### **Implications for Wales**

29. Building regulations and fire and rescue services are devolved responsibilities of the Welsh Assembly Government, and the main implications arising from the recommendations of the Hackitt Review and the government's response to it are on building regulations and fire safety in England. However the Welsh government has announced that it will be making the changes recommended in the report to the regulatory system in Wales, and the LGA has been keeping in contact to ensure the WLGA is kept informed of the latest developments in England.

### **Financial Implications**

30. Although the LGA has set up the Joint Inspection Team, the cost of doing so is being met by MHCLG. Other work arising from this report will continue to be delivered within the planned staffing budget, which includes an additional fixed term post in the safer communities team to support the LGA's building safety work.

### **Next steps**

31. Officers to continue to support the sector's work to keep residents safe and reform the buildings safety system, as directed by members.

**Annex one Queen's Speech – [Supporting document](#) text on the Building Safety Bill**

*“My Ministers will establish in law a new Building Safety Regulator to ensure that the tragedies of the past are never repeated.”*

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Make substantial reforms to the UK's building safety regime by establishing the Building Safety Regulator to deliver a new approach to regulating the built environment.
- Implement the recommendations made in the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety, led by Dame Judith Hackitt.

The main benefits of the Bill would be:

- Changing the regulations and standards for the construction of high-risk buildings to ensure accountability and responsibility by making fundamental changes to the regulatory framework for higher-risk buildings and ensuring that products used in the construction of buildings will be held to rigorous safety standards.
- Putting in place measures that ensure homeowners can have a clearer path to redress and giving residents a stronger voice in the system.
- Ensuring the lessons from the Grenfell Tower tragedy are learnt and that residents are safe and feel safe in their homes.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Establishing the Building Safety Regulator and updating existing building safety regulation, including a new stringent regime for buildings 18 metres or more, or 7 storeys or more, and introducing a system of Accountable Persons and Dutyholders – who will be responsible for making and keeping a building safe.

17 June 2021

- Establishing a new framework to provide national oversight of construction products, and strengthening the powers of the Office for Product Safety and Standards in this area.
- Establishing a new homes ombudsman and simplifying the process to log complaints to the Housing Ombudsman for social housing tenants.
- Making provisions to support the removal of unsafe cladding, including through a financing scheme to pay for costs and a levy to ensure the development industry pays its fair share of the costs of remediating unsafe cladding.

#### Territorial extent and application

- The Bill will extend and apply to the whole of the UK. Its substantive provisions would apply in the main to England, with some provisions applying to England and Wales and provisions related to the Construction Products Regulator applying to the whole of the UK.

#### Key facts

- Over 13,000 buildings will fall into the higher risk regime established by the Bill, with an estimated 400 additional buildings coming into scope each year.
- We are supporting the removal of all unsafe cladding from buildings between 11-18m [*NB this must be a typo, they mean over 18m*] through a £5 billion investment fund which will fully cover these costs.

We have also announced a generous financing scheme for the removal of unsafe cladding from buildings between 11 and 18 metres. A new tax on the residential property development sector will raise at least £2 billion to help cover the costs of the Government's remediation programme. We are also providing £30 million to pay for the cost of common alarm systems, to help end costly waking watch measures in buildings waiting for remediation.

17 June 2021

- We are clear that the responsibility for building safety still lies with the building owner and that the Government has stepped in only as a last resort.
- The Government published a draft bill in July 2020 for pre-legislative scrutiny by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

We will respond to their considerations shortly

17 June 2021

## **Annex 2 Text of email on Gateway One**

*As this email arrived on the day of the Queen's Speech it has not been possible to analyse or condense its contents.*

Yesterday (10/05/2021) MHCLG published information on planning gateway one to support stakeholders and industry (including planning applicants and local planning authorities) to prepare for its implementation in the summer, and as you know JRG have contributed to the planning gateway one policy and policy design trials over the last year.

Government is committed to transforming the regulatory framework for fire safety in response to the Grenfell Tower fire, bringing about the biggest change in building safety for a generation, and will be introducing our Building Safety Bill this year which will establish a new building safety regime in England.

As a first step, a number of new requirements (referred to as planning gateway one) are to be introduced into the planning system by making amendments to The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), and an associated instrument. The purpose of the new requirements is to ensure fire safety matters as they relate to land use planning are incorporated at the planning application stage for schemes involving a relevant high-rise residential building. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny we propose to bring the changes into effect from 1 August 2021. The draft statutory provisions have been published and will:

- involve the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) becoming a statutory consultee before permission is granted for development which involves or is likely to involve a high-rise residential building in certain circumstances;
- require relevant applications for planning permission to include a fire statement (on a form published by the Secretary of State, or one to substantially the same effect) to ensure applicants have considered fire safety issues as they relate to land use planning matters (e.g. layout and access) ; and
- help inform effective decision-making by local planning authorities (or the Secretary of State as the case may be), so that those decisions and the actions that flow from them properly reflect and respond to the needs of the local community.

Planning gateway one information can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/building-safety-planning-gateway-one>

17 June 2020

## **Safer and Stronger Communities End of Year Report 2020/21 and 2021/22 work plan**

### **Purpose of report**

For direction.

### **Summary**

This paper sets out the Safer and Stronger Communities end of year report, including initial proposals for the 2021/22 work plan.

### **Recommendation**

That members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board note the end of year report and consider the Board's work priorities for 2021/22.

### **Action**

Officers to prepare a paper setting out the proposed work plan for 2021/22 in line with the Board's feedback, for consideration at the September meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board.

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## **Safer and Stronger Communities End of Year Report 2020/21 and 2021/22 work plan**

### **Background**

1. At its meeting in September the Board considered its priorities for 2020/21 and agreed five overarching themes:
  - 1.1. Community safety
  - 1.2. Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion
  - 1.3. Regulatory services and licensing
  - 1.4. Blue light services and civil resilience
  - 1.5. Crematoria, funerals, coroners and registrars.
2. Alongside these core areas of safer communities work, the Board's work plan also included an ongoing programme of activity on building safety, following the Grenfell Fire in 2017.
3. This paper provides an overview of the achievements delivered against these themes and seeks an initial steer from the Board on its priorities for 2021/22. As with 2019/20, the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to impact on delivery of the 2020/21 work plan agreed in September, with resources in some areas in particular still diverted to ongoing work on the pandemic. In recent months, team members who have been heavily focused on Covid-19 have begun to resume a more normal pattern of activity, and it is hoped that this will continue throughout summer and as we move into the 2021/22 Board programme.
4. Feedback from members on their priorities for next year will subsequently be developed into a full paper for consideration at the first meeting of the 2021/22 Board cycle in September.

### **Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion**

5. We have continued to raise concerns about the impact of extremism on communities and the challenges this presents for councils, and urged Government to retain investment in measures to build resilience and tackle division and polarisation.
6. The last year in particular has continued to see the emergence of a number of extremism and cohesion issues for local government and partners. We have continued to provide significant support to councils to respond to these through our work with the [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism](#) (SIGCE), which the LGA has also been

17 June 2020

financing since last autumn. The SIGCE has been key in providing timely guidance, support and a network of experienced practitioners to those facing issues throughout the year.

7. The SIGCE's programme comprised a number of workstreams, including: organising webinars on online extremism, COVID-19 and conspiracy theories (which has supported wider work at the LGA on vaccine disinformation), and social media monitoring; a series of practitioner roundtables focussing on themes such as COVID-19 narratives and exploitation by extremists, Black Lives Matter protests and counter-protests, and learning from the MHCLG integration area pilots; supported Newcastle City Council to host a further series of roundtables specifically on tackling the harassment of asylum seekers; worked with the East of England LGA to run a regional session for elected members; and provided regular guidance and updates through the online Knowledge Hub.
8. We have also continued to support the SIGCE's working groups on Far-Right extremism and Faith-Based "Islamist" extremism. The Far-Right Working Group has provided bespoke support and training to a council facing significant far-right activity, and developed guidance for councils on how to respond when activists exploit a local issue. The Faith-Based Working Group has also provided bespoke support to a council facing particular challenges in this space, and has commissioned research to explore the impact of terminology on community engagement and the delivery of local counter-extremism work, which is due to report back shortly.
9. Beyond the SIGCE, we delivered two successful training courses for officers on effective community engagement and communications, developed in response to specific concerns about how to respond and build resilience to far-right activity and narratives.
10. We published [guidance on the scrutiny of Prevent and counter-extremism](#) with CfPS and a [guidance note for councils on responding to calls for changes to public realm](#).
11. In December we submitted a response to the Law Commission's hate crime review, which stressed the seriousness of hate crime and its impact on communities, including on councillors and officers who have themselves been targets. We raised councils' concerns about increased levels of hate crime and a reported resurgence of racial and racialised narratives; welcomed efforts to amend hate crime legislation to remove discrepancies across characteristics; and supported proposals for misogyny to be recognised explicitly under the legislation.
12. More recently we responded to Lord Walney's review into political violence and disruption, setting out a number of concerns about extremist activity on- and off line, and drawing a distinction between protest activity which is disruptive only, and acts which are violent and/or target certain communities thus stoking division and mistrust.

17 June 2020

13. Building on our 2019 submission, we provided supplementary information to the Independent review of Prevent, and over the year continued to feed in sector views to Government about the regionalisation of Prevent delivery.

14. We are also producing a sector response to the Government's Protect duty consultation, which is aimed at helping to protect public venues and spaces from terrorist attacks, which is due at the beginning of July.

### **Community safety**

15. On **domestic abuse**, we have focused on the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act through Parliament, highlighting the importance of preventing domestic abuse from occurring in the first place and the need to take co-ordinated and urgent action against the perpetrators of abuse.

16. Following our lobbying, the Government recognised the calls of the LGA and charities for a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy and committed to bring this forward as part of the forthcoming Domestic Abuse strategy.

17. We welcomed the Spending Review 2020 announcement of £125 million funding to help enable local authorities to deliver the new statutory duty to support domestic abuse victims and their children in safe accommodation. The LGA continues to work with councils and government on this so that we can ensure the successful implementation of the new statutory duty. We are also working hard to ensure this new funding meets any increases in demand for services, and any additional burdens identified by local needs assessments.

18. We also expressed concern that the learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews was not being shared at a national level or part of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's remit. We were pleased the Government amended the legislation to require a person or body carrying out a domestic homicide review in England and Wales to send a copy of the report of the review to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

19. The LGA campaigned for greater investment in community-based support services, which provide vital support for domestic abuse victims. The legislation has now been amended so that the Domestic Abuse Commissioner is able to publish a report, under her new powers in the Act, on the provision of and need for community-based services. Local authorities will also be able to assess the impact of the safe accommodation duty on the provision of community-based support in their area.

20. A full overview of our lobbying work on the Domestic Abuse Act is [available here](#).

21. In addition to our Parliamentary work, the LGA has held several webinar sessions on tackling domestic abuse, most recently with a webinar session on transforming the response to economic abuse. We have held a series of workshops throughout the year with local authorities to support them in the implementation of the new statutory duty.
22. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board has been very active on tackling **Violence Against Women and Girls** issues. We submitted a [response](#) to the Government's [consultation](#) on the development of the next Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG), highlighting the need for this to align with other strategies and legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Bill. We also reflected on the terrible news about Sarah Everard, and the wider concerns about public safety. The LGA also submitted [written evidence](#) to the Home Affairs Committee [inquiry](#) into Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
23. The LGA continues to contribute to Government strategic discussions on tackling antisocial behaviour and regularly attends the Home Office-led Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board. We have hosted a several well-attended conferences on tackling anti-social behaviour and the Community Trigger, as well as published a series of best practice [case studies](#) for local government. The Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board also took part in an ITV programme on addressing anti-social behaviour, alongside representatives from the National Police Chief's Council and ASB Help. We have also worked closely with the Victim's Commissioner's office and attended roundtables on this important issue.
24. On **serious violence**, the LGA continues to lobbying MPs on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which contains provisions on the forthcoming serious violence duty, as well as measures on unauthorised encampments, right to protest, youth custody and remand, Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews and Serious Violence Reduction Orders. In May, Cllr Nesil Caliskan gave [oral evidence](#) to the Public Bill Committee, and we submitted supplementary written evidence.
25. The LGA has also held webinars on tackling serious violent crime and published a series of case studies on 'taking a [public health approach to tackling serious violence](#)'. We continue to work with the Government, councils and partners on this important issue.
26. **Modern slavery** is one of the areas where our activity has been impacted by the need to focus on Covid-19, although we have sought to maintain our involvement in regular discussions with the Home Office and other key stakeholders. We are now aiming to build this back up and have scheduled a webinar in mid-July to introduce councillors and others to the issue of modern slavery, and are currently aiming to develop a wider programme of sessions responding to issues that councils have identified they would like

to hear about. We are also in the process of developing a set of case studies of good practice on housing and modern slavery.

### **Blue light services and civil resilience**

27. The LGA continues to input into the government's long-term ambitions on fire governance. In September 2020, the LGA submitted a [consultation response to part one of the Home Office's two-part review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners \(PCCs\)](#), on behalf of the Fire Services Management Committee and the Safer and Stronger Communities Board. The submission focussed on both Police and Crime Panel (PCP) issues as well as fire governance. The LGA represents Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners and PCPs.
28. The LGA worked with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Home Office to develop a business case for submission to the 2020 Spending Review, submitted in August 2020. We have continued working with the NFCC input into the Spending Review process we are expecting this year. This includes re-convening the Senior Sector Group (SSG), following the positive engagement we had with the Home Office through the SSG throughout 2020.
29. Fire Services Management Committee and FRA Members across England have continued to engage with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services to contribute evidence to its annual inspections, including the COVID-19 inspection in 2020. This has culminated in: the [COVID 19 National Inspection Report](#), published in January 2021; and the [State of Fire 2020 report](#), published in March 2021. We also continue to hold a position on the Fire Standards Board.
30. On 1-4 March 2020, the annual LGA Fire Conference was held virtually for the first time. Guest speakers included the Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities, Lord Stephen Greenhalgh, and HM Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor. All four plenary sessions and the two interactive meetings were well attended, and positive feedback was received. Planning for the 2021 LGA Fire Conference has begun, including reviewing key considerations regarding options to return to in person conference activity, subject to government guidance later in the year.
31. Throughout 2020/21, the LGA worked with the NFCC, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), and consulted with the broader fire and rescue sector, to develop the [Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services](#) for England (Core Code). The Core Code is designed to help employees of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) act in the best way towards each other and while serving the public. On 18 May 2021, the Core Code was launched, alongside the Code of Ethics Fire Standard developed by the Fire Standards Board, which we also contributed to the development of.

17 June 2020

32. In 2020/21, the LGA delivered the Fire Leadership Essentials course, which aims to support FRA members with their responsibilities, including developing skills around leadership and understanding of practical scrutiny in FRAs, and improving their knowledge of the key strategic issues facing the sector. This was delivered via Zoom this year for the first time.
33. Improving equality, diversity and inclusion remains a priority area in the fire and rescue sector. The LGA's Fire Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network has continued to convene virtually throughout 2020/21. The Network brings together elected representatives who are responsible for diversity and inclusion issues in their fire and rescue authorities. Topics covered during the four virtual sessions included: Positive action; The Benefits of Staff Networks; and a Two-part meeting series on 'Improving Racial Equality in the Fire and Rescue Sector'.
34. In 2020, the LGA commissioned Andy Fry, ex-Chief Fire Officer and former HM Inspector of Fire Services in Wales, to deliver a series of instructive videos covering various topics associated with the governance role of Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) members. Building on the LGA's guide, [Leading the fire sector: Oversight of fire and rescue service performance](#), the webinar series aims to provide an introduction to governance issues for those who are new to FRAs, as well as the support the development of existing members. The first three webinars – '[The Role of Fire and Rescue Authority Members](#)', '[Political Oversight of Fire and Rescue Service Performance](#)', and '[Effective FRA Governance During Times of Crisis](#)' – are available on the LGA website. The remaining webinar will be published in Summer 2021.

### **Water safety**

35. The independent review of the legal framework for beach safety commissioned by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) was published in November and the Board considered the implications for local authorities at its meeting that month. The National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) then consulted on the recommendations in the MCA review, which we responded to in December. However the majority of respondents to the NWSF consultation supported some of the key recommendations that the Board and member authorities had concerns about. The Board therefore wrote separately to the Minister for Aviation, Maritime & Security setting out our position and making clear we do not support a new duty as well as sharing our views on alternative approaches to improving water safety.

### **Licensing and regulation**

36. Our work on regulatory services and licensing has been dominated this year by Covid-19 compliance and enforcement activity. In a rapidly changing environment (particularly throughout Autumn 2020) we have worked closely with both councils and key Government departments to feed into the development of evolving regulations and policy

approaches on a wide range of compliance and enforcement matters, identify issues and support councils with information and guidance. We have also held a series of compliance and enforcement webinars attracting several hundred delegates each.

37. In Autumn, the LGA argued that the pressures on council regulatory services merited a cross government approach to identifying pressures and priorities, with demands linked to COVID and EU exit layering on top of existing capacity issues within the services. This led MHCLG to convene a cross-government regulatory services task and finish group which we have been supporting over the past 5 months. The task and finish group is looking at options for increasing the resilience of regulatory services, specifically environmental health and trading standards. Alongside the growing demands being made of these services, there is also the challenge of an ageing workforce with a limited pipeline of officers being developed, with recruitment challenges already occurring in many places. From an LGA perspective, the proposals being developed by the task and finish group workstreams are likely to align with the ideas in the submission on regulatory services which we made to last year's spending round, which we will update for the spending review expected later this year.
38. On **taxis**, we have recently updated our councillor handbook to reflect the statutory guidance published last year. This will be published shortly, and we intend to run some supporting webinars to promote this.

#### **Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners**

39. The ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during the second wave, has impacted planned work on crematoria and burial services, coroners, registrars, medical examiners, and emergency planners. The LGA has continued to engage with Government and the sector on the impact of the pandemic on these services. The LGA is currently undertaking work on the role of Coroners in local government.
40. The LGA has input into key government guidance documents, including the [Public health funerals: good practice guidance](#) (published September 2020) and the regular updates to the [Guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#) (latest version published 4 June 2021).
41. The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation into the funeral market was originally paused during the early stage of the COVID-19 response in 2020, acknowledging the pressure that local authorities were under. The CMA resumed their investigation in Summer 2020, which the LGA inputted into. The CMA have now published their final report, which contains some . The CMA may revisit this issue again in the future.

**Building safety**

- 42. The [LGA lobbied on behalf of councils on the Fire Safety Bill](#), successfully ensuring that the Bill’s commencement will be accompanied by guidance designed to minimise the problems arising from a shortage of fire risk assessors and working with the NFCC and the Home Office to design the guidance. It is impossible to say whether the guidance will completely overcome this issue as the number of buildings affected and the number of assessors available are unknown.
- 43. The LGA [responded to the Fire Safety Consultation](#) addressing the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry’s first phase.
- 44. The LGA submitted [evidence](#) to the HCLG select committee’s pre-legislative scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill and Lord Porter gave [oral evidence](#). Officer continued to liaise with MHCLG and the HSE over the development of the new building safety regime, in particular through membership of the Joint Regulators’ Group.
- 45. Lord Porter also gave [oral evidence](#) to the [HCLG select committee inquiry inquiries into remediation of flammable cladding](#) and the LGA gave [written evidence](#) to the [PAC inquiry into the same subject](#).
- 46. We published a guide for counsellors in supporting residents of buildings with dangerous cladding and a [position statement on leaseholder costs](#).
- 47. The LGA has continued to work with NFCC and MHCLG on the remediation of buildings with dangerous cladding, in particular through its membership of the Fire protection Board and through hosting the Joint Inspection Team.

**2021/22 Priorities**

- 48. It is expected that the themes for the 2021/22 work priorities will remain broadly consistent with 2020/21, with a number of workstreams continuing into the new Board cycle.
- 49. The table below sets out some initial thinking on workstreams that will continue into the new Board cycle, subject to the Board’s views:

Priority area	Proposed activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to lobby Government on the importance of retaining investment in measures to prevent extremism and build resilience</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a programme of support to councils on tackling extremism through the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism, including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A series of roundtables and webinars for practitioners to share emerging challenges and facilitate support</li> <li>• Case studies to capture good practice in tackling extremism and hate crime</li> <li>• Facilitating academic support to councils on tackling far-right and faith-based extremism</li> <li>• Continuing with the work of the SIGCE's Working Groups on far-right and faith-based extremism</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide training for elected members on tackling extremism and building cohesion</li> <li>• Feeding in sector views in response to anticipated legislation on tackling online harms</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with the Government on the forthcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021 – 2024 and continue to lobby for increased investment in VAWG services - as well as the DA strategy.</li> <li>• Support councils to implement the duties in the recent DA Bill.</li> <li>• Continue to lobby Government on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, including ensuring the proposed new statutory duty to tackle serious violent crime is fully funded by Government. Also, engage with the forthcoming Draft Victims Bill.</li> <li>• Provide support to councils responding to unauthorised encampments and work with LGA Boards to inform our response on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities.</li> <li>• Take forward work delayed from 2020/2021 looking at resilience in community safety issues.</li> <li>• Develop a programme of work to support councils on tackling modern slavery.</li> <li>• Host a range of webinars and events for councils on community safety issues.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue light services and civil resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute an LGA view to the government review of Local Resilience Forums and the Civil Contingencies Act.</li> <li>• Respond to the Police and Crime Commissioner Review White Paper when published and seek to shape government's policies on changes to fire and rescue service governance.</li> <li>• Work with the National Fire Chiefs Council to inform the Home Office's Spending Review submission.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support FRAs respond to HMICFRS’s State of Fire report recommendations and to individual inspection reports.</li> <li>• Continue work around transparency and standards, workforce development and climate change.</li> <li>• Support Police and Crime Panels scrutiny of Police and Crime Commissioners.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licensing and regulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby government to provide sustainable funding for vital public protection services and build on the work of the regulatory services task and finish group by introducing changes that increase the resilience of services.</li> <li>• Develop our training offer for licensing committees (potentially including a further Leadership Essentials course and an online offer).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to participate in the JRG, FPB and similar groups working to strengthen building safety.</li> <li>• Continue to host the Joint Inspection Team.</li> <li>• Support the implementation of the Fire Safety Act.</li> <li>• Lobby around the passage of the Building Safety Bill.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crematoria, coroners and registrars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We anticipate that there will be a range of work related to resilience in the death management processes including crematoria and registrars’ service.</li> <li>• Officers will continue to respond to the CMA investigation on the funerals market on aspects that affect local authorities.</li> </ul>

50. The Board’s views on any other areas they would like us to focus on would be very helpful.

**Implications for Wales**

51. We will work with colleagues at the Welsh LGA to identify areas where our work will be applicable to Wales, and where WLGA may wish to use our work as a basis for Welsh specific work of its own.

**Financial Implications**

52. None. The work priorities identified for 2021/22 will be delivered within the planned staffing budget and grant funding available from the LGA’s MHCLG grant (although this funding has been reduced for 2021/22).

**Next steps**

53. The Board are asked to reflect on the work delivered this year, and consider and comment on their priorities for 2021/22.

