

## Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

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<b>Title:</b>	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday 9 November 2021
<b>Venue:</b>	Beecham Room, 7th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	<b>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b>
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The Chair welcomed members to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Jeanie Bell and Cllr Alan Rhodes with Cllr Margaret Mullane and Cllr Clive Jonson in attendance as substitution.

Declarations of interest were made by Cllr Lewis Cocking, who informed the Board he was Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, and Cllr Arnold Saunders who is a Chaplain at a Care home in Salford and his wife is a Primary School Teacher.

2	<b>Notes of previous meeting</b>
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Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board agreed the notes of the last Board meeting, held on Tuesday 21 September 2021 and requested a small change to the action for item 3 - *Officers to explore the scope and benefit of the National Community Safety Board*.

3	<b>LGA Business Plan Update</b>
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The Chair introduced the report which set out that in October 2019 the LGA Board approved a new 3-year business plan, built around the United Nations sustainable development goals. In 2020, one additional priority – narrowing inequalities and protecting communities was added, bringing the total to seven.

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser informed the Board that this report was broadly to note as the LGA Business Plan had been approved by the LGA Board in September. However, there were a number of priorities within the business plan that related to the Board's business. In particular, places to live and work and narrowing inequalities and protecting communities.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- Given the priority of recent discussions around climate change in Glasgow at COP26, should sustainability and climate action be higher up the list of priorities? The Chair responded that the LGA Business Plan had been approved and agreed a few weeks ago and this point would be fed back to the LGA to consider.
- Members asked if there was a success-based criteria that these priorities were being measured against. The Chair replied that the LGA Business Plan was regularly reviewed to ensure that it was fit for purpose and that all Boards Chairs feedback on whether they are meeting the set priorities outlined for the year. Mark added that officers regularly report and feedback to the Senior Management Team and LGA Board.

**Decision:**

That the Safer and Stronger Communities Board note the 2020/21 update of the 3-year business plan as the basis for work programmes over the coming months.

**Action:**

- Officers to feedback comments made by members.

#### 4 **Update Paper**

The Chair introduced the item which outlined the issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Mark Norris highlighted the following key points:

- Spending review update – there were no significantly new updates in the review that would be of particular interest to the Board.
- A submission had been cleared by Lead Members on a recent consultation as part of a wider review on giving PCC's greater powers of competence. The Chair added that it was a challenge to co-ordinate a response without a formal meeting and thanked Lead Members for their time and input.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- The taxi and private hire vehicle licencing webinar had had over 500 attendees with Baroness Vere in attendance. The Minister had said it was unlikely there would be a taxi reform Bill imminently and highlighted that she was disappointed that more local authorities weren't using NR3 facilities and at the lack of support given by the police to licensing teams, which she would feedback to the Home Office. The Chair responded that regarding NR3 it was important to encourage licensing authorities to use the database; officers confirmed a letter on behalf of lead members had recently been circulated.

- Members commented that while the temporary pavement licensing was well received by businesses, licensing officers had highlighted that the cost of £100 was insufficient to cover the cost of administration and enforcement and this needed to be reviewed. The Chair agreed and mentioned that this particular issue had been raised with Government a number of times.
- Members thanked the Local Government Association's Coastal Special Interest Group and officers for responding to the consultation on jet skis and recreational water vehicles on behalf of the Board. The Board was advised that this review was in danger of making a similar mistake to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency review of beach safety in regards to ownership and oversight. The majority of recreation would take place beyond the foreshore, which would leave councils with no powers to enforce despite them being suggested as the solution.

**Decision:**

Members of the Board noted the update.

## **5 Violence against women and girls**

The Chair introduced a presentation by Detective Chief Constable Maggie Blyth, the new National Policing lead for Violence against Women and Girls.

Rachel Phelps, Adviser informed the Board that Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth had been appointed as the new National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for violence against women and girls in September. Following the tragic murder of Sarah Everard the government re-opened the VAWG 2021-2024 Strategy, in which the LGA resubmitted additional points raised from the subsequent Board meeting. The consultation received over 180,000 responses to help shape the strategy, which was recently published in July 2021. There were several updates in the consultation, more specifically to do with the National Policing role and the Detective Chief Constable coming into post from October onwards.

The Chair invited Maggie Blyth to present her discussion to the Board.

DCC Blyth thanked the Board for inviting her to the meeting and introduced herself as the newly appointed Deputy Chief Constable to the National Police Chief Council. Maggie said that she was pleased to be appointed to the role at such a watershed moment with the recent tragic events that had taken place over the last few months.

DCC Blyth highlighted that policing at a national level needed to work across departments, and the importance of a local level set of relationships as well as national relationships. She explained that there are a number of things she wanted to put into place but that she was also keen to listen to communities and what the public are saying. The starting point within policing would have to be to regain trust and confidence with the public across England and Wales.

DCC Blyth continued that she had a strong background of over 30 years in public protection and community safety within a range of different settings, focusing on protecting the most vulnerable, reducing harm and reducing violence within communities. Over the next few weeks, she would be implementing a strategic plan for all the 43 police forces across the country and would be co-ordinating activity to address violence against women and girls. The plan would focus on three core objectives;

- the relentless pursuit of perpetrators, something the police to do more and well;
- all of the work (including with councils) to prevent VAWG and create safer spaces and
- trust and confidence; focusing on the conduct and standard of behaviour of police officers and gaining trust back from the public.

She had recently written to various stakeholders over the last few days to listen and engage around the plans moving forward. There was also a strong focus on building consistency across the 43 forces and how they could work with Police and Crime Commissioners to build that consistency over time. Moving into 2022, DCC Blyth hoped to have a clear National Plan including what policing needed to achieve to drive the outcomes of local plans.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- Members commented that some survivors had no recourse to public funds, with this in mind how were the police taking on the work of supporting survivors from perpetrators? Maggie responded that she hoped her role would enable her to work with other stakeholders and sectors to continue to put pressure on areas that needed change.
- Members referenced the importance of working with pre-schools, health visitors and midwifery with a lot of domestic abuse starting during pregnancy. There are many known families that won't engage with services early, was there scope to look at funding for prevention and early intervention? Maggie agreed with the comments made and said that policing would not be able to arrest its way out of violence against women and girls. It was important to look at understanding prevention, overseeing how boys were growing up and the support women and adults had with young children.
- Members raised that there was a relatively new case emerging of spiking with injections, and creating a lot of apprehension among women not wanting to go out. As this was a fairly new phenomenon, was this something high on the radar and would there be any advice and guidance published for councils and police forces? Maggie replied that this was fairly new and information was patchy across the UK. The numbers were still relatively small and she would urge women and girls to report cases.
- Members commented that smart phones and social media contributed to an epidemic of violence against women and girls, allowing men and boys to feel entitled to make sexual

suggestions that once would have never been acceptable. The Chair agreed and added that it was important to recognise that a whole generation of young men were being exposed to sexual relations in the form of violent pornography online, which needs to be recognised within prevention. Maggie replied that was a very live on-going issue. The digital threat posed a new developing area of crime with a lot to be done especially around educating boys and girls on online harms and acceptable behaviour.

- Members raised that contact with agencies was particularly difficult in certain areas that were more rural and remote. Maggie replied that she supported working with partnerships at a local level and would continue to do so through existing statutory partnerships and PCCs.
- Would prevention cover the training of police officers, given low conviction rates in relation to sexual assault and victims feeling they had not been supported especially during the early stages. Maggie replied that training was one part of policing and the wider criminal justice system and at a local level it was vital to look at how policing was part of a bigger whole system response to violence against women and girls.

**Decision:**

That members of the Board note the Violence against Women and Girls report.

It was suggested that the item be brought back to the Board to consider future progress.

**Action:**

- Officers to include VWAG at a future Board meeting.

## 6 Counter-extremism update

The Chair introduced the item which gave an update on national counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policy, and the work undertaken to support councils. The report also provided a detailed overview of the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE), which formed a significant part of the LGA's support offer, as requested by members at the Board meeting on 21 September.

Rachel Duke, Adviser informed the Board that the tragic events in Southend had raised a number of questions and concerns about counter-terrorism and counter-extremism, and about the safety of those in public office.

Rachel highlighted the following key points in the report:

- The Independent review of Prevent by William Shawcross, announced in 2019 was underway and due to report shortly, with findings and a government response expected in the coming months.
- The Government's Counter-Extremism Strategy, focusing on those who fall below the counter terrorism level but cause harm to local areas, was originally published in October 2015 and

expired last year. The strategy comprised of four strands - countering extremist ideology, building a partnership with those opposed to extremism, disrupting extremists and building more cohesive communities but there has been little clarity on the future direction of the strategy and recently there had been reports in the media that the Building a Stronger Britain programme had closed.

- The government funded Counter-extremism Community Co-ordinator posts had been repurposed for wider community issues and we are waiting to see if funding for the posts would be retained beyond March.

Rachel commented that the government had seemed to be shifting its focus from the prevention focus space to tackling issues where they had already crossed the threshold of criminal activity i.e hate crime and civil disorder and raised concerns that this would lead to gaps at national policy level. The LGA was continuing to make the case for a comprehensive approach to countering extremism and investing in prevention remain important.

Rachel outlined that the report highlights issues which the LGA believe will continue to be an ongoing problem for some time to come. A particular concern was around the online space; an Online Safety Bill was published this year, and the Board is feeding into the LGA response, which is being led by another Board. The LGA has also published a call for evidence on abuse and intimidation of councils.

During the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- There was a discussion about whether members should be obliged to publicly disclose their personal addresses, e.g on election material, council websites or via declarations of interests. While many members felt that individuals should not have to do so, some Board members felt that councillors should retain the choice publish their address if they wished to do so. It was agreed however that there was a need for consistency of advice to members, and that it was not helpful for some monitoring officers to say that personal addresses must be public when their counterparts in other authorities say that they are not: the LGA should look into this, as well as whether an opt in system rather than an opt out would be preferable.
- Concern was raised that gaps will be left if the Home Office does not lead the way in building community resilience, and that resources are needed at a time when hate crime and extremism are rising. Long term soft intelligence happened over a long time; without the resources to build that locally there is a risk of a lack of intelligence to respond when issues occur.
- The link between radicalisation and the anti-vaxxer movement was noted.
- There was concern that with MPs better protected in future, councillors could become an easier target. Social media companies were criticised for responding more slowly to online threats to councillors compared to threats to MPs.
- Members called for swift action from the LGA rather than a lengthy call for evidence.

**Decision:**

That members of the Board note the counter-extremism update.

**Action:**

- Officers to raise that the advice of monitoring officers needs to be consistent across all authorities and review the options of opt in or opt out addresses.

## **7 Disruption to fuel supplies**

The Chair introduced the item which updated the Board on our work to understand how councils, Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) and local areas dealt with the disruption to fuel supplies which impacted some areas earlier this Autumn.

Ellie Greenwood, Senior Adviser informed the Board that although some areas across the UK faced fuel shortages due to a lack of HGV drivers, the issue was uneven with certain areas facing much more disruption than others. There had been suggestions, particularly from the care sector, that the government should evoke formal powers for local fuel plans, enabling local areas to designate fuel to priority access fuel stations.

Ellie continued that there was a lack of clarity on the interim steps local areas are expected to take in the absence of formal powers being evoked. Fuel stations took a very mixed approach to handling the issue, with some introducing voluntary efforts to prioritise key workers; however, these were inconsistent. The LGA had agreed to have joint discussions with social care providers, LRFs and councils to share best practice and feedback on lessons learnt. The Department for Levelling-Up and Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had agreed to debrief with local areas to work together to achieve the same objectives.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- Members noted that there were national fuel plans but queried whether there were there any local fuel plans and if so, how would this be implemented? Ellie responded that there were local fuel plans in which each LRF would have a list of designated filling stations to prioritise access for critical workers, but that these powers were not something that local areas would unilaterally be allowed to evoke.
- Members highlighted that within some local authorities they were following the National Emergency Plan for Fuel (NEP-F) advice and had already set aside unleaded and diesel fuel for the winter period, as well as keeping tanks at a high level through to spring.
- A high level of cars queueing up and blocking access caused road safety issues with little to no control. The public were accessing information on fuel availability via various platforms of social media, which quite often was wrong.
- Many people were purchasing more fuel than they needed and some resorted to filling up petrol in containers and bottles which were not fit for purpose.

- Some Members raised concerns that there wasn't a fuel shortage but rather mass panic that was hyped up by the media. The Chair recognised that issues did not affect all areas across the country but noted that the paper had talked about disruption to fuel supply, rather than fuel shortages, and that it was important for the LGA to have discussions with social care colleagues and LRFs about issues that impacted key services and councils' reputations.

**Decision:**

Members of the Board noted and agreed the next steps as set out at paragraph 20.

**Actions:**

- Officers to enquire and feedback on HGV driver shortage response to the Board.
- Officers to feedback discussions with RED to the Board.

## 8 **Building safety update**

Charles Loft, Senior Adviser introduced the report which updated members on the key developments around building safety work not covered in the previous paper.

Charles highlighted the following key brief points:

- The Fire Safety Act was due to commence from October but was now delayed until April.
- The Building Safety Bill had completed its journey through the committee stage in the House of Commons.
- There was a recent fire incident within a housing association block in Tower Hamlets that had to be evacuated due to concerns about how it would respond if it suffered a significant fire. In response the LGA has written to councils to inform and remind them of the importance of ensuring they know how their high-rise buildings were constructed; what has been done since they were built and their current conditions.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comment:

- Members raised that the new Secretary of State had echoed what the LGA had been saying - that leaseholders should not have to foot the bill for cladding removal - although some leaseholders have had already paid for costs incurred. Charles responded that the Secretary of State comments broadly fell in line with what the LGA had been saying about leaseholders being penalised for something that was not their fault, and that there are concerns in government about how this would impact the housing market.

**Decision:**

Members of the Board noted and agreed the proposal in paragraph 9.



## 9 Building Safety Funding

Charles Loft introduced the report which detailed officers' concerns about the funding of fire safety and building safety and suggested possible responses.

Charles highlighted key concerns within the report.

Following the brief discussion, Members made no comments.

### **Decision:**

Members of the Board noted the report.

### **Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Nesil Caliskan	Enfield Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Mohan Iyengar	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
	Cllr Clive Woodbridge	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Members	Cllr Eric Allen	Sutton London Borough Council
	Cllr Bill Borrett	Norfolk County Council
	Cllr Lewis Cocking	Broxbourne Borough Council
	Cllr Julia Lepoidevin	Coventry City Council
	Cllr Lois Samuel	West Devon Borough Council
	Cllr Arnold Saunders	Salford City Council
	Cllr Asher Craig	Bristol City Council
	Mayor Damien Egan	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr James Beckles	Newham London Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council
	Cllr Philip Evans JP	Conwy County Borough Council
Apologies	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Bassetlaw District Council
	Cllr Jeanie Bell	St Helens Council