

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title: Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date: Thursday 16 June 2022
Venue: Beecham Room, 7th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item Decisions and actions

1 Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest

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

Apologies were received from Mayor Damien Egan. Cllr Philip Evans had retired at the recent election, with Cllr Karen Lucioni in attendance as a substitute.

The Chair mentioned that Cllr Mohan Iyengar was no longer a member of the board as he had stood down as a Conservative councillor. She thanked Cllr Iyengar for his time on the board and the work he had contributed as a lead member.

Cllr Lewis Cocking would be the Conservative Lead member for this meeting and the remainder of the Board cycle. Cllr Paul Findlow was in attendance as a substitute.

Declarations of interest were made by Cllr Lewis Cocking, who informed the Board he was Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire and Cllr Jeanie Bell, who works with a charity that receives funding from the local violence reduction unit.

2 Notes of previous meeting

Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2022.

Members requested an amendment be made to item 3 which did not capture Dr Harris' comments during the meeting that there was an underlying trend towards no ideological extremism.

The Chair informed the board that item 4 would be taken next due to speaker availability for item 3.

3 Spiking incidents: current picture and activity

The Chair introduced the report which updated the board on the LGA's activity in response to reports of an increase in the prevalence of spiking incidents, accompanying an update to the Board from Gabby Chamberlain, spiking lead at the Home Office.

The Chair introduced Gabby, who informed the board that spiking by needles was a new phenomenon that had got the attention of media and subsequently the government. In response the Home Secretary had asked the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to review the scale and extent of the issue. A range of actions had been taken including; developing a forensic strategy, including developing rapid testing kits; joining up work with the Crown Prosecution Service and others to improve the response to victims, and communication campaigns in specific locations. The government was also supporting the role of pilot initiatives to improve the safety of women in public spaces. The Home Office were committed to considering a case for spiking as a specific criminal offence, working alongside the police and other stakeholders to build evidence. The work would inform a statutory report which the Home Office would present before Parliament by the end of April 2023.

The Government would shortly be responding to the Home Affairs Select Committee report on spiking. Much of the work identified by the committee is already in train, with a strong focus on partnership working nationally and locally. In relation to the local recommendations, the view is that current legislation and the Licensing Act section 182 guidance are broadly sufficient to encourage local areas what they can to tackle and support this locally. The Minister recently wrote to licensing committees on this but is looking at what more could be done, so the Board's local experience on this would be very useful.

Cllr Bell was invited to follow up Gabby's remarks as one of the Board's licensing champion and following her evidence to the HASC earlier this year; then members subsequently made the following comments:

- Cllr Bell added that there were issues around gathering evidence and the motives behind instances of spiking (as there is no strong link between spiking and additional crime and it would require in-depth medical knowledge needed to spike someone with a needle). There are issues with reporting and low public confidence, as victims often felt shame to admit being associated with the incident and in some cases, by the time they come forward it could no longer be proved.
- Cllr Bell raised concerns that within the licensing regime, premises that have had their licence revoked can continue to operate until the appeal was heard, if they opted to appeal. A poorly run premises in St Helen's had continued to operate for a further three months after having its licence revoked, and only then voluntarily surrendered it after a serious rape on the premises rather than because the appeal had been heard.

- Gabby responded that research was being done specifically around the offence and broader work. Some areas were using dip stick tests, but whilst she agreed that they provide reassurance they weren't able to test a full range of drugs, so should be used with caution. The Home Office were looking at how they could help speed up the process of testing and current kits on the market. As for the motive, Gabby commented that there is limited understanding around the motivation, particularly when it came down to needle spiking as there was no secondary offence, but work is ongoing with the National Crime Agency to try to understand perpetrator behaviour.
- Members commented that there was a shortage qualified of door staff and the lack of female security staff and asked what conversations there had been between the Home Office and the hospitality industry to help tackle the issue. Gabby replied that the data held by the Home Office suggested that there was a year-on-year increase in people who have obtained Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence, both male and female, but low wages and the effects of the pandemic had led to job changes.
- Members highlighted that spiking was largely a crime perpetrated against young people: the police data provided in the Parliamentary report noted that 73% of victims were 18- to 21-year-olds. The response needed to be targeted to premises that young people would go to, for example student bars and festivals. Gabby responded that festivals organisers were being asked to be prepared for incidents, and that work and communications were being targeted.
- Members added that buying someone double drinks without their knowledge would count as spiking and there was a link between alcohol consumption. The Chair added that she felt they were separate issues and was a wider piece of work that should be considered.
- Members discussed whether it was appropriate to think about this issue as part of a wider issue where we need to build community resilience, as alongside some spiking being undertaken with an ulterior motive, there are also numerous cases of opportunistic advantage being taken of people who are drunk. Some members felt that there is a risk that by looking at spiking in isolation we miss a wider issue.

The Chair thanked Gabby for attending the meeting and taking time to provide an insightful discussion amongst board members.

Decision:

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

4 Safer and Stronger Communities issues in the Queen's Speech

The Chair introduced the report which provided an overview of the

items relevant to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board's portfolio within the Queen's Speech.

Ellie Greenwood, Senior Adviser highlighted the following key points from the report:

- Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill – The Local Government Association (LGA) had secured improvements to the existing, temporary pavement licensing regime, introduced during COVID. The temporary regime would be extended for a further year while the permanent system under the Levelling Up Bill was introduced. The Bill also includes proposals that pre-empt the outcome of a consultation on new controls on changing street names.
- Transport Bill – although not referenced in the Queen's Speech itself, Minister Baroness Vere had made a commitment in Parliament that the Bill would include limited number of taxi provisions to introduced national enforcement powers and national standards.
- Draft Digital Markets, Competition and Consumer Bill – This Bill may have implications for trading standards and the LGA would look to keep in touch with trading standards organisations.
- Protect duty – this Bill is intended to strengthen preparedness against terror attacks but we are still waiting on details on what the requirements will look like.
- Modern slavery bill –this will put into statute the requirement for public authorities to comply with rules on transparency in supply chains, which many councils already do on voluntary basis, and enshrine victim support under international conventions in domestic legislation.
- Draft victims bill –the Bill will enshrine the victims code in law and is expected to introduce a new duty for councils to collaborate in commissioning support for victims.
- Public order bill – the Bill will ensure the police have the tools they need to better manage and tackle dangerous and highly disruptive tactics.

Following the discussion, members made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the extension of modern slavery supply chain requirements to public authorities.
- Members raised that having referendums on street naming was not the right approach and that the approach to this should stay as it was. The Chair agreed and felt that it was an unnecessary burden on councils.
- Further clarity around taxi licencing was needed and whether the measures in the Transport Bill would only apply to councils which already have taxi licensing responsibilities, or whether this would extend toto include combined authorities, as per the discussion at the previous Board meeting. Ellie replied that the Transport Bill measures would apply to the existing regime, but that Government is expecting in future to consult on changing the tier that taxi licencing is managed at.
- Members noted that we are reliant on regulatory services and licensing for much of the work being discussed and that we

needed to monitor additional funding to support these services.

- In the context of the Victims Bill, members raised concerns there is a piecemeal approach to child on parent abuse Parents who were subjected to their children being abusive were not seen as victims, and this was something that it would be good to look at, in terms of what support there is and how it is being addressed. The Chair noted the cross over into areas of responsibility for other Boards but added that she felt it right that the board pick up on this and asked officers to include this as part of board priorities.
- Clarity was needed on the new provisions set out within the Draft Digital Markets, Competition and Consumer Bill, as there was a risk of making it confusing for consumers in terms of where issues are currently dealt with by trading standards in primary authorities. Ellie responded that officers would need to come back to members on this.
- Members commented that more was needed to be done to encourage younger people into the Trading Standards profession; in one council the average age of officers was 56 years of age. This was important with cyber crime increasing.
- Members welcomed the increased fee for pavement licensing and additional enforcement powers.

Decision:

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

Actions:

- Officers to include child on parent abuse as part of board priorities.
- Officers to circulate a note to members on the implications of the Digital Markets Bill for Trading Standards.

5 PCC complaints

The Chair introduced the report which sought agreement from members on a set of principles to inform the LGA's future work in relation to Police and Crime Panels' handling of complaints, and also sought agreement to raise a number of practical points which would assist police and crime panels in their work.

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the item. Mark highlighted the following key points:

- Dealing with complaints against PCCs is a secondary but important function of panels. The issue had been raised recently in the quarterly meetings between the chairs of the APCC and LGA; APCC Chair Mark Jones had raised a case of a PCC who had been through the PCC complaints process based on a complaint from an MP, where the case had been referred to the Independent Office of Police Conduct before the PCC was notified. The APCC had requested guidance on complaints handling for PCPs.
- Management of PCC complaints is split between the Independent

Office of Police Conduct (IOPC), which oversees criminal issues, and panels, whose role is more akin to a standards committee looking at conduct issues. There is a clear issue of misunderstanding amongst the public as to what complaints panels deal with as opposed to the PCC and IOPC.

- Some panels have had a lot of experience of managing PCC complaints, while others haven't, and there are different views regarding whether panels should maintain their role.
- Following the conclusion of the Part 2 Review the Home Office committed to giving further consideration to the processes for how complaints of misconduct against police and crime commissioners (PCC) are handled; the paper sought the Board's views on this. A set of proposed principles for managing complaints was outlined in the paper, with a broad objective of simplifying a complex process.
- Mark asked whether if PCPs maintain this role, there would be agreement with aligning the process of dealing with PCC complaints with that already in place for standards committees in local authorities.

Following the discussion, members made the following comments:

- Members raised concerns over public confusion emphasising that more clarity is needed and that it was important to outline who did what when it came to complaints panels, IOPC and PCC. It is difficult to help people understand that the panels cannot come to conclusions when they cannot investigate a matter.
- Members felt that the LGA should have a view on the next steps, or at the least comment on processes. The Chair added it was important for processes to fulfil public expectation and have teeth.
- Members on panels should be provided with complaints training to they have the background on the process to deal with complaints properly, as with licensing committee members.
- Concerns were raised that if panels were to receive greater powers around complaints, the people making the complaints may subsequently complain about panels too.
- Members commented that there should be consistency Across panels regarding what is treated as a serious matter band what is not.

The Chair concluded that the key message to take away was the importance of the structure, integrity and faith of the process.

Decision:

Members agreed the principles for reforming the system for resolving non-serious complaints against PCCs set out in paragraph 11 with further work required to look at the practical proposals set out in paragraph 12.

6 Safer and Stronger Communities End of Year Report 2021/22 and 2022/23 work plan

The Chair introduced the item which set out the Safer and Stronger Communities end of year report, including initial proposals for the 2022/23 work plan, and noted Cllr Iyengar's contribution to developing a clear forward plan.

Mark highlighted the following key proposed themes for the 2022/23 work priorities which were as followed:

- Prevent, counterextremism and cohesion
- Community safety
- Blue light services and civil resilience
- Licencing and regulations
- Building safety
- Crematoria, coroners and registrars

Following the discussion, members made the following comments:

- Members commented whether the Government's preferred model of having a single, elected person governing fire and rescue services government policy would be mandatorily imposed and the existing FRA abolished. Mark replied that there was no mandatory transfer of fire governance mentioned in the Fire Reform White Paper. However, the government and Home Office were clear on a preference for a single point of contact. Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) and the Fire Commission would be submitting a response when the consultation closes at the end of July. Mark stressed that the response would focus on ensuring that if any changes in governance were made that they should be voluntary and a matter for those in the locality to make decisions.
- Special Interest Groups (SIG) formed a large part of the report and members felt that it would be better to have a separate report setting out what SIGs had done as distinct to the board.
- Recruitment and retention in regulatory services should be made a higher priority the work plan as it is a growing problem across the country.
- Members mentioned that they would like to see some work around hate crime.
- Members thanked officers for work they have done in the past year particularly around water safety and licencing.

Decision:

Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board noted the end of year report and considered the Board's work priorities for 2022/23.

Action:

- Officers to clarify the importance of regulatory services recruitment and retention within the board priorities.

7 Update Paper

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

Mark highlighted that the Chair would be giving evidence to the Bill committee regarding the Draft Victims Bill. The LGA had been speaking closely with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) to look at and highlight issues from a local authority perspective on victim services, and there is overlap with the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act. The Home Office has written to PCCs and chief constables about the commence timetable for the PCSC Act, but particular sections within the Act will also have an impact from a local authority perspective.

Lastly, the drug strategy framework published by the Home Office and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), proposed local partners should put in place a combating drugs partnership at upper tier authority level, with a single point of contact who would be responsible for delivering against framework target. The proposed timetable for this is onerous.

Following the brief discussion, members noted that Cllr Alan Rhodes had recently spoken at an APPG on modern slavery regarding licensing of some high-risk sectors such as car washes.

Decision:

Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board noted the update paper.

8 Building Safety update

The Chair introduced the report which updated members on the LGA's building safety-related work since the last Board meeting.

The Chair introduced Georgia Goddard, who informed the board that since the last board meeting the Building Safety Bill had received Royal Assent, the Fire Safety Act had commenced and the LGA had continued to support remediation.

Georgia highlighted the following key points:

- The DLUHC-led group Remediation Partners continued to work on a framework to support remediation across the country, alongside discussions with National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to support a coordinated audit of risk within medium-rise residential buildings.
- The Joint Inspection Team had secured funding for the next two years which would triple its capacity by the end of the financial year.
- There were also a number of questions remaining over the Building Safety Act, particularly the provisions protecting leaseholders from the requirement to pay for remediation and concerns over whether the Act could leave councils liable for the costs of buildings on their land.
- The funding for councils and NFCC to expand building control and fire service competence and capacity to meet the requirements of the new regime had been agreed at £41 million.
- The commencement of the Fire Safety Act was followed by regulations implementing most of the recommendations made by phase one of the Grenfell Tower inquiry, which would come into

effect January 2023. This does not include measures on PEEPs: the LGA is calling for appropriate guidance on this and working with the evacuation and fire safety working group on this issue.

- The LGA is making progress in communicating to councils and schools risks around Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).

Following the discussion, members made the following comments:

- Members commented that there weren't many local authority maintained schools but there would be a number of academies affected by Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and asked how would this be addressed. Georgia responded that DfE (Department for Education) were in charge of academies, and they had received a 30% survey response rate from academies who were aware of RAAC.
- Members commented if remediation costs were only covered for tenants who had not yet spent money on remediation, that would be unfair for those who had already paid towards costs. Georgia replied that residents who had already paid would not get their money back. Charles Loft, Senior Adviser added that the LGA is focusing on lobbying for the cost of remediation not to fall on the housing revenue account.
- It would be vital that the responsible person for each building had a requirement to plan for evacuating disabled people; it would not be acceptable to fall back on the fire service.

Decision:

Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board noted the Building Safety update paper.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Nesil Caliskan	Enfield Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Lewis Cocking	Broxbourne Borough 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 Julia Lepoidevin	Coventry City Council
	Cllr Lois Samuel	West Devon Borough Council
	Cllr Arnold Saunders	Salford City Council
	Cllr Asher Craig	Bristol City Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Bassetlaw District Council
	Cllr Jeanie Bell	St Helens Council
	Cllr James Beckles	Newham London Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council



Apologies

Mayor Damien Egan

Lewisham London Borough Council