

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title: Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date: Thursday 24 March 2022
Venue: Victoria Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

| Item | Decisions and actions | Action |
|----------|--|--------|
| 1 | Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest | |
| | <p>The Chair welcomed members to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting.</p> <p>No apologies were received.</p> <p>Cllr Cocking declared that he was a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire</p> | |
| 2 | Notes of previous meeting | |
| | <p>Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board agreed the notes of the last Board meeting, held on Thursday 20 January 2022.</p> <p>Cllr Rhodes highlighted that he had not sent his apologies for the last meeting and was in attendance.</p> | |
| 3 | Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism - CONFIDENTIAL Guest speaker: Dr Gareth Harris | |
| | <p>The discussion for this item is confidential and has been distributed to members of the Board separately.</p> | |
| 4 | Update on Part Two of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review - CONFIDENTIAL | |
| | <p>The discussion for this item is confidential and has been distributed to members of the Board separately.</p> | |

5 Taxi/ PHV licensing update

The Chair introduced the item which provided an update on current issues in taxi licensing and the LGA's work on taxi licensing reform.

The Chair invited Jade Hall, Policy Adviser, to add any comments. Jade informed the Board that paper set out a number of lobbying asks on taxi/private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing reform and the proposal set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, which sought to transfer control of taxi/PHV licencing to combine upper tier authorities.

In the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- Members commented that they were broadly supportive of the LGA's lobbying asks, which had been discussed extensively at previous Board meetings.
- Members were concerned about the taxi licensing proposal in the Levelling Up White Paper. They felt taxi/PHV licensing is fundamentally a local issue with important safeguarding implications, and that while more consistency was desirable across authorities, there was a concern that moving licensing to combined authorities might see standards reduce.
- Members also questioned which councillors would be able to undertake appeals if responsibility sat at combined authority level: local accountability was important.
- The opportunity for a joint policy to be administered by districts in a county council area was suggested as one way of improving consistency of standards.
- Members highlighted that the points made in paragraph 17 were important as changes needed to be made as part of a bigger package of taxi/PHV reform, including new legislation. They also highlighted concerns about taking away taxi/PHV licensing from smaller licensing teams as this may impact on other areas of licensing and staffing levels.
- Members highlighted concerns about limiting out of area working by drivers and questioned the practicalities of introducing measures to address this. However, members highlighted how this is causing firms in some areas to go out of business because they are losing out to out of area workers who are only available during certain periods of the day.
- Members pointed out that people with criminal backgrounds could move around to neighbouring authorities and be approved. This sparked discussion about modern slavery, safeguarding and sexual exploitation issues.
- Inconsistency across authorities was concerning, especially around safeguarding. A best practice model was needed, ensuring certain standards were mandatory, and a national database was also long overdue.
- Members raised that if taxi licensing was moved to a county council level, this could cause challenges in terms of the

location of courts.

The Chair concluded that taxi/PHV licensing decisions should be made as locally as possible, elected accountability was an important element, cross border hire raised standardisation issues and any changes needed to be part of a wider package of reform.

Decision:

That members of the Board noted the item.

6 Update paper

The Chair briefly introduced the item and asked members for any comments, which were as followed:

- Members highlighted that as many Ukrainians crossed borders to safety, especially women and children, they were at risk of modern slavery. As a community it was important to welcome as many families as possible.
- Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, was recognised by the board for the excellent work she had done ahead of her term of office ending shortly.

Decision:

That members of the Board noted the item.

Action:

- Officers to circulate drugs consultation to all Board members.

7 Building safety update

Due to the meeting overrunning, the Board noted the item.

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 |
| | Cllr Alan Rhodes | Bassetlaw District Council |

Mayor Damien Egan
Cllr Jeanie Bell
Cllr James Beckles
Cllr James Dawson
Cllr Jon Ball
Cllr Philip Evans JP

Lewisham London Borough Council
St Helens Council
Newham London Borough Council
Erewash Borough Council
Ealing Council
Conwy County Borough Council