

# Minutes of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

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## Safer & Stronger Communities Board

Thursday, 19 January 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#)

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

Apologies were received from Cllr Carleene Lee-Phakoe and Cllr Jeanie Bell, who was substituted by Cllr James Swindlehurst.

Cllr Lewis Cocking declared an interest in Item 3 as the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire. There were no other declarations of interest.

<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meetings held on 22 Sept and 10 Nov 2022</b>
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The minutes of the previous meetings held on 22 September 2022 and 10 November 2022 were agreed.

<b>3</b>	<b>Community Safety Partnership Review</b>
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Members had a confidential discussion on the Community Safety Partnership Review.

<b>4</b>	<b>Asylum: community cohesion and modern slavery</b>
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Members had a confidential discussion on community cohesion and modern slavery.

<b>5</b>	<b>Local Government Workforce Capacity</b>
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The Chair invited Heather Wills, Principal Adviser (Improvement), to introduce the report, which summarised the LGA's policy and improvement activity to address workforce capacity challenges in local government and sought the Board's feedback on priorities for future

activity. This would be fed back to the Resources Board and Executive Advisory Board.

The Chair commented that issues related to COVID pressures should be separated from long-term systemic issues around capacity and funding. Furthermore, the Government announcement around mould and damp would have a significant impact for the sector in terms of workforce capacity, particularly for large stock-owning councils.

Members comments:

- While Covid can be separated to some extent, it has exacerbated previous issues; councils are struggling to attract younger staff but since Covid have lost lots of staff in their 50s and 60s which means local authorities are losing experience and the opportunity to pass this down to young people.
- Employing and retaining young staff is proving challenging due to low pay and lack of opportunities for career development, notably in IT and planning. Councils are training staff but then seeing them head hunted when they have two to three years' experience.
- Inflationary increases have caused challenges with contracts, for example, the price of tree contractors has gone up by 98%. Even if the increases in pay driven by inflation slow down, when contracts are retendered, big rises will be seen.
- It was suggested that local government campaign to attract people to the sector by emphasising benefits such as flexibility and secondment opportunities in other public sector agencies.
- It was noted that other parts of the economy are experiencing workforce shortages too, and that all organisations should have a workforce strategy.

#### Decision

The Safer and Stronger Communities Board noted the LGA's policy and improvement activity to address workforce capacity challenges in local government and endorsed the next steps set out in paragraph 58 of the report.

## **6 Building Safety - RAAC Strategy update**

The Chair introduced Marshall Scott from the Building Safety Team to introduce the report to members on the LGA's awareness-raising work regarding the dangers of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).

Charles Loft, Senior Policy Adviser confirmed to the Chair that the response rate referred to council-owned schools, however, council's responsibilities in academies and other schools is ambiguous (in some areas, councils may have contracts with academies to maintain buildings). This is, therefore, potentially a much larger problem, and part of the strategy aims to push academies and diocese schools to check their buildings. The LGA is seeking to understand from the Department of Education (DfE) how they plan to tackle the wider problem beyond councils' legal responsibility.

Members comments:

- The Chair asked what funding was available for councils to carry out the necessary remedial work, and to what extent councils were funded by existing work and refurbishment programmes for schools.
- The scale of the issue was raised, as this may be a problem in many buildings that cannot be addressed by the DfE alone. Members sought clarity on whether outside of councils' responsibility for schools, this was a building control issue where they had a wider responsibility.
- There were concerns that this has the potential to turn into another major building safety issue like Grenfell Tower/cladding, and that the buck should stop with government over what was permitted at the time. Officers were asked to engage with the WLGA on the issue.

In response to concerns regarding the scale of the issue, Members were advised that the Office of Government Property (OGP) had written to all government departments to clarify if the approach would be extended to other public buildings as well as schools. It was further clarified to Members that this was not concern for all buildings but potentially for those built with RAAC between 1950 and 1990.

#### Decision

That members agree that the LGA should pursue the updated strategy of awareness raising and collaboration with the Department for Education outlined in paragraph 15 of the report.

#### Action

- Officers to with the OGP how wide an issue this may be beyond municipal buildings and who is responsible, to help inform a paper which will outline for members the scope of their responsibility (ie whether this is a schools issue or a wider building control issue).
- Officers to contact other regions particularly the Welsh LGA.

## **7 Update paper**

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the update paper which outlined issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Members commented on concerns relating to the Metropolitan Police, police checks and the Online Safety Bill and requested a future paper.

#### Decision

Members of the Board noted the update and comments.

#### Action

- To consider an item on the Metropolitan Police / police checks at a future meeting of the Board.
- To provide an update on the Online Harms Bill.

**8 AOB**

Members had a confidential discussion on Antisocial Behaviour.

**Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Nesil Caliskan	Enfield Council
Vice-Chair	Cllr Lewis Cocking	Broxbourne Borough Council
Deputy-chair	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 Louise McKinlay	Essex County Council
	Cllr Julia Lepoidevin	Coventry City Council
	Cllr Lois Samuel	West Devon Borough Council
	Cllr Arnold Saunders	Salford City Council
	Cllr Tracey Dixon	South Tyneside Council
	Cllr Amanda Chadderton	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Asher Craig	Bristol City Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
Apologies	Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council
	Cllr Karen Lucioni	Isle of Wight Council
In Attendance	Cllr Carleene Lee-Phakoe	Newham Council
	Cllr Jeanie Bell	St Helens Borough Council
LGA Officers	Cllr James Swindlehurst	Slough Borough Council
	Cllr Jake Short	Sutton London Borough Council
LGA Officers	Mark Norris	
	Ellie Greenwood	
	Charles Loft	
	Rachel Phelps	
	Rachel Duke	
	Marshall Scott	
	Francesca Stott	
	Jonathan Bryant	
	Amy Haldane	
Abigail Benari		