

Minutes of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Safer & Stronger Communities Board

Thursday, 15 June 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest
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The Chair welcomed members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board to the meeting. The Chair and members acknowledged the outstanding work being done by the emergency services in response to the attacks in Nottingham.

Apologies were received from Cllr Jas Athwal.

Declarations of Interest were raised from Cllr Lewis Cocking as Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire and from Cllr Jeanie Bell as Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside and Chair of Combatting Drugs Partnerships for Merseyside. There were no other declarations of interest.

2	Notes of previous meeting
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Members agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March.

3	Martyn's Law
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The Chair introduced the recently published draft legislation, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill, which is aimed at helping to protect the public from terrorist attacks. Known as Martyn's Law, the legislation proposes introducing a new duty for those responsible for certain publicly accessible premises and events to take measures to review and mitigate against terrorist activity. The Chair invited Debbie Bartlett, Deputy Director of Protect and Prepare at the Home Office to present to the Board.

Members comments:

- Information was sought on the difference between how the duty would apply to commercial events and non-commercial community events.
- Concerns were raised regarding proportionality and that Martyn's law could stop community groups from organising events for fear

of financial implications and liabilities.

- There were significant concerns about the financial implications for councils from the proposals, and that any additional burdens should be reflected as part of implementation. It was suggested that financial aid would be needed to implement Martyn's Law and to ensure consistency across the country, with yet further resources provided should the regulatory function also fall to councils. The difficulties in recruiting into regulatory services was also highlighted, should they have a role in overseeing the new requirements.
- There was a discussion about the implications should councils become the regulator for the new duty, although the Home Office has not indicated that this will be the case. It is unclear what councils' liability might be under the legislation, and a concern about what extra insurance would be needed as a result.
- It was raised that if councils do become the regulator, to enforce event holders to adhere to the rules, inspection, action, and penalties will be needed which has a potential to build large legal bills.
- Another factor that would need to be considered would be where responsibility lies within a two-tier council system.
- It was highlighted that a support system would be needed during implementation, such as a dedicated phoneline to ensure councils do not take on additional burden, because local businesses/events will naturally turn to the councils for guidance, regardless of whether they are the regulator.
- Concern was raised regarding the emergency services role in protecting people.
- A member emphasised the need for sufficient lead time for implementation.

Debbie Bartlett provided the following information in response to Members' comments:

- Confirmation that no decision had been made on who will be the regulator, and whoever will be assigned to take on this role will be supported.
- Ministers are aware of the need for proportionality in the measures implemented, to ensure the measures are not overly burdensome and community events can continue.
- Martyn's Law will not require implementation of disproportionate measures for instance by ensuring that where there are existing measures already in place (fire safety, health and safety, road closures etc.) these are reflected in the new risk assessments.
- Threats are increasingly difficult to predict and thus measures are needed to protect the public in a variety of locations, including community events and spaces.
- The HO is in the process of developing a calculation to help understand costs, which is proving difficult as venues do not know their capacity.
- The legislation as currently drafted will apply only to venues where access can be controlled, for example no open spaces, and only those parts of premises which the public has access to (not areas reserved for staff).
- The [Protect UK platform](#) will be providing vital information to help

with implementation, which will continue to be developed over a period to help ensure the regulator and partners are prepared.

- This is just one part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, with wider work that is attempting to address the mentioned emergency service issues.
- It is anticipated that there will be a period between Royal Assent and implementation to help those within scope to prepare.

The Chair thanked Debbie Bartlett for her time and informative answers.

Decision

The Board discussed the outline legislative proposals and provided insight on the potential implications for local councils.

Action

- Officers potentially to follow up with a letter to Home Office summarising points made by the Board.

4 Overview of current drugs activity and links to community safety

The Chair invited Ellie Greenwood, Senior Adviser to introduce the report, which followed the Board indicating that it would like to undertake a piece of work looking at drug use and community safety issues.

Members comments:

- Members raised a concern that due to the lack of local elected councillors that sit on Combatting Drugs Partnerships (CDPs) Board meetings, that sharing of information is not filtering down to the democratic level. There was a consensus that the LGA should lobby for consistency in at least one elected member sitting on each CDP.
- There is a need for further training on the CDPs as there is a large gap in understanding among councils/councillors, for instance there is potential to include this into Leadership Essentials courses.
- A member raised their experience of the CDP being focused on drug users, public health and treatment, and instead urged SSCB to encourage CDPs to address more issues in relation to community safety, such as cuckooing and drug dealing.
- There was a request for CDPs to be regulated, or greater transparency encouraged.
- A member raised that the Home Office had announced a U-turn on drug testing at festivals which increased the time taken to become licensed for onsite drug testing.
- Concern was raised that police time is being wasted by issuing cannabis fixed penalties, when organised crime is the more pressing issue.
- The length of delays and lack of fulfilment of drug treatment programmes is an issue.
- There was a request for research to be undertaken to understand what councils think should happen in their communities to tackle drug use which leads to crime.

The Chair summarised and agreed the Board's perspective should be reducing crime on the streets, (targeting drug dealers rather than drug users for example) as opposed to public health focused but commented that there will be crossover between the two, as the use of drugs is intrinsically linked to prostitution and youth violence.

Decision

The Board indicated how they would like to focus future work on this issue agreeing to the proposals laid out in paragraph 19.

Actions

- Officers to explore the issue raised regarding onsite drug testing at festivals, including liaising with Cllr Craig regarding the concerns Bristol is highlighting.
- Officers to consider how to close the gap in understanding of CDPs.
- Officers to explore possibility to undertake research to understand what communities would want to see to help tackle drug use and subsequent crime.

5 Gambling Act Review

Decision

The Board noted the report on the Gambling Act Review which provided an overview of the proposals.

6 Public Health Funerals

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the paper which outlined the findings of the UK Commission on Bereavement, which reported in October 2022, with a number of recommendations for organisations involved in the provision of bereavement services, including councils. There is a particular recommendation on creating new regulations for public health funerals.

Members' comments:

- The Chair requested that the scope of the work be expanded to private cemetery grounds to address the gap in the legislation where local authorities cannot regulate them.
- Concern was raised that introducing central government standards and regulations could take more power away from local authorities. The Chair clarified this is not the proposal, but instead the proposal is to agree that the LGA carry out further research to inform future policy lines.
- It was suggested that the LGA provide some training for councils on the handling of public health funerals. The Chair stated this was a secondary issue as currently there is a disconnect between what councils do and what they are being asked to do by the Government.
- A member highlighted that public health funerals are sometimes a

last resort for people who invest in a prepayment funeral plan and the funeral company subsequently goes bankrupt – a situation not currently covered by the Financial Conduct Authority.

- Further data was requested on funeral turnaround times and the time taken to pass on costs, in order to reduce stress for families. Another member requested that a time limit be set for the burial of bodies. The Chair added that the struggle is that some bodies are not being claimed and Local Authorities are being contacted by hospitals and mortuaries for public health funerals.

Mark Norris clarified that the paragraph which mentioned the introduction of statutory regulatory function was from an independent body separate from local government and reiterated that the recommendation in the report was for the Board to agree for the LGA to undertake research. Mark Norris said that members' comments regarding opposition to national requirements would be used in framing what is communicated back to Government officials.

Decision

Members noted the report and agreed the next steps set out in paragraph 24.

7 Baroness Casey Review

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser to introduce the report which summarised the findings and recommendations of the Baroness Casey Review of the Metropolitan Police and highlighted some key areas of interest for councils.

Members comments:

- The Chair commented that data sharing across the country is inconsistent, specifically how police forces allow Local Authorities to access to police data.
- Secondly, the Chair stated that trust and confidence in the police is linked to the standards in policing and is not just an issue in the MET police.
- Finally, she outlined the need for the continuation of work to improve the police's response to violence against women and girls, to meet national targets.
- All public bodies should have a responsibility for the protection of people, including councils, however, concern was raised regarding the ability to perform these duties which has been eroded by funding cuts and a lack of resources.
- There is no way of measuring the internal culture within the police. The Chair added that there is no framework or metric to measure improvement overall, across multiple areas from standards to partnerships to culture.
- It was suggested a method of sharing good practice should be established between many organisations, particularly in addressing violence against women and girls.
- A member emphasised that the Board must focus on what councils can do to work with police forces rather than addressing what

police forces should do, as this is the role of PCCs. The member clarified that PCCs can be held to account by police and crime panels.

- The Chair raised that the consistency of Safer Neighbourhood Boards across the country needs to be improved, as this would allow good partnership working; these are police led but should have a member council representative on the board.
- A member highlighted that the consistency and methods through which councils hold PCCs accountable, and PCCs hold Chief Constables accountable, could be researched and greater consistency encouraged, for instance, live stream scrutiny and training.

Decision

The Board noted and discussed the findings and recommendations of the Baroness Casey Report and considered how its conclusions and recommendations are reflected in the Board's work in the areas outlined in paragraph 32.

8 Vagrancy Act

Members had a confidential discussion on the Vagrancy Act.

9 SIGCE

Members had a confidential discussion on the SIGCE.

10 Update Paper

The Chair invited Mark Norris to introduce the report which outlines issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda.

A member raised the need for awareness training around the dangers of unregulated vape use with higher levels of THC as they are larger.

Decision

That Members of the Board noted the update.

11 RAAC Update

The Chair invited Mark Norris to introduce the report which updated members on developments concerning Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in the local authority-maintained school estate and beyond.

Decision

The Board noted the development of the LGA's work on RAAC.

12 End of year report and forward look

Decision

The Chair deferred discussion of the 2023/24 Board cycle priorities until a later meeting.

Lead Members and the wider Board thanked and complimented Cllr Nesil Caliskan for her service as Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board for the past three years and wished her luck for her new role as LGA Labour Group Leader.

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 MBE	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	Devon County Council
	Cllr Arnold Saunders	Salford City Council
	Cllr Tracey Dixon	South Tyneside Council
	Cllr Jeanie Bell	St Helens Council
	Cllr Asher Craig	Bristol City Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council
	Cllr Karen Lucioni	Isle of Wight Council
Apologies	Cllr Jas Athwal	Redbridge London Borough Council
In Attendance	Debbie Bartlett	Deputy Director of Protect and Prepare at the Home Office