

Safer & Stronger Communities Board – report from Councillor Simon Blackburn (Chair)

Fire Conference

1. Cllrs Hilton, Howson, Aston and Hammond from the Fire Services Management Committee chaired sessions at the LGA's annual fire conference in March (as did other members of the Committee). The conference was attended by 280 delegates and heard from a range of speakers including the Fire Minister.

Meeting with the Home Secretary

2. Cllr Jeremy Hilton met the Home Secretary in March for an introductory discussion about the government's reform agenda for the fire and rescue service.

Police and Crime Panels

3. Cllr Morris Bright, Vice-Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, chaired a seminar for police and crime panel members and officers from England and Wales in March.

Ethics and accountability in Policing

4. I spoke at an Inside Government event on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report on ethics and accountability in the police about the role of police and crime panels.

Serious and Organised Crime

5. I spoke at a Policy Communications event about the role of local authorities in tackling serious and organised crime.

Advisory Board on Female Offenders

6. Cllr Janet Daby attended the Ministry of Justice's Advisory Board on Female Offenders in March which considered a range of issues associated with a whole system approach to dealing with women offenders.

Unlicensed diet pills

7. I highlighted the dangers of unlicensed diet pills, which are increasingly bought over the internet, and called for tougher sentences for people caught selling these pills illegally.

E-cigarettes

8. Cllr Jeremy Hilton called on the manufacturers of e-cigarettes to more to warn of their dangers following a fresh spate of fires caused by using the devices.

Public Space Protection Orders

9. I was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's Today programme about council's use of Public Space Protection Orders to deal with a range of anti-social behaviour in public places.

Domestic abuse

10. I attended the National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse chaired by the Home Secretary to look at the police response to domestic abuse incidents, and which is attended by Karen Bradley MP, the Minister for Preventing Abuse, Exploitation and Crime.

Food hygiene

11. I set out the LGA's case for the introduction of mandatory display of food hygiene ratings by restaurants, pubs, cafes, takeaways, sandwich shops, supermarkets and delicatessens to drive up standards.

Fixed Odds Betting Machines

12. I called on the government to launch its triennial review into gaming machine stakes immediately and use it to reduce the maximum stakes on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs).

Dog microchipping

13. I highlighted the new microchipping law for dogs which came into force in April.

Teeth whitening

14. I raised the dangers of having teeth whitening procedures being carried out by unqualified staff or of using teeth whitening kits containing dangerous chemicals at home.

Alcohol and licensing

15. Cllr Tony Page called on the drinks industry to produce more low or zero strength ciders, wines, beers and spirits to reduce alcohol related health harms, and for the government to support this by extending the tax breaks currently available to low strength beers. Cllr Page also responded to a report by the Institute of Alcohol Studies by highlighting the need for councils to be able to take into account the health implications of licensing applications.

Illegal tobacco

16. I highlighted the risks of using illegal tobacco, and the work of trading standards to tackle this.

Fire reform

17. Several members of the FSMC attended the Home Secretary's speech on fire reform where she spoke of her plans around efficiency and collaboration, workforce reform, and governance.

Psychoactive Substances

18. I issued a press release welcoming the commencement of the Psychoactive Substances Act on 26 May. The LGA had consistently lobbied for a blanket ban of the type introduced by the Act, to make it easier for councils and police to tackle the issues associated with the sale and consumption of psychoactive substances.

Alcohol summit

19. I chaired a summit with the alcohol industry to discuss the changing nature of its retail and the implications for councils as licensing authorities. The summit also explored options to increase the number of zero- and low-strength products on offer, for the benefit of public health.

Fake goods

20. I issued a press release urging people to watch out for fake goods being sold at bank holiday markets and car boot sales. Recent investigations by council trading standard teams across the country have found poor quality, dangerous and fake designer items on sale.

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