

## **Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting**

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| <b>Title:</b> | Safer & Stronger Communities Board                                |
| <b>Date:</b>  | Monday 11 June 2018   |
| <b>Venue:</b> | Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ |

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### **Attendance**

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

| <b>Item</b> | <b>Decisions and actions</b> |
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| <b>1</b> | <b>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b> |
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The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.

The Chair noted apologies received, and substitute Board Members in attendance. The Board noted Janet Davey's selection as Parliamentary Candidate for Lewisham East, and asked the Chair to write to thank her for her contribution to the Board.

No Declarations of Interest were made.

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| <b>2</b> | <b>Commission for Countering Extremism</b> |
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The Chair welcomed Sara Khan, Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism to the Board. Sara started by giving an overview of the Commission's work, including:

- The Commission was setup earlier this year following the series of terror attacks in London and Manchester in 2017.
- The Commission's overall aim is to build a societal response that challenges extremism, as well as building knowledge amongst the public so people can identify extremism.
- Sara stated that councils play a vital role in tackling extremism, and are on the front-line in seeing the impact of it in towns and cities.
- Sara stated that the Commission is currently building a robust set of recommendations for the government to act on, following in-depth conversations with over two hundred stakeholders, including the Special Interest Group on Counter Extremism. This is via a study being conducted to pull in evidence, and will result in a public consultation. Sara stated that her office has visited local communities and will continue to do so, as local government had the best understanding of extremism at a local level because they know their residents and communities best.
- Sara went on to outline three key themes the Commission has learnt so far:
  - There is a sense that we must and can do more to challenge extremism and the ideology behind it, which can inspire terrorism. Extremism can present in two ways; as an acute threat which provokes

- terrorism, but also in a chronic way that creates isolation and undermines democracy and our communities.
- There is an extremely strong will to do more to challenge extremism. Sara also stated that people who have been willing to challenge extremism have received a significant amount of abuse, and that councils and civil society urgently require additional support to tackle this.
  - There is an issue with identifying and naming Islamist extremists, compared to identifying and naming far-right extremists; people feel more comfortable addressing the latter– something that needs to change, with people having the confidence to talk about both.

The Chair thanked Sara for the update and invited Members to comment:

- Members recognised geographical / local differences in patterns of extremism (and whether it is recognised as such) and how this affects how much support and funding councils receive to tackle extremism. .
- Members discussed the use of social media in extremism and how it can support demonstrations – Members gave the recent violent protest outside No. 10 Downing Street to release the far-right leader Tommy Robinson as an example. Members stated that posting on social media allows extremist momentum to be built; that those who seek to challenge it are abused and that leading social media sites will not take these views down.
  - Sara fed-back that she has met with social media providers, including Facebook, Google, and Microsoft; work is currently ongoing and the providers are engaged to take extremist material off their platforms, as well as tackling fake news items and providing positive content to counteract extremism.
  - The Chair stated that the Serious Violence Taskforce had looked at the role of social media in tackling knife and gun crime, and that the social media providers had recognised they needed to do more.
  - Members also discussed that often, when you tackle online extremism, you become a victim of cyber-bullying and hate messages from so-called ‘trolls’.
- Members discussed gathering intelligence through front facing roles such as licensing officers, building inspectors, and the importance of community safety partnerships.
- Members suggested councillors should receive further advice and training – in a peer setting – to help combat extremism.
  - Sara stated the need for further training in all areas of government, sharing best practices, including localised strategies.
- Members discussed the possibility of forming a Task & Finish Group to join up the various pieces of work the LGA and wider organisations undertake in this area, including modern slavery and county lines.
  - Sara stated that extremism is rising at an unprecedented rate, and perpetrators always seem to be five steps ahead. The development of a whole society approach is key, with as many stakeholders engaged as possible.
- Members discussed the numerous agencies, and how to refer a case to the right one. Members stated that this is a wider government problem, that too many agencies can cause confusion, and asked that the Commission ensures clear signposting towards the right agency.
- Members also discussed the differences between the Commission and Prevent agenda.

- Sara stated the remit of the Commission is trying to understand the relationship between extremism and violence, as well as integration and extremism, and while there was an overlap Prevent was not in the Commission's remit.
- Members discussed the causes of extremism, the need to understand its underlying causes and how it manifests, as well as its partners in violence and the subjugation of women's rights.
  - Sara stated that some driving factors include socio-economic circumstances, as well as the long-term development of fundamental, extreme religious views.

The Chair introduced the Leader of Brent, Cllr Mohammed Butt (attending this item as an observer). The Chair explained that as Leader of Brent, Cllr Butt had an interest in this area of work. Cllr Butt made the following points:

- Radicalisation is happening online rather than in mosques, but not enough work is being undertaken by social media providers, and work in this area is about safeguarding.
- It's encouraging that the Commission wants to engage with councils, rather than adopting a top-down approach, as the Home Office has done previously. Councils know their communities best.
- The approach to extremism too often focuses on faith rather than communities. Muslim communities are often victims of extremism themselves, and there are concerning issues related to far right Polish nationalism and European based Nazi groups - a far-right Polish group ran for election in the recent Local Elections in May in the Brent area.

In response to the Leader's comments, Sara stated:

- That her office does not represent the Home Office, and that she will be looking at all sorts of issues that exist in current legislation to tackle extremism, including Home Office strategies.
- Sara stated that it is all about promoting a better quality of conversation in the public domain regarding extremism.
- Sara stated that the Commission has made it clear that engaging local communities is a key part of the work being undertaken, and the activities of far right groups from other parts of Europe in the UK and its impact on extremism had already been raised with them.

Sara concluded by thanking Members for their time and said that she will share evidence the Commission receives with the Board.

The Chair thanked Sara for her attendance said the Board would welcome her attendance at a future meeting.

#### **Action**

- Members noted the presentation.
- A future invitation to be extended to Sara to attend a Board meeting in the 2018/19 cycle.

## **4 Serious Violence Strategy Update**

The Chair motioned for item four on the agenda – update on the Serious Violence Strategy – be re-tabled to agenda item three. Members agreed to this motion.

The Chair then invited Dan Greaves, Crime Director, the Home Office to give his presentation. Dan thanked the Chair and delivered his presentation to Members, which included the following information:

- The strategy doesn't cover all crime, but covers knife crime, gun crime, acid attacks and homicide.
- The strategy does not cover domestic violence or night-time crime; Dan stated that whilst these were deemed serious, they were covered under different government/Home Office strategies.
- Dan also discussed the significant increase in recorded gun and knife crime and homicide since 2016, along with robbery – which has been on the rise since, in a reversal of the previous long term downward trend. While some of this is attributable to changes in police recording, it is clear that there has been a genuine national increase, although disproportionately in urban areas. Dan also stated that there was a global component to the trend.
- Dan discussed the significant role drugs play in serious violence as a dominant driving factor, including gang violence, fuelling addiction and the effects of drug misuse.
- Dan also discussed the prevalence of county lines as a driving factor and distinct issue.
- Dan touched on the use of social media being used both to glamourise but also as a tool in serious violence; increasing numbers of at risk groups, such as looked after children, excluded children and homeless people, as well as the pressures on police forces.
- Dan outlined the four main pillars of the strategy as:
  - Action against county lines and the misuse of drugs; the Home Office will be reaching out to taxi drivers on awareness raising measures as a next step.
  - Early intervention and prevention, including with Pupil Referral Units, looked after children etc.
  - Supporting communities and local partnerships to tackle violence.
  - Law enforcement and criminal justice response, for example on knife sales and acids. A trading standards prosecution fund will launch in Autumn 2018.
- Dan emphasised the importance of working in partnership with local government during the delivery phase of the strategy, noting that Cllr Blackburn was sitting on the Serious Violence Task force. He sought the Board's view on galvanising partnerships and any potential quick wins.

The Chair thanked Dan for his presentation, and invited Members to comment and put questions to Dan:

- Members welcomed the focus on County Lines, but raised concerns over the terminology of 'County Lines' and the lack of public understanding surrounding this.
  - Dan stated that there is a plan in place, led by the National County Lines Group (which Dan Chairs), which aims to provide further guidance for stakeholders regarding the concept and risks of county lines.
  - Dan also stated the Group is focusing on the brand – what 'County Lines' means, as well as targeting families and public, spreading the word regarding county lines.
- Members expressed concerns over the reduction in early intervention work as a result of cuts in funding to youth services and targeted youth services.

While additional money was welcome it did not replace what had been cut. Consideration also needed to be given to the role of public health funding for treatment services, and members argued that the solution to these issues was not to allocate money to PCCs.

- Members discussed the serious violence strategy in relation to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). Some members stated that their PCC had made it clear that funding and resources for the Serious Violence Strategy was not a priority.
- Members discussed the use of licensing – for example, only being able to buy sulphuric acid with a licence – as is the same with firearms.
  - Dan highlighted the Offensive Weapons Bill, and how the bill will introduce age restrictions and possession offences.
- Members queried whether match funding would be required for the Early Intervention Youth Fund, and whether councils could bid, raising concerns at the possibility it may be routed through PCCs.
  - Dan recognised overall funding challenges. He stated that resources would be targeted given we know where violence is concentrated, Currently Dan's office is working on the criteria and delivery of this, and will discuss this with the LGA.
- Members raised concerns about the impact of school exclusions, and lack of democratic oversight on policies about exclusions.
  - Dan noted that this was a known risk factor which DfE had been looking at, and encouraged the LGA to respond to its consultation on this.
- Members discussed Public Health engagement and funding.
  - Dan stated that the strategy is engaging with Public Health and Community Wellbeing teams and organisations.
- Members discussed the increase in drugs bought and used recreationally, and questioned whether the strategy was looking at the fundamental issue of the supply of drugs.
  - Dan broadly agreed with members' comments and referred to the National Drug Strategy, and recognised the issue of middle class drug users who don't realise or choose to ignore the wider ramifications of their drug use.
- Members discussed the possibility of decriminalising drugs, and used the Portugal model as an example.
  - Dan stated that the consequences of this would need to be looked at in significant detail.
  - Dan also disagreed with comparing different models that have different driving factors, as the variables are significantly different.
- Members requested more information in relation to the funding being made available as part of the Strategy.
  - Dan stated that he will circulate this after the Board.

The Chair thanked Dan for his time, and members for the discussion. The Chair stated that Dan would be welcome to attend a future Board meeting.

### **Action**

- Members noted the presentation.
- Circulation of the presentation to members after the Board.
- Dan Greaves to provide further information regarding funding available under the Strategy.

### **3 Update on LGA Work to Develop a National Register of Taxi Licence Revocations and Refusals (NR3)**

The Chair invited Ellie Greenwood, Senior Adviser, and Rebecca Johnson, Adviser to introduce the item.

Rebecca and Ellie gave a live demonstration of the new National Register of Taxi Licence Revocations and Refusals for Members, which included an overview of the system. Ellie and Rebecca also discussed some of the risks relating to the register – particularly pertaining to information sharing, guidance from the Information Commissioners Office, and the possibility of breaching human rights legislation without a targeted and proportionate approach to information sharing – as outlined in the paper.

The Chair thanked Ellie and Rebecca for the presentation, and invited members to comment:

- Members discussed the data retention period for information on the register, and asked what information would / would not be disclosable.
- Members discussed whether there would be an appeals process.
- Members welcomed the development but emphasised the importance of continuing to lobby on issues around public service vehicles and the DVSA.
  - Rebecca and Ellie explained that the data retention period for information on the register was proposed to be 25 years. The register itself will record only basic details of when a licence has been refused or revoked; licensing authorities will need to make a judgement about whether it is appropriate to share further information if asked, based on the nature of the refusal or revocation and the length of time that has passed. Individuals whose details are entered onto the register will be able to object to this, although as the register has been set up to support a public task, there are limited grounds for them to object. This would of course be separate to the process of appealing a decision to refuse or revoke in the first place.

The Chair thanked members for their comments.

#### **Action**

- Members noted the update.

### **5 Safer and Stronger Communities Board End of Year Report 2017/18 and 2018/19 Work Plan**

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the item.

Mark stated that the paper was broadly in two parts; the first part detailed the Board's work and achievements during the 2017/18 Board cycle. The second part proposed draft Board priorities for the 2018/19 cycle – Mark invited Members to consider and agree these, ahead of a full discussion at the September meeting.

The Chair thanked Mark for the update and invited Members to comment:

- Members discussed the importance of water safety, councils' work surrounding this, and the good practice that could be shared.
- Members suggested amending the section on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT) communities, to include positive aspects GRT communities can contribute, and the balance of rights between sections of society.
- Members suggested that post-Grenfell work might include insulation and fire safety, and not just work on high rise buildings.
- Members supported the suggestion of cross-cutting work on mental health.
- Members discussed the pressures of police funding, as well as pressures to local and neighbourhood policing.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments.

### **Actions**

- Officers to include positive impacts in relation to GRT communities in future reports.

## **6 Fire Safety in High Rise Buildings**

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the item. Mark stated the item outlined the recommendation from the final report of the independent review of building regulations and fire safety led by Dame Judith Hackitt. Mark stated that the report was published in May, and then ran through the implications of these for councils and fire and rescue services.

The Chair thanked Mark for the update and invited Members to comment:

- Members discussed the implications for local authorities and housing associations.
- They noted the important role of planning and planning legislation in building safety.
- Members discussed the implications on funding and the severe impact this has on councils building safe and sustainable homes.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments.

### **Action**

Members noted the update.

## **7 Update Paper**

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principle Policy Adviser, to introduce the item.

Mark gave an overview of the report, which outlined the issues and interest to the Board not covered under other items and work streams in the agenda.

The Chair thanked Mark and invited Members to comment:

- Members discussed the modern slavery mobile phone app.
- They noted the work of the Advisory Board on Female Offenders and the forthcoming strategy on reducing female offending, and the use of women's

centres as an alternative to sentencing.

- Members expressed the need to push the Boards work – particularly in relation to domestic violence, modern slavery, fire safety and terrorism.
- Members thanked officers for their hard work in relation to Fixed Odds Betting terminals (FOBT's), and the recent announcement by government to lower the stake of these down to a £2 maximum bet.
- Members also discussed online gambling behaviour.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments.

## **8 Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting**

Members agreed to the note of the last Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting on 19 March 2018.



## **Appendix A -Attendance**

| Position/Role              | Councillor   | Authority  |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Chairman                   | Cllr Simon Blackburn   | Blackpool Council  |
| Deputy-chairman            | Cllr Anita Lower<br>Cllr Clive Woodbridge  | Newcastle upon Tyne City Council<br>Epsom and Ewell Borough Council  |
| Members                    | Cllr Jo Beavis<br>Cllr Chris Pillai JP<br>Cllr Judith Wallace<br>Cllr Katrina Wood<br>Cllr Nick Worth<br>Cllr Kate Haigh<br>Cllr Alan Rhodes<br>Cllr Jim Beall<br>Cllr James Dawson<br>Cllr Janet Daby<br>Cllr Carole Burdis<br>Cllr Jeremy Hilton | Braintree District Council<br>Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council<br>North Tyneside Council<br>Wycombe District Council<br>South Holland District Council<br>Gloucester City Council<br>Nottinghamshire County Council<br>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council<br>Erewash Borough Council<br>Lewisham London Borough Council<br>North Tyneside Council<br>Gloucestershire County Council |
| Apologies<br>Vice-Chairman | Cllr Morris Bright MBE<br>Cllr Lisa Targowska<br>Cllr Colin Spence   | Hertsmere Borough Council<br>Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough<br>Suffolk County Council  |