

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title:	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date:	Monday 14 January 2019
Venue:	Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest
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The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and noted the apologies that were received. This included the guest Speaker Louise Baxter, who was due to present item two to the Board. No declarations of interest were made.

2	National Trading Standards Scams Team: Councils' Work to Tackle Fraud
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Rebecca Johnson, Adviser, presented item two, and updated members on the work of the National Trading Standards Scams Team (NTSST). Rebecca stated that scams are estimated to cost around £5-10 billion each year, however the exact figure is not known due to people often not being aware they are victims of a scam, or being too embarrassed to report the incident.

Rebecca went on to state that the Scams Team works alongside local Trading Standards teams to investigate scams and identify and support victims. Rebecca outlined some of the wider work the scams team have been doing, for example with the banking sector – such as a new Banking Protocol involving the training of front line staff to look out for unusual transactions.

Rebecca introduced the Friends Against Scams initiative (FAS) which is a programme of work focused on raising awareness about scams, and providing individuals and organisations with information about how to spot and support a victim. Councils have a key role to play in raising awareness amongst residents and are well placed to signpost to self-help tools that are available. Currently around 54 councils have signed up to FAS and NTSST is working to encourage more councils to sign up.

Rebecca confirmed that the LGA (and WLGA) has committed to becoming a FAS partner – and to promote the initiative with councils, Cllr Wallace has also been nominated as Scambassador.

Cllr Judith Wallace – the Board's Scambassador – gave the following update:

- The FAS initiative is aimed at communities to build up resilience against scams.

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- The FAS aim to sign-up one million friends against scams by 2020.
- Victims of scams do not want to admit it they are a victim of this crime, as they often feel ashamed.
- Part of the work is to raise awareness of scams and for victims not to feel ashamed.
- Cllr Wallace asked members to encourage their authorities to sign-up to the initiative.
- The FAS e-learning tool will be circulated following the Board.
- Alongside banks, the FAS is working with the Royal Mail, as postal scams make up the majority of NTSST's work.
- The FAS initiative is also working with young people, for example during universities fresher's weeks.

Following the update members discussed how scammers can play on peoples' greed and victim's generosity, giving examples of fake charity collections in towns and highstreets, as well as via post and on the internet. Members agreed that this is an incredibly important issue that creates significant costs to the taxpayer and economy, and as a result, local government should be at the forefront to tackle scams.

Members also discussed the importance of the Scambassador role and the FAS initiative, although some had not been aware of it. Members went on to state that it is worrying only 54 councils have signed so far, noting that while initiatives such as these takes a while to gain traction, the LGA and NTSST need to encourage more councils to sign up.

Members agreed that this work should be covered by schools as some young people are just as unaware of scams as some of the elderly. Members also commented that this is a cross-boundary issue.

Members reported that Trading Standards teams in their own authorities had received a significant increase of reporting of scams. Concerns were raised over perpetrators securing money transferred via banks, as once money has been transferred from one account to another, it is effectively gone for good. Members discussed the idea of a time lock to delay transfers of money.

Members raised awareness of a recent event for the elderly at elderly retirement village, which was well attended by both residents and stakeholders, such as banks, HMRC and the NTS.

Members agreed that working with the Post Office to train staff on this issue is key.

Members requested the list of the 54 councils who had signed up to the FAS initiative.

- Rebecca stated she would seek clarification from the NTS regarding circulating this list.

Member raised the issue of cuts to trading standards, as well as the age profile within trading standards services, with many officers approaching retirement.

Members also discussed the impact of Brexit, and how consumer law and scams legislation may fall under the radar following the UK's departure from the EU.

Actions

1. Members noted the update.

2. Officers to circulate the list of council members of FAS and e-learning tool.

3 Protective Security Issues - Government Security Advisor, CPNI

Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board received a confidential update from a government security adviser.

Action

3. Members noted the update.

4 Fire Safety in High Rise Buildings

Mark Norris, Principle Policy Adviser, introduced the item. Mark's update included numerous developments since the previous Board meeting, including:

- Progress has been made on remediating buildings with ACM cladding, particularly in the social housing sector, where dangerous cladding is now being removed from around three quarters of buildings.
- The bigger, outstanding issue however is with private sector buildings, and Government has made a number of announcements on this since the last meeting. The Secretary of State has announced changes to operating guidance, which will come into effect in a couple of weeks and will aid local authorities in taking enforcement action against owners who are not taking off cladding as fast as they need to.
- In the same statement, the Secretary of State also said that where councils want to take action to remove cladding themselves (given that they already have powers to strip cladding off), MHCLG will make money available to support this, although councils will have to make a case for funding on a case by case basis.
- Significant progress had been made on the indemnity insurance for the joint inspection team, though further work was needed to finalise the funding and indemnity agreement with MHCLG. Once this is in effect the team will be better placed to go and advise authorities; a lead officer is now in post and there is a list of local authorities the team is expecting to talk to.
- The ban on combustible cladding came into effect on 21 December 2019.
- The Government's implementation plan for the Dame Judith Hackett proposals has been published. The LGA is heavily involved in discussing with this with MHCLG, and there will be a consultation, so there will be further opportunities to influence this.
- The LGA has been sharing information with authorities about possible risks relating to buildings with concrete roofs, following the collapse of a concrete roof at a school in 2018. The speed between the issue being noticed and the roof collapsing was a particular concern.

Following the update, members discussed the Approved Document B consultation, which seeks views on whether the scope should be expanded. Members discussed that there is a case for looking at lower buildings with vulnerable residents. The Chair agreed with this point, and stated that his area has lots of buildings that are at a lower level – hotels for example – where lots of people reside. The Chair also made the note that managers of these buildings often test the fire alarm at the wrong time, for example in the middle of the day when the buildings are less busy than they would be during the night.

Action

1. Members noted the update.

5 Update Paper

Member Champions of the Board fed-back their recent work during item five:

Member Champions for Licensing had attended a meeting of BACTA, the trade body for amusement arcades. Members reported that BACTA are pleased about the reduction in Fixed-Odd Betting terminal (FOBT) stakes, but feel there are similar products on the market they felt would be appropriate for regulation and campaigns.

Members discussed the impending Councillors' guide to tackle Modern Slavery. The member Champion to Tackle Modern Slavery also updated members that is still no Independent Commissioner in post, and also noted that he would be meeting with Vernon Coaker MP, Chair of the APPG on Modern Slavery. The Member Champion concluded by thanking officers for the recent conference that took place at the LGA – making specific reference to paragraph 12 in the Update Paper.

Members questioned if there had been any further news or assurances around future funding of the National FGM Centre. Deputy-Chair Cllr Anita Lower, Member Champion to Tackle FGM stated there had been no assurances from the government yet, but ideas are being formulated by Sarah Champion MP.

Members, Deputy-Chair Cllr Dalton, and the Chair, all welcomed the announcement that Just Eat will now include the official Food Hygiene Rating of each of its UK restaurant partners.

The Member Champion for Water Safety thanked officers for their submission into the MCA review, as well as officer's work to get incident data released by the Home Office.

Action

1. Members noted the update.

6 Note of last Safer Stronger Communities Board meeting

Members agreed to the notes of the previous meeting on Monday 19 November 2018.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
	Cllr Hannah Dalton	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Members	Cllr Eric Allen	Sutton London Borough Council
	Cllr Keith McLean	Milton Keynes Council
	Cllr John Pennington	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Colin Spence	Suffolk County Council
	Cllr Judith Wallace	North Tyneside Council
	Cllr Katrina Wood	Wycombe District Council
	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland District Council
	Cllr Jim Beall	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Farah Hussain	Redbridge London Borough Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Substitutes (In attendance as observers)	Cllr Mohan Iyengar	Borough of Poole
	Cllr Becca Thackray	Lambeth London Borough