

Company Number 11177145

## Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

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**Title:** Safer & Stronger Communities Board  
**Date:** Monday 2 September 2019  
**Venue:** Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

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

### Item Discussion, decisions and actions

#### 1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Safer & Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) of 2019/2020. Introductions were given around the table and apologies and substitutes were noted (which can be found at [Appendix A](#)). The following declarations of interest were made:

- Cllr Philip Evans declared he is a member of the Licensing Institute.
- Cllr Farah Hussain declared she is a Director of UK Feminista.

#### 2 Safer and Stronger Communities Board 2019/20: Terms of Reference, Membership and Appointments to Outside Bodies

Benn Cain, Member Services Officer, introduced item two. Benn reminded members that this was a standing item that was presented at the beginning of every annual Board cycle. The report presented asked members to agree the Board's terms of reference, formally note the membership of the Board for 2019/20, agree to the Board's outside body appointments, note the meeting dates of the Board and review and appoint member champions.

Following this update, members' discussion focused primarily around the possibility of appointing a member Champion for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities as this is a long standing issue for councils, as well as the links with other community safety issues such as anti-social behaviour. There was cross-party agreement in principle to making such an appointment, subject to consideration being given to the appointment by Lead Members and a further report to the next Board meeting, to bring other members up-to-speed with the work the LGA had been doing on GRT issues. Members agreed that any work-stream of this type needs to not only focus on issues arising from unauthorised encampments, but also issues that GRT communities are facing – particularly for GRT women, education and health access.

The Chair concluded the discussion by mentioning the engagement the LGA had had with the All Party Parliamentary Group, and the Select Committee inquiry which had requested

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a submission from the LGA. However, the LGA declined this as it was felt that the organisation did not have best practice evidence from councils to provide helpful input to the Inquiry. The Chair agreed in principle to a member champion being appointed, subject to an update paper to be brought to the next Board meeting.

Regarding the other Member Champions, the Chair requested that lead members meet after the Board meeting to appoint members to these roles.

During the discussion the following **action** was noted:

- A GRT update paper to be presented at the next Board meeting. Following this, the Board will agree if a Member Champion needs to be appointed.

### **Decisions**

- Members agreed to the Board's Terms of Reference.
- Members noted the membership of the Board for 2019/20.
- Members agreed to the Board's Outside Bodies appointments:
  - o National FGM Centre Advisory Board – Cllr Anita Lower to continue to Chair the Board, with Cllrs Jo Beavis and Farah Hussain to attend the meetings in order to enable some succession planning at the end of the 2019/20 cycle.
  - o National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse – Cllr Simon Blackburn.
  - o Serious Violence Taskforce – Cllr Simon Blackburn.
  - o Events Security Group – Cllr Dave Stewart with Cllr Kate Haigh as a substitute.
- Members noted the dates of the future Board meetings for 2019/20.
- Members reviewed and agreed to the Board Member Champions role descriptions.
- Lead members agreed to the following:
  - o Abuse, exploitation and modern slavery – Cllr Alan Rhodes.
  - o ASB – Cllr Bridget Smith.
  - o Bereavement Services – Cllr John Pennington.
  - o Community Cohesion and Integration – Cllrs Farah Hussain and Mohan Iyengar.
  - o Licensing and regulatory services – Cllrs Kate Haigh and Eric Allen.
  - o Domestic Abuse – Cllrs Lois Samuel and Jim Beall.
  - o Prevent and counter-extremism – Cllrs Blackburn, Dalton and Stewart.
  - o Drowning Prevention – Cllr James Dawson.
  - o Scambassador – Cllr Hannah Dalton.

### **3 Tackling modern slavery: LGA support for councils and joint work with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner**

The Chair introduced Dame Sara Thornton, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to introduce item three.

The Commissioner thanked members for the invitation to the Board, and gave a brief overview of her career history as a police officer, as well as the strategic four point plan,

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which she hopes to be published in October. This plan was currently with the Home Secretary for sign-off. The Commissioner's presentation included:

- Slide one – the role of the Commissioner;
- Slide two – the strategic plan & four priorities. This mentioned the LGA as a key partner.
- Slide three – improving victim care and support. This included figures of victims, the key role for frontline staff in identifying victims and the need for up-to-date quality training within the local government sector, increasing the quality of victim support including the review of the National Referral Mechanism, the roll out of Independent Child Trafficking Advocates and other means of improving support to child victims (including details around the Bedfordshire University research into child trafficking).
- Slide four – supporting law enforcement and prosecutions. This included details on the nature of this serious violent crime, coordinating the whole criminal prosecution system, details around victims that are trafficked across police borders, the need to take into account the serious and organised crime aspect of modern slavery, the need to increase prosecutions and how labour intensive this can be (the Commissioner gave an example of a West Midlands operation which took place over a five year time frame), and getting the balance right between prosecutions and protecting victims.
- Slide five - a focus on prevention and protection; working with the private sector, organisations and businesses looking into their supply chains and encouraging them to complete and meet their statutory requirements around statements on transparency in their supply chains (Government departments will be completing statements for 2020/2021), raising public awareness when buying products produced by victims and highlighting examples of this (sourcing of consumer products, such as chocolate and clothes for example), and homelessness - homeless people are actively targeted.
- Slide six – value from research & innovation, and making sure this feeds into policy and practice more.
- Slide seven & eight – the Commissioners work with local authorities and the LGA including the LGA's guide for councils on modern slavery. The Commissioners office is trying to raise awareness of the issue on the ground, and are keen to work with local authorities to identify good practice via possible joint reports or round tables. The Commissioner stated that there were around 7,000 referrals last year; 40 per cent of these were are child victims, and so adopting multi-agency child social care working models may be an avenue to explore, so the plan can integrate within existing local authorities procedures.

Following the Commissioners presentation, members made the following comments:

Members asked the Commissioner if this policy area will remain a high priority for the new, Prime Minister (PM) and Home Secretary. The Commissioner stated that when this issues is discussed in parliament, it continues to gain cross-party support and that Whitehall decision makers believe this continues to be a very important issue of our time. There are also a number of organisations that believe tackling modern slavery is an important issue. The Commissioner also stated that there are a number of international conventions to which the UK is party requiring it to tackle modern slavery.

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Members discussed nail bars and car washes as some of the most common businesses where modern slavery can be found; members questioned if the Commissioner held any statistics over how many of these businesses commit modern slavery crimes. The Commissioner responded that there are approximately 15,000 – 20,000 car washes in the UK, and that there are wider issues around breaking other laws such as health and safety standards, for example. It is known that some of these businesses are run by serious organised crime gangs, with money laundering taking place. The Commissioner concluded that if you are paying under £6.70 for a car wash, the employees of that business will be paid under the national minimum wage, though some employees were happy to be paid at that rate.

Members discussed women who are presenting as sex workers, and if there are any questions being asked as to whether they are victims of modern slavery? The Commissioner stated that her offices plan has a significant focus on the welfare of women, and noted that more needs to be done with sex workers to ensure they are not modern slavery victims.

Members also brought up the issue of County Lines and the increase in these across the country and the links they have with modern slavery, particularly children. Members questioned how public awareness of this issue could be raised? The Commissioner responded that child referrals are on the increase because of County Lines – children are being forced to traffic drugs, and dealers are being prosecuted under modern slavery laws. However, the Commissioner concluded that further awareness needs to be raised amongst middle classes drug users, as drug taking and purchasing is not a victimless crime and affects all people in the narcotics supply chain.

The Chair thanked Dame Sara for her time and invited the Commissioner back to a future Board meeting, and stated the Board will continue to maintain a close focus on this work.

### **Decision**

Members noted the update, and provided their views on future work in this area.

## **4 Commission for Countering Extremism**

The Chair welcomed Sara Khan, Commissioner for Countering Extremism, who introduced item four. The Commissioner stated that councils are vital to this work, as council workers are on the front line, whose voice and work is invaluable.

The Commissioner updated members on her visit to 20 different towns and cities, including talks councillors and officers as well as with critics of extremism policy, and the public consultation which has played a vital part of the commission's work as it represents the public views on this.

The Commissioner stated that extremism threatens democracy, liberty and the public's freedoms, including freedom of expression - the commission aims to champion freedom of expression, but to protect the public. The Commissioner went through the proposed broad areas of work; tackling behaviours including those that seek to restrict the rights of others, hateful extremism and violent extremism; addressing the range of harms associated with

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extremism including mental health issues, crime and violence. The main focus of the Commission will be tackling hateful extremism, which was discussed in the Board report, and include hateful behaviour and the incitement of hatred. Finally, the Commissioner mentioned the on-going protests in Birmingham, the group of which aims to stop LGBT education in primary schools. The Commissioner stated that whilst the parents are completely within their right to protest, hateful extremist groups are actively exploiting this.

The Commissioner then handed over to Euan Neill who confirmed that the Government is committed to move this work on, and that the challenge ahead is becoming more victim focused. The commission aims to bring a rights-based approach, including:

1. A greater public awareness of what hateful extremism is: the commission is writing a statement on this.
2. Delivering better interventions: this offer is via a toolbox to offer the right interventions to local areas, and promote best practices of new and innovative practises.
3. Better leadership across society: this is a vital aspect and needs consistency, with the Commission working with others to help develop that leadership.
4. More transparent leadership with a new Home Secretary chaired taskforce being a possibility.
5. The role of education and what is done about the unregulated sector.

Following the Commissioners update, members made the following comments:

Members discussed how some local authorities are receiving additional funding, and questioned that there would surely be a better outcome if all councils get funding given the importance of this national issue. The Commissioner stated that this issue has arisen through the public consultation, and that this funding should not be at the expense of other services such as youth centres. The Chair stated that the commission does not hold any funding powers, and that the LGA always raise these points through all consultations that are undertaken. The Chair also mentioned how this work feeds into the #CouncilsCan campaign.

Members questioned what can the commission do to get Government departments to buy into this work? Members mentioned the Birmingham example, and reported that one head teacher felt let down by the Department of Education (DoE). The Commissioner confirmed that the new strategy she would be publishing would require the DoE to take action, and that she had personally said not enough was being done to address this issue.

Members raised concerns over the public's support and confidence in this work, and how do we get a strategy that everyone has confidence in? The Commissioner responded that there needed to be a consensus on how to tackle extremism – although practitioners like the Government's definition of extremism the public did not. The Commissioner went on to explain that the challenge is to balance the public's right to freedom of expression and the harms that hateful extremism has on all victims, including children and young people. This stage of the work is about getting all people – both the public and Government – to buy into a new way of thinking.

Members highlighted the key role the voluntary sector had to play, and asked if their work will be incorporated. The Commissioner stated that the civil society's role is huge especially in tackling extremist narratives, however, a lack of funding is recognised by the

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commission and that the third sector needs a significant increase of support from Government. The Chair supported this, saying a strength of the Serious Violence Taskforces was the involvement of charities and civil society groups to give their feedback.

Members questioned if protection and early intervention for violence against women and girls (VAWG) will be a distinct area that the commission will focus on? Members mentioned honour-based violence and Female Genital Mutilation as two examples that feed into countering extremism. The Commissioner responded that the plan will link to the VAWG strategy, which provides support and best practice for these crimes.

Members supported a two-year plan for this work, and asked if this was a possibility. The Commissioner responded that the report will focus on steps going forward, and develop what the commission aims to do. The Commissioner confirmed that there would be a two year work programme.

### **Decisions**

Members of the SSCB:

1. Noted the updates on national counter-extremism policy, the Commission for Countering Extremism and support for local authorities; and
2. Considered and offered feedback on the issues and suggestions outlined in paragraph 15, which members raised with the Commissioner.

## **5 Safer and Stronger Communities Board Policy Priorities for 2019-20**

Mark Norris, Principle Policy Adviser, introduced item five.

Mark stated the paper sets out the proposals for the SSCB's priorities and work programme for 2019/20. These proposals are based on corporate LGA priorities and options for broader work based on a continuation of ongoing Board work (including responding to recent policy announcements made by Government) and areas of interest previously indicated by Board members. The LGA's Executive would be considering the LGA's declaration of a climate emergency and adoption of the UN's sustainable development goals at its annual meeting in the summer and would be considering what work individual Boards do in this area.

Members made the following comments:

Member questioned if crematoria and the CMA investigation should be a priority of the Board. Mark responded that this investigation may have a significant impact on local authority revenue from provision of these services.

Members discussed adding a work stream on neighbourhood policing. The Chair reminded members the Board had considered the issue before and there had been meetings with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners as well as with the College of Policing. Mark also stated that there would be further Home Office work on the provision of more front line policing linked to the spending round announcements. Members questioned if it would be possible to reach agreement on what should be done to strengthen neighbourhood policing and highlighted the links with Police and Crime Panels

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and their Police and Crime Commissioners.

Members questioned if points raised in paragraphs 19.1 – 19.4 will fall under the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC). Mark stated that the FSMC falls under the SSCB.

Members questioned if mental health and community safety – points raised in paragraph 18.6 – should be split up (although recognised this as a cross-cutting issue). Mark confirmed the wording needed to be revised here and that they would be two different strands of work.

Members requested that points raised in paragraph 18.1 should be opened up to males? Members agreed that this is a heavily gendered crime, but that men are victims of domestic abuse too. Members also raised the point of perpetrators of domestic abuse and early intervention.

Members discussed how paragraph 18.4 is linked to the possibility of a GRT Member Champion.

Members discussed paragraph 18.2, and questioned how the LGA can help local authorities reduce violence against children and young people who are victims of County Lines. Members questioned if there needs to be a public health and child protection approach. The Chair supported this statement, and stated that whilst the Children's Act helps to stop the abuse of children, it is designed for intra-familial violence and doesn't protect the most vulnerable from issues such as County Lines, which also has distinct links to modern slavery.

Members held discussions over adopting public health approaches in other areas – such as licensing and regulation. This was supported by the Chair, who reminded members that the Government is now taking a public health approach to tackle serious violence.

The following **action** was noted during the discussion:

- Officers to re-word paragraph 18.6 and take forward two different work streams on mental health and community resilience in the coming year.

### **Decisions**

1. The SSCB agreed to the Board's priorities and work programme for 2019/20.
2. Members agreed to the recommendations set out in paragraph 15.

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

Mark Norris introduced item six. Mark's update included:

- Details around the remedial work on housing blocks – out of 45 council blocks, 16 are complete, 20 of them with problematic cladding have been stripped off; 9 are facing funding issues.
- The MHCLG / LGA Joint Inspection Team have completed their first inspection.

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- An advice note of high pressured laminates has been published which states that some types of this cladding can be regarded as dangerous as category 2 ACM cladding, and owners have been advised to remove it.
- Discussed the 'Building a safer future: proposals for reform of the building safety regulation system' consultation response (which can be found at **Appendix A** in the agenda).

Following the update, members made the following points:

Members requested a seminar once this work has concluded, to brief members on the changes of regulations, wins for local Government and changes of national policy, as the development of this work has been very fast-paced.

Members raised questions on the government's proposals for residents' involvement in the future of building safety. Mark responded that this was an important issue that the new regulatory framework was considering but there was also an overlap with Social Housing Green Paper which the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board was leading on.

#### **Decision**

Members of the Board noted the LGA's building safety related work.

### **7 Update Paper**

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced this item, which outlines issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items of the agenda.

Following Mark's update, no comments were made.

#### **Decision**

Members of the Board noted the update.

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

#### **Decision**

Members agreed to the note of the last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting, which took place on Monday 10 June 2019.

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## **Appendix A - Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Katrina Wood	Wycombe District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Bridget Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Hannah Dalton	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Members	Cllr Eric Allen	London Borough of Sutton
	Cllr Mohan Iyengar	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
	Cllr John Pennington	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Dave Stewart	Isle of Wight Council
	Cllr James Gartside	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Lois Samuel	West Devon Borough Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Jim Beall	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr Farah Hussain	London Borough of Redbridge
	Cllr Claudia Webbe	London Borough of Islington
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Philip Evans JP	Conwy County Borough Council
	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent County Council
Cllr Tim Roca	Westminster City Council	
Cllr Clive Johnson	Medway Council	
Cllr Daniel Francis	London Borough of Bexley	
Apologies	Cllr Jason Ablewhite	Huntingdonshire District Council
	Cllr Andrew Joy	Hampshire County Council