

Company Number 11177145

Update Paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Recommendation

That members of the Board note and comment on the update.

Action

Officers to action any matters arising from the discussion as appropriate.

Contact officer: Mark Norris
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3241
Email: mark.norris@local.gov.uk

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Domestic Abuse Bill

1. In September 2019, the LGA [briefed](#) Parliamentarians ahead of the Second Reading debate of the Domestic Abuse Bill. We highlighted the importance of investing in early intervention and prevention to stop domestic abuse from occurring in the first place, and the need to identify effective perpetrator interventions.
2. Following this, the LGA was called to give oral evidence to the Public Bill Committee responsible for scrutinising the Bill in the House of Commons. However, this evidence session was postponed due to the general election.

New statutory duty for domestic abuse accommodation services

3. On the same day as the Queen's Speech 2019, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed plans for a new legal duty for local authorities to deliver domestic abuse accommodation-based support services. The Government also announced £15 million would be made available for refuges and safe accommodation projects in 2020 to 2021. LGA officers will continue to work with the Government on this policy.

Tackling anti-social behaviour conference

4. In October 2019, Cllr Simon Blackburn chaired the LGA conference on tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB). We had some excellent local government speakers, including contributions from the Home Office and the new Victim's Commissioner Dame Vera Baird. Discussions focused on the use of 2014 ASB powers, the community trigger process, the challenges of Public Spaces Protection Orders and Injunctions. Attendees also discussed the cross-over with serious violent crime and county lines issues, particularly how to tackle cuckooing. Dame Vera Baird addresses some of these important issues in an interview featured in this month's edition of First Magazine, [available here](#).

Safer Streets Fund

5. In October 2019, the Home Secretary announced a £25 million fund to prevent burglary and theft in crime hotspots. The Safer Streets Fund will be open to bids from Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) for projects aimed at preventing acquisitive crime. PCCs must work with local authorities and other partners to develop plans, which need to be based on evidence, demonstrate value for money and engage local communities. Further information [available here](#).

Serious and Organised Crime Review

6. In October 2019, the Government [announced](#) that Sir Craig Mackey QPM, former deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, will be leading a review on serious and organised crime. The review will consider the powers, capabilities, governance and funding required to tackle today's threats across law enforcement and the justice system in England and Wales -

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including the National Crime Agency, local police forces and regional organised crime units. Sir Craig's report is expected to be published in Spring 2020.

New package of measures to tackle county lines

7. In October 2019, the Home Secretary [announced](#) a new package of measures to tackle county lines activity, which includes £20 million investment to intensify law enforcement efforts to disrupt the county lines model. The National County Lines Co-ordination Centre will receive additional investment to increase its activity, as well as investment in British Transport Police teams and working with money service bureaux.

Knife Crime Prevention Order (KCPO) consultation response

8. In September 2019, the LGA submitted a [response](#) to the Government's [consultation](#) on Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPOs). Where KCPO areas are introduced, we have said it will be essential to ensure the new orders effectively tackle knife crime. These orders should not contribute to the unnecessary criminalisation of young people. We also highlighted it will be vitally important that any new costs to local government associated with KCPOs are fully funded and sustained.

Serious Violent Crime Conference

9. On 13 November 2019, the LGA will be holding a conference on taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime. The aim of the event is to share best practice with local government colleagues on taking a multi-agency approach to tackling serious violent crime. Full details are [available here](#).
10. Public Health England has also published a guide for frontline professionals on taking a multi-agency approach to tackling serious violent crime. The full guide is [available here](#).

Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion

11. On 4-5 November we supported an event at Leeds council on Bridging Northern communities, developed in recognition of some of the common issues facing communities across the North of England around radicalisation, extremism and integration. The conference attracted over 150 delegates from local authorities and partners throughout the region over the two days.
12. The conference concluded with the SIGCE's eighth seminar, also supported by the LGA, on women and extremism and its links to misogyny.
13. Our series of [leadership essentials courses](#) starts in Blackpool later this month; places are still available for the Prevent and counter-extremism course on 14-15 November. We will be running further courses on Prevent in London on 29 November; cohesion and integration in Loughborough on 3-4 December; Prevent and counter-extremism in Leeds on 4-5 February; and cohesion and integration in Coventry on 10-11 March. If you or colleagues would like to attend any of the events, please contact grace.collins@local.gov.uk.

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Commission for Countering Extremism

14. Following the update to the Board in September, the Commission for Countering Extremism [published its report](#) on extremism in England and Wales last month.
15. The report's recommendations included: a new focus on 'hateful extremism', framed within a rights-based approach; a need for better and more consistent application of effective interventions to counter extremism; putting the Commission on a statutory basis; a call for more visible and stronger leadership against hateful extremism from political parties - but also more support and protection from abuse and intimidation; clearer articulation from government about distinctions between related policy areas; and a call for a new hateful extremism task force to oversee development of the new Counter Extremism strategy and respond to extremist incidents.
16. In our response to the report's publication we welcomed its recognition of the importance of councils and their ongoing work in tackling extremism and promoting cohesion, and supported the call for a joined-up approach across related policy areas at both local and national levels. We also called for local government's voice to be heard as part of proposals to introduce a taskforce.

Modern slavery

17. In September, we published two new guidance documents for councils on modern slavery: a set of best practice case studies and a guide for councillors on the role they can play in tackling modern slavery.
18. To mark international anti-slavery day in October, the new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner published her [strategic plan](#) for 2019-2021. This was in line with the themes the Commissioner outlined to the Board during her presentation at the meeting in September, and focuses on her four themes:
 - 18.1 Improving victim care and support;
 - 18.2 Supporting law enforcement and prosecutions;
 - 18.3 Focusing on prevention; and
 - 18.4 Getting value from research and innovation
19. As well as noting the work of the LGA with councils which have voluntarily developed transparency statements (para 3.5.3), the strategic plan highlights two local authority issues that the Commissioner flagged in her presentation to the board and her subsequent meeting with Councillor Alan Rhodes as Member Champion for Tackling Modern Slavery:
 - 19.1 Whether there is an issue with council awareness of modern slavery on the ground, notwithstanding the LGA's guidance (para 1.2.4).

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19.2 Exploring the possibility of local decision making for child victims of modern slavery (1.5.1).

20. Following the launch of the strategic plan, officers attended a roundtable hosted by the Commissioner which considered the role of local authorities in tackling modern slavery. The roundtable was also attended by London Councils, council officers, local modern slavery partnership leads and charities working closely with both victims of modern slavery and councils. The roundtable considered some of the challenges in supporting victims of modern slavery – in particular, the lack of clarity and tensions between different legal frameworks and systems and pressures on resources – and considered how the Commissioner could use her role to help address these.

Councillor masterclasses on civil resilience and emergency planning

21. In October, the LGA hosted our fourth leadership essentials session on civil resilience. The councillor masterclass took place in Durham, and heard from Councillor Sue Murphy about how Manchester City Council responded to the Manchester Arena Attack, and from Councillor Glen Sanderson about the response to a severe flooding incident in Northumberland. Once again, the event received extremely positive feedback. Officers are currently working with officials from Hampshire County Council and the Hampshire Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum to develop a bespoke version of the event which will be held in Hampshire in early December.

Licensing

Taxi licensing

22. We have [called on](#) Government to stick to the commitment that was made earlier this year to strengthen out of date taxi and private hire legislation to improve passenger safety. Government committed to bringing forward new legislation to introduce national minimum standards as well as new enforcement powers so councils can take action against any vehicles operating in their areas irrespective of where they are licensed. Government has said it will issue new statutory guidance for licensing authorities shortly.

National Register of Revocations and Refusals (NR3)

23. Following the launch of the National Register of taxi licence Revocations and Refusals (NR3) last year, 68 councils are now using the register as part of their licensing checks. In total there have been over 14,000 searches of the register.

Wakefield case - taxi driver enforcement fees

24. The High Court recently ruled against Wakefield council's method of recovering the cost of driver enforcement through vehicle licences. The council has been granted permission to appeal the decision and the LGA is seeking permission to intervene in the case on the basis that there is a wider sector impact. Our view is that there is a key point of principle that councils should be able to recover enforcement costs and that local taxpayers should not be subsidising the taxi/private hire vehicle trade.

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Leadership Essentials – running a good licensing committee

25. Following the publication of our new [handbook](#) for councillors on the Licensing Act, officers are currently developing a course for committee chairs and vice chairs around principles of good practice in running a licensing committee. Further details will be circulated once plans have progressed.

Minimum Unit Pricing

26. Research conducted by Newcastle University into the impact of Scotland's introduction of minimum pricing for alcohol suggests it has been successful in cutting drinking. Since May 2018, the price of alcohol has had to be at least 50p per unit. The study found the amount purchased per person per week fell by 1.2 units between May and the end of 2018. The biggest fall was among the heaviest fifth of drinkers with the amount purchased by this group falling by two units.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community Member Champion

27. At the last Board meeting, members discussed the possibility of appointing a Member Champion for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Community. Members agreed for the lead members to make this decision at their meeting in October, and for a comprehensive briefing note to be produced. This can be found at [Appendix A](#).

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Appendix A – Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community – briefing note on recent activity and future LGA work

Background

1. At the meeting in September, SSCB members discussed whether to appoint a board member champion for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community issues and requested a briefing on this area.
2. At their meeting in October, lead members decided against appointing a member champion for GRT issues, on the basis that issues linked to the GRT community cut across a number of LGA boards and the SSCB's work plan for this area is relatively limited.
3. However, in line with the request from board members, this paper provides an overview of recent work relating to GRT community issues, and our future work plan in this area.

Overview

4. The LGA's recent involvement with GRT community issues has focused on two themes:
 - 4.1. Concerns about unauthorised GRT community encampments, in terms of the impact on local communities and the significant challenges and costs for councils in trying to remove them.
 - 4.2. Tackling the issues faced by GRT communities themselves, in terms of deprivation; inequality; access to services, and discrimination.
5. Feedback from LGA member authorities has tended to focus on the issues that councils are experiencing as a result of unauthorised encampments, with some local areas greatly affected by these issues (although other areas have very little or no experience of responding to these issues).
6. This is an issue that cuts across a number of LGA boards, but over the course of the last year the SSCB has played a more active role on this policy area in light of concerns among our members and senior figures within the LGA. As a membership organisation the LGA has sought to provide practical support to local authorities in this area as appropriate. For example, we have previously worked with the Planning Advisory Service to inform council officers and elected leaders of the role of planning in working with GRT communities. We have also been working with the Government to monitor the progress of its own recent work on this issue.

Recent LGA /Government activity on GRT community issues

All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

7. In March 2018, the Chair of the Board met with Baroness Whitaker, the co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. The APPG raised various issues affecting the GRT community, including access to healthcare and education,

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discrimination faced by the community, and levels of poverty and deprivation. The LGA agreed to disseminate relevant updates to our SSC Board and our community safety and planning colleagues through our LGA bulletins.

Women and Equalities Committee inquiry

8. We also followed the progress of the Women and Equalities Committee [inquiry](#) on tackling inequalities faced by GRT communities. The committee inquiry was wide-ranging and focused on all aspects of GRT communities, in particular on access to healthcare and quality of authorised sites.
9. Given the broad scope of the [inquiry](#), we wrote to the Chair of the Committee Maria Miller MP to outline why we felt the LGA was unable to provide formal evidence on behalf of all councils. We highlighted local councils were best placed to provide a local context on how they were supporting and working with GRT communities.

Unauthorised development and encampments

10. In April 2018, the Government consulted on [powers for dealing with unauthorised development and encampments](#). The following December, the LGA held a roundtable with community safety, environmental health and planning officers to understand the key issues facing local authorities (this was reported back to lead members at their meeting that month). Key issues raised in the meeting included:
 - 10.1. Lack of funding available to local authorities to invest in sites or provide additional training of officers.
 - 10.2. Difficulty in securing orders against Traveller groups who were familiar with court delays/ local authority and police procedures.
 - 10.3. Police dispersal powers meant groups could be moved on to different areas, but they would often return.
 - 10.4. Associated clean-up costs.
 - 10.5. In some cases anti-social behaviour-related concerns.
11. In February 2019, the Government published its [response](#), which set out a package of measures to strengthen police powers and to assist local authorities in responding to unauthorised development and encampments, in addition to support for GRT communities.
12. These measures included:
 - 12.1. stronger powers for the police to respond to unauthorised encampments;
 - 12.2. practical and financial support for local authorities to deal with unauthorised encampments;
 - 12.3. support for traveller-site provision; and

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12.4.support for the travelling community to improve life chances.

13. The consultation found that local authorities generally believe the powers available to them under Section 77 and Section 78 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 are adequate. However, some local authorities deal with unauthorised encampments less frequently than others, which makes it difficult to develop expertise and good practice in all areas.
14. The Government said it would keep local authorities' powers in this area under review, following the proposals to reform police powers, and where there are deliberate and repeated breaches of planning. The Government also planned to undertake further work to address issues of concern, such as clean-up costs which can occur following an unauthorised encampment.
15. The Government committed to providing new good practice guidance to support local authorities' use of powers to deal with unauthorised encampments. This guidance is expected to be placed on a statutory footing.

Tackling offensive speech relating to GRT communities

16. LGA officers met with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to discuss a toolkit to support elected officials in seeking out early interventions to address offensive speech in their work and communities about GRTs. The EHRC raised the issue of how the GRT community are referred to on council websites, particularly with regards to unauthorised encampments. We highlighted the EHRC's work on this issue in our new councillor handbook.

Wider policy context

National Government strategy to tackle entrenched inequality and improve the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

17. In June 2019, Communities Minister Lord Bourne [announced](#) the Government's commitment to publishing a national strategy to tackle entrenched inequality and improve the lives of GRT communities. MHCLG provided £200,000 of funding between six projects aiming to improve outcomes for GRT communities in the areas of educational attainment, health and social integration. LGA officers will continue to liaise with MHCLG as this national strategy is developed.

Unauthorised encampments and developments enforcement handbook

18. We understand the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has commissioned an update to the unauthorised encampments and developments enforcement handbook. This is expected to be published in March/April 2020 and include examples of best practice on how local authorities respond to unauthorised encampments. The LGA will continue to liaise with MHCLG to ensure that best practice is shared across local government.

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Consultation on new police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments

19. On 5 November, in line with the response to the earlier consultation on unauthorised developments and encampments, the Government launched a [consultation](#) on new police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments. Officers are currently reviewing the consultation and will subsequently seek members' views on whether and how the LGA should respond.

Future LGA work on this issue

20. The SSCB's work plan for 2019-20 includes a commitment to engage with government and support councils on GRT issues. As noted above, we expect to continue engage with government on the development of both the national strategy and the enforcement handbook, as well as responding to relevant consultations.