

16 July 2020

Safer and Stronger Communities Board – update report from Cllr Katrina Wood (Acting Chairman)

Licensing and regulation

Re-opening of licensed premises

1. With pubs, cafes and restaurants able to re-open from 4 July [Cllr Katrina Wood responded](#) to a joint statement from the British Beer and Pub Association, UKHospitality, the London Night Czar and the National Police Chiefs urging people to act responsibly and safely, including maintaining social distancing, avoid anti-social behaviour and help keep public spaces litter-free.

Outdoor tables and chairs

2. In June, the Government [announced plans to introduce new laws](#) and a simplified licensing and planning process as part of a Business and Planning Bill to support the reopening of pubs, restaurants and cafes, and make it easier for people to safely drink and dine outside. The LGA has been in discussion with government departments and has [briefed MPs](#) about the possible relaxation of licensing, emphasising the need for councils to be able to take decisions about what is appropriate for their areas given other considerations such as the need for road closures and the proximity of residential areas. We are also urging the Government to provide clarity on any changes as soon as possible, to enable councils to prepare for them and provide the most effective support to local businesses.

Resumption of live sport

3. With live sport resuming behind closed doors in England in the last few weeks, the LGA has [published a brief overview of councils' regulatory responsibilities](#) where there is a relevant sports ground in their area, to assist senior officers and members in seeking assurance on this issue.

Protective screens in taxis

4. In June, the LGA published a [short note for councils on the use of protective screens in taxis and private hire vehicles](#). Councils have been receiving queries from taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers and operators about the use of temporary screens as a way of providing physical separation between drivers and passengers in order to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. The note provides an overview of relevant guidance and signposts to approaches taken by some of those authorities who have taken a position on the use of screens.

Scams

5. Sadly, criminals have been exploiting COVID-19 to defraud the public, in particular, older and vulnerable people who are isolated from family and friends. The LGA has warned consumers about a number of new [coronavirus-related scams](#), including criminals trying

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to con people out of money by pretending to be from the NHS Test and Trace Service. The LGA has urged businesses such as banks, family, friends and neighbours to work together to prevent fraud from happening in the first place and stop fraudsters taking advantage at this time of national crisis.

Beach safety

6. Over the past few months there have been numerous incidents at overcrowded beaches in England. With the country facing what could be its busiest ever summer beach season, with many schools closed and restrictions on travel abroad, the LGA [has made it clear](#) that councils urgently need government funding to help them introduce measures to improve safety at beaches and coastal spots, particularly as a lifeguard service still won't be provided at all the beaches patrolled in a normal summer.

Modern Slavery

7. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on modern slavery and human trafficking, through forced premises closures, displacement of victims and further reducing visibility within the community, whilst unemployment and furloughing has increased vulnerability. The LGA has encouraged councils to engage with local policing and modern slavery partnerships to plan joint activity to tackle modern slavery.

Domestic Abuse

8. In June 2020, the LGA hosted a webinar on tackling domestic abuse. Guest speaker Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, opened the session and was followed by two excellent local government speakers, from Lambeth and from Central Bedfordshire, speaking about how they had taken the lead on responding to domestic abuse and supporting victims during the COVID-19 pandemic. We had over 240 delegates join the webinar, with councils from all around the country engaging with the event. Many delegates have since been in touch to call for further sessions on this important issue. We will continue to share best practice across local government and work closely with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office and the Government to help transform the response to domestic abuse.
9. This week, the LGA also [briefed](#) MPs ahead of the Remaining Stages (House of Commons) debate for the Domestic Abuse Bill. We highlighted the importance of investing in early intervention and prevention to tackle domestic abuse, we called for the Government to introduce a National Perpetrator Strategy and we highlighted the impact that domestic abuse has on children and young people as victims. The Bill will progress to the House of Lords shortly, where we will continue to lobby Government on this important issue.

Counter-extremism and community cohesion

10. We have been continuing to explore the evolving challenges around extremism and community cohesion related to the pandemic. This has included hosting two roundtables with the [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism](#) (SIGCE - a local authority led network co-chaired by Leeds and Luton councils) for councils to share experiences and approaches, and discuss some of the anticipated longer-term implications from the

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pandemic in this space. We have also continued to work with the SIGCE's Far Right Working Group, which is working across a small group of local authorities to proactively respond to far-right activism and provide support to others facing emerging issues.

11. In June we [published a guidance note](#) for local authorities who had received calls for changes to the names of estates and streets and the removal of statues etc (alongside objections to such proposals) to help councils work to ensure all sections of the community feel heard by decision-makers and each other.
12. At the beginning of July we held a joint seminar with the SIGCE on online extremism for around 70 representatives from councils and statutory partners, which included inputs on current threats and opportunities to explore how authorities have been responding to issues at a local level.

Fire & Rescue Services

Fire authority members development support

13. To support fire and rescue authority (FRA) members we have published a new fire specific member development webpage. Member development resources like our [Leading the fire sector](#) guide to oversight of performance and our [New Member](#) guide are directly accessible through the webpage. The webpage will also host new webinar videos on key aspects of the fire and rescue authority members role. These include the FRA in times of crisis, FRA member induction, oversight of fire and rescue performance, and good officer/member relationships. We have also published a Diversity and Inclusion Champions [webpage](#) where outputs, resources and useful links to support FRA members will be hosted.

Fire Standards Board

14. Cllr Nick Chard attended a meeting of the Fire Standards Board on the 4 June where the proposed forward plan for standards delivery was discussed and the first tranche of standards were examined.

National Fire Chiefs Council People Engagement Forum

15. Cllr Roger Price attended the Forum on the 9 June where the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and apprenticeships were discussed in detail.

Fire Lawyers Network

16. Policy and workforce officers attended the Network meeting on the 26 June and updated them on activity around the COVID-19 response by fire and rescue services, including the wide range of activities undertaken to support other blue light services and vulnerable people in the community. Fire and rescue authority governance was also discussed.

Home Office Senior Sector Group

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17. Cllr Ian Stephens, Fiona Twycross, Cllr Nick Chard and Roger Hirst attended the meeting, where plans for the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review were discussed. As well as LGA members, the group also includes Home Office officials and National Fire Chiefs Council members, and is intended to support closer working between different parts of the fire sector around key issues like finance.

Her Majesties Inspectorate External Reference Group

18. Cllr Ian Stephens, Fiona Twycross and Cllr Rebecca Knox attended this meeting on 8 July. Items discussed included COVID-19 related activities of fire and rescue services and how services are working through their recovery plans. Members of the group discussed how the Inspectorate will conduct inspections under the current challenging circumstances.

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