

Safer and Stronger Communities Board Overview Paper and Policy Priorities for 2020-21

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper sets out an overview of the current status of the issues the Board has focused on in recent years, alongside proposals for the Safer and Stronger Communities Board's (SSCB) priorities and work programme for 2020-21. The proposals are based on corporate LGA priorities and options for broader work based on a continuation of ongoing work (including responding to recent policy announcements by Government) and areas of interest previously indicated by Board members.

Recommendation

That the Safer and Stronger Communities Board discuss and agree the Board's priorities and work programme for 2020-21.

Action

Officers will undertake the projects set out in the report.

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

Safer and Stronger Communities Board Overview Paper and Policy Priorities for 2020-21

Background

1. At this first meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (SSCB), members are asked to consider the policy priorities for the work programme for the coming year. In making these decisions, members are asked to consider two issues:
 - The work that the LGA Leadership Board has asked Boards to undertake based on the overall policy priorities of the LGA.
 - Specific policy priorities based on the remit of this Board.
2. This paper provides an overview of the current status of the key issues that the Board's work programme has focused on in recent years, along with the key high-level priorities for each of the key thematic work areas for the Board.
3. The work programme takes account of feedback and suggestions provided by Board members at the meeting in June 2020, as well as the input provided by lead members at their meeting earlier this month.
4. The LGA's business plan for 2019-2022 sets out a range of cross-cutting LGA priorities which Boards are asked to incorporate within their work programmes:
 - Funding for local government
 - Adult social care, health and wellbeing
 - Children, education and schools
 - Places to live and work
 - Strong local democracy
 - Sustainability and climate action
5. Additionally, Boards are also being asked to incorporate equalities issues into their work through the designation of a champion or lead for equalities.
6. As in previous years, it is proposed that the SSCB should focus on the following broad areas of activity:
 - Community safety
 - Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion
 - Regulatory services and licensing
 - Blue light services and civil resilience
 - Crematoria, funerals, coroners and registrars

7. Alongside this, the team will continue to support two key areas of work on building safety, and responding to the legacy of the Grenfell Fire, and EU transition.

Community safety issues

Domestic Abuse

8. Tackling domestic abuse has been one of the key priorities for the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board. Our main aim has been to make the case for increased investment in early intervention and prevention services, including domestic abuse perpetrator programmes, with the ultimate aim of helping to eliminate domestic abuse from occurring at all.
9. The LGA has worked closely with the Government and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and we have been successful in helping to secure funding for domestic abuse community-based support services and emergency domestic abuse accommodation, as well as investment in domestic abuse perpetrator programmes and early intervention programmes in schools and communities. We have held a number of best practice events to share learning with local government colleagues and partners, most recently with a webinar session which included a presentation from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.
10. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board has contributed to several parliamentary inquiries on domestic abuse, including giving evidence to the [House of Commons Domestic Abuse Public Bill Committee](#). The work of the LGA has been highlighted in the committee's final reports and has been recognised in the Government's responses. It should also be noted that Safer and Stronger Communities Board representatives have regularly attended the National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment, which has been chaired by the Home Secretary.
11. There is an opportunity to transform the response to domestic abuse, by ensuring the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Bill provides the necessary protection for domestic abuse victims, interventions for domestic abuse perpetrators and resources and funding for the services that provide both. There is a statutory duty, proposed in the Bill, which would apply to Tier 1 local authorities to commission domestic abuse accommodation support and services. We have called for this new duty to be fully funded and understand the Government intends to address this in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.
12. Unfortunately, the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that perpetrators of domestic abuse have been more likely to be at home with the victim. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 2.4 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse for the year ending March 2019, according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Whilst it will take time to fully understand the impact of how the nationwide shutdown in response to COVID-19 has affected victims of

domestic abuse, there is widespread recognition that the lockdown measures could have escalated and exacerbated domestic abuse in households.

13. A joint investigation by Panorama and Women's Aid found that someone called police for help about domestic abuse every 30 seconds in the first seven weeks of UK shutdown. The investigation also found that three-quarters of victims said the shutdown had made it harder for them to escape their abusers.
14. The LGA published a guide for councils on tackling domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guide includes resources to help councils support domestic abuse victims and tackle perpetrators' abusive behaviour. The guide has been downloaded over 2,000 times and is being regularly updated with the latest policy and funding announcements.
15. The LGA is also speaking regularly with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, the Government, councils and the domestic abuse sector to ensure we are doing all we can to tackle domestic abuse. The Commissioner has written an article on this important issue for First magazine. We will continue to lobby the Government on our key asks and will brief Parliamentarians as the Domestic Abuse Bill continues in the House of Lords.
16. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:
 - Continue to lobby for our key asks on the Domestic Abuse Bill.
 - Share best practice on tackling domestic abuse by holding future webinars/ events and publishing case studies.
 - Work closely with councils and partners to help improve domestic abuse services and learn any lessons from the COVID-19 response which could inform future work on this issue.

Serious Violent Crime

17. The LGA continues to contribute to national-level strategic discussions on serious violent crime and county lines activity. We have been members of the former Serious Violence Taskforce and the County Lines Working Group, and have contributed to the Prime Minister's Serious Violent Crime Summit and the Children's Commissioner's Gangs Summit.
18. The forthcoming Serious Violence Bill will be a good opportunity to lobby parliamentarians on our key asks, including calling on the Government for greater investment in children's and youth services, as well as diversionary activities. A statutory duty is expected to be placed on Community Safety Partnerships to ensure there is a local plan to tackle serious violent crime locally. We will be lobbying for this new statutory duty to be fully funded, and for the Bill to take account of wider community safety changes proposed in other forms of legislation and reforms, such as the Domestic Abuse Bill and the PCC Review.

19. Our LGA key messages on tackling serious violent crime have been influential in Parliament, following our evidence to the Home Affairs Committee inquiry on serious violent crime and briefing MPs and Peers ahead of a number of Parliamentary debates in which our briefings were quoted. The Home Affairs Committee report reinforced our calls for greater investment in youth and children's services, to prompt a shift towards early intervention and prevention in tackling serious violent crime.
20. Following a successful Annual Conference workshop session on taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, we held an LGA conference focusing on this important issue in October 2019 and held a sub-plenary session at the National Children and Adult Services Conference in November 2019. We also held an LGA conference on tackling knife crime in February 2020, which over 65 councils were represented and over 100 delegates in attendance. We have a future webinar session planned for 9 September 2020 on tackling county lines and child criminal exploitation.
21. Whilst there are signs that knife crime and serious violence in a public space has decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest crime data suggests that drug offences have been the main crime type to have increased. The police have reported that county lines networks have adopted new models to continue to sell and distribute drugs. There are concerns about the decrease in children's social care referrals and safeguarding concerns about vulnerable children at risk of serious violent crime. Certainly, as we look towards the recovery period, the issue of county lines and serious violent crime will become an increasing priority for all councils and their partners.
22. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:
- Support councils in their efforts to tackle serious violent crime and county lines activity, through the sharing of best practice and inputting to strategic national-level discussions with Government.
 - Continue to hold webinars/best practice events to provide the latest data and trends on serious violent crime and identify how councils are tackling this important issue.
 - Lobby in favour of our key asks on the forthcoming Serious Violence Bill.
23. Lead members have indicated that serious violence and county lines should be a key priority for the Board in 2020/21.

Anti-social behaviour

24. Many anti-social behaviour offences are serious issues for residents and businesses. Councils recognise they have an important role to play, alongside the police, in protecting our communities from these offenders in order to make our communities safer places to live.

25. During the lockdown period, councils and the police reported an increase in calls about anti-social behaviour. We still need to fully understand how the response to COVID-19 has affected levels of anti-social behaviour. It is possible some of these referrals could be partly attributed to complaints about people who were perceived to have broken the social distancing rules. This increased pressure on anti-social behaviour teams to respond to noise nuisance and neighbour disturbances came at a time when councils and the police faced considerable pressures on their wider services.
26. In our key messages, we highlight that every victim of anti-social behaviour will have different experiences, reactions and needs. We have called for local areas to continue to have services that are flexible and responsive to the victim's experience and voice. We have seen how strong partnerships that take a multi-agency preventative approach to improving community safety can make a considerable difference. As part of our work to support councils, the LGA will continue to share best practice examples of how councils and their partners are helping to tackle anti-social behaviour and addressing wider community safety issues.
27. Following the appointment of Dame Vera Baird DBE QC to the role of the new Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales in May 2019, Dame Vera was invited to speak at the LGA's Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour Conference and at our Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting. At these events, Dame Vera touched on a number of issues, including support for victims of domestic abuse, particularly during the court and prosecution process, and continued support for victims of anti-social behaviour.
28. The Commissioner also highlighted the importance of the community trigger process and called on local authorities to ensure information and guidance is made readily available to members of the public. This follows the former Commissioner Baroness Newlove's [report](#), "Anti-Social Behaviour: Living a Nightmare", which outlines a series of recommendations on the community trigger process. We continue to work with councils and the Commissioner's office on this important issue and have invited Dame Vera to speak at our upcoming webinar session on [Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour](#), due to take place on 29 September 2020.
29. Across the range of community safety issues, the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board will continue to press for the victim's voice to be central to developing and improving support services. We will continue to work with the Government, the Victims' Commissioner and partners on the proposed victim's law reforms and wider victim's support services.
30. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:
- Continue to share best practice examples of how local government and their partners are tackling anti-social behaviour in their communities.

- Work with councils, the Government, the Victims' Commissioner and relevant partners to help provide support to victims and work together on the proposed victim's law reforms.
- Undertake a piece of work looking at community safety resilience.

Modern slavery

31. The Board tasked officers with scaling up a programme of activity on modern slavery following a presentation to members by the first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner in January 2017. Our work since then has primarily focused on raising awareness of modern slavery within councils; we have held a number of events and workshops around the country, as well as developing general council guidance, guidance for councillors and producing a set of case studies.
32. There is still work to do to raise awareness of this issue, both generally and in specific areas such as housing. However, we are now also focusing on raising the issue of the new burdens imposed on councils by the issue of modern slavery, as councils have not received any new burdens funding to support their work on this issue, despite growing numbers of suspected victims being identified and referred into the National Referral Mechanism (the central system for identifying and supporting victims).
33. We also engage regularly with the Home Office's Modern Slavery Unit, who are currently exploring options for reforming and potentially decentralising aspects of the NRM. A pilot of localised decision making for child victims of modern slavery is due to be launched later this year, and the Home Office is also looking at support for adults, given the changing profile of victims being referred into the NRM.
34. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:
- Develop a new programme of awareness-raising and guidance for councils on modern slavery, targeting specific areas such as housing.
 - Set out the case for reforms and funding that enable councils to appropriately support victims of modern slavery.
35. Lead members have indicated that modern slavery should be a key priority for the Board in 2020/21.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities

36. Our LGA view has been that engaging with and supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities is very much a local issue that different councils take different approaches on, based on local levels of need.

37. As a membership organisation we have 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.
38. Board representatives have met with All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma to discuss issues affecting the GRT community, including access to healthcare and education, discrimination faced by the community, and levels of poverty and deprivation.
39. LGA officers have also 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 Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. 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.
40. We held a workshop session with local government officers to help inform our response to the Government consultation on unauthorised encampments and we continue to liaise with our Community Safety Advisers Network group on this matter. We hope to work closely with the Government on the introduction of the National Strategy to tackle entrenched inequality and improve the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
41. During COVID-19, the LGA worked with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise councils' concerns about unauthorised encampments. The Minister sent a letter to councils highlighting the importance of supporting vulnerable people during the COVID-19 outbreak, which we made available on our LGA coronavirus hub.
42. The LGA will continue to liaise with the Government and councils about support for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and responding to unauthorised encampments. Legislation on unauthorised encampments is expected to come forward later this year. While it is expected that the SSCB should continue to lead on issues linked to unauthorised encampments it is proposed that wider work on a National Strategy for tackling entrenched inequality and improving the lives of GRT communities will fall within the scope of the LGA's developing equalities programme.
43. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:
- Work with the Government, councils and partners on any proposed reforms or legislation to unauthorised encampments.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

44. In 2015, the LGA and the children's charity Barnardo's established the National Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Centre. The Centre was funded through the Department for

Education's (DfE) children's social care innovation fund to pilot a new way of addressing FGM cases in six local authority areas with a low prevalence of FGM. Funding for the Centre was extended in 2017 on the basis that the Centre would expand its remit to include breast flattening and Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Belief (CALFB). The funding was provided on a tapered basis, with the aim of making the Centre sustainable by 2020. The DfE funding period ended in March 2020, although it was extended by a further three months to cover some of the COVID-19 period, ending in June 2020. Options are now being looked at to help ensure that the Centre can continue.

45. The Centre's vision is to keep children and young people safe from FGM, breast flattening and CALFB, including an aim to end new cases of FGM by 2030. To achieve this the Centre developed a four-part model to create a system change. The model involved embedded social work provision, community outreach, consultancy and professional development, and a Knowledge Hub as a "one stop shop" for resources and guidance.
46. The LGA administers the Centre's Advisory Board which is chaired by Cllr Anita Lower and involves police, health, social care, education and legal representatives and LGA and Barnardo's officers hold regular partnership and sustainability meetings to look at the running of the Centre.
47. The LGA has been lobbying for Government to continue funding the Centre to retain core roles and functions, however, it has not been possible to secure further funding. The LGA, Barnardo's and the Centre are now looking to consider what funding options exist and how the Centre can continue to work towards their goal and become financially sustainable in the long-term.
48. Lead members have emphasised the importance of the LGA through the SSCB continuing to champion this issue, but have agreed to review this work area and member input once there is further clarity on funding arrangements.

Police and Crime Panels

49. In July 2020, the Government announced that they would be conducting a review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). This was following their manifesto commitment to strengthen the accountability of PCCs and expand their role. The review is in two parts, the first part is currently underway and is focussed on the changes required to strengthen the model which can be delivered ahead of the 2021 PCC elections. Part 2 will start after the election and will be focused on looking at further ways to strengthen and expand the role of PCCs, including looking at their role in tackling reoffending to help reduce crime. There are a number of questions related to Police and Crime Panels (PCPs), especially around the role of PCP chairs. PCPs provide the main check and balance on PCCs during the four-year PCC term, however, many have highlighted the limitations in their powers to require PCCs to respond to a panel's concerns.

50. Part 1 of the review will also look at fire governance and set out their long-term ambition for fire governance. Currently the Policing and Crime Act 2017 enables PCCs to take on fire governance where there is local agreement, where there is not local agreement the PCC can submit a business case to the Home Secretary for determination. The LGA supports the transfer of governance where there is local support, however we do not agree with mandatory transfers of governance.
51. The LGA has previously held the Police and Crime Panels Annual Workshop and last year, we published updated [guidance](#) for chairs, members and officers of Police and Crime Panels. This year, we will be holding a virtual webinar session in September to provide an opportunity for PCPs to discuss current priorities and challenges for the year ahead.
52. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021
- Respond to the Government's call for evidence in Part 1 of the review and continue to engage with Part 2.
 - Work with the Home Office to develop a range of tools to support PCPs in their work.

Water Safety

53. In recent years, the Board has increased its focus on water safety and drowning prevention, in part following the Camber Sands tragedy, and this has become a small but consistent feature of the Board's work programme. Over the summer there have been numerous incidents at overcrowded beaches in England. With the country facing an extremely busy summer beach season the LGA has called for urgent government funding to help them introduce measures to improve safety at beaches and coastal spots, particularly as a lifeguard services were not able to be resumed at all the beaches usually patrolled in a normal summer.
54. In March 2020, the Board heard an update on the independent review of the legal framework for beach safety commissioned by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). The review will make recommendations for greater clarity about responsibilities for beach management. Whilst the publication of this review has been delayed, we are expecting it to be published in the next year, and we propose to continue to maintain a watching brief on this area of work.

Prevent, counter-extremism, and cohesion and integration

55. This strand of the Board's work covers counter-terrorism (particularly in delivering the Prevent duty, under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015), counter-extremism, and building community cohesion. These can be particularly sensitive areas of work, and present a range of challenges for local government, which continue to evolve. Much of our focus has been on supporting councils to understand and respond to these challenges, whilst encouraging government to take (and enable) a dynamic, joined-up and long-term approach across the three policy areas.

56. Recent months in particular have seen the emergence of a number of extremism and cohesion issues, with activists seeking to exploit a range of matters to extend their reach and garner support. During the pandemic we have seen growing levels of hate incidents on and off-line, initially targeting Chinese communities, but focussing increasingly on blaming Muslim communities for spreading the virus and breaching control measures. The pandemic has also seen unprecedented mainstream circulation/advocacy of various conspiracy theories and more recently, Black Lives Matter protests and counter protests, and an increased focus on migrant crossings have added further to concerns about rising community tensions in many areas. We expect that extremists will continue to use the post-COVID landscape to support 'blaming' and 'othering' narratives; economic decline and rising inequality (or perceptions of these) in particular, have traditionally provided fertile territory for extremists to exploit.
57. Since its inception in 2017, we have been working closely with the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE); a local authority led network chaired by Leeds and Luton Councils which seeks to provide support, and develop and share good practice in countering extremism across councils in England and Wales. Central funding for the SIGCE's work beyond March 2020 is still not yet secured, however in the interim we have been working with SIGCE colleagues to explore the extremism challenges highlighted above and develop work plans for the coming months (with or without further funding).
58. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:
- Lobby for further funding for the SIGCE network.
 - Support councils through a series of ongoing roundtables, webinars, training, KHub facilitation and bespoke support to councils facing specific current extremism challenges. It is likely this will include sessions on partnership working (particularly with the police), leadership, and engagement in the online space.
 - Reconvene regional elected member networks in the North of England and East of England.
 - Convene and support SIGCE working groups focussing on Far-Right extremism and Islamist extremism respectively, including trialling and evaluating community engagement initiatives in local areas with predominantly white-British communities.
 - Scope additional work to explore policing and community relations, particularly in the light of the BLM campaign.
 - Ensure that local government's voice is heard as central government policy and delivery of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism measures is developed, and look to support councils to understand any changes as they are introduced - including responding to both a consultation on a new statutory Protect duty (seeking to increase protection in public buildings from terrorist attacks), and the Law Commission's anticipated review of hate crime.

- Scope joint work with MHCLG to explore current and emerging cohesion challenges and commission a series of case studies to capture councils' responses to particular issues as they emerge.
- Working with colleagues from the LGA's cyber-security team, ensure that councils are briefed appropriately on evolving security threats, including signposting guidance and support from agencies such as the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) and National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO).

59. Lead members have indicated that cohesion, counter extremism and Prevent should continue to be a high priority for the Board.

Regulatory services and licensing

Taxi licensing

60. The existing licensing governing the taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) sector is outdated and needs substantial reform. We have been lobbying for the introduction of new Taxi and Private Hire Bill to modernise the licensing system for taxis and PHVs, improve passenger safety and create a level playing field for drivers for several years.

61. Our key asks for new legislation have been to give councils the ability to take action against any licensed vehicle operating in their area, to set national minimum standards with local flexibility, and to include measures to ensure drivers are working predominantly in the area where they are licensed, while recognising that there may need to be flexibility in some instances.

62. Last year government committed to strengthening out of date taxi and PHV legislation to improve passenger safety in response to [recommendations](#) from a cross-industry working group which the LGA was part of. Whilst [new statutory standards on taxi and PHV licensing](#) published in July 2020 will go some way to improving consistency across the country, we will continue to make the point that the best way to improve passenger safety is to reform outdated legislation.

63. We will also continue work to support licensing authorities in strengthening taxi and PHV licensing processes. This will include updating our [Cllrs Handbook](#) to reference new statutory standards and continuing to promote the National Register of Revocations and Refusals (NR3) which was commissioned by the LGA in 2018 (the new statutory guidance for councils recommends use of the NR3). NR3 enables councils to share information about people who have had a licence revoked or refused, to stop them going elsewhere and securing a licence without disclosing their past history.

Alcohol and entertainment licensing

64. The LGA has two longstanding policy asks relating to the Licensing Act 2003: the need for a health objective to be introduced in the Act and for the localisation of fees under the Act: the current fees were centrally set when the Act came into force in 2005 and have not been increased since. In the absence of localisation, we are also pushing for an increase to the current fees. COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to highlight why these asks continue to be important, with councils finding it difficult to take Covid-related action under the Licensing Act, and the centrally set fees preventing them from taking a flexible approach to fees paid by licensed businesses, as has happened in other areas.
65. We have argued that a temporary public health or COVID-19 objective in the Licensing Act would allow councils to act where premises are not protecting the public during the pandemic, for example collecting people's contact details or maintaining social distancing. Government has seemed receptive to this and Home Office officials have been tasked with looking at what a fifth licensing objective could look like and we will continue to engage with them on this.
66. During the COVID-19 pandemic, councils received requests from a range of businesses including pubs and bars that were subject to closures and no longer able to operate asking for dispensations on licence fees. As fees are set centrally, councils do not have the discretion to do this and there is no clear mechanism to provide refunds or part refunds even where businesses were unable to open. We have argued that locally set fees would give councils the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and support businesses.

Regulatory services

67. We have consistently argued that councils' regulatory services are becoming dangerously stretched as a result of cuts to local government funding. Trading standards budgets and staffing have been cut by around half since 2010 – and environmental health teams have also reduced over the same period. Whilst councils use a risk-based model to target their limited resources we have argued that services are simply not sustainable without additional resources, especially as government continues to give them additional enforcement responsibilities. However, it has been challenging to get this issue on the agenda given the many competing pressures that councils are facing.
68. Throughout the COVID-19 response, regulatory services have played a key role, from supporting businesses to comply with new legislation around business closures and offering advice on how they can re-open safely to support the roll out of Track and Trace. This work, alongside the work around last year's Brexit no deal planning, has raised the profile of trading standards (TS) and environmental health (EH) in MHCLG and across government, while the forthcoming spending review is an opportunity to make the case for additional resources and sustainable funding.
69. We are therefore developing a detailed submission ahead of the Spending Review focused on regulatory services jointly with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) and

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). The intention is to highlight the breadth of the work council trading standards and environmental health services do, their vital contribution during COVID-19, and the risks they are facing in terms of sustainability.

70. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:

- Support councils regulatory services in their work to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Lobby government to provide sustainable funding for vital public protection services and introduce a proper new burdens process that enables councils to increase/ invest in staff.
- Lobby government to introduce a Taxi and Private Hire Reform Bill and support council's the implementation of new statutory standards
- Work with Home Office officials to explore a health objective in the Licensing Act and an increase in licensing fees.
- Deliver another Leadership Essentials course for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of licensing committees, following a successful pilot course in early 2020.

71. The recent lead members' meeting recognised the importance of regulatory and enforcement work linked to COVID-19 and anticipated this being a continuing key area of work in the coming months.

Crematoria, funerals, coroners and registrars

72. Bereavement services have been a key part of the response to COVID-19 with a number of changes being introduced as a result of the outbreak though the Coronavirus Act 2020 and other guidance. Our focus has been on providing support to councils in their COVID-19 response, representing councils' interests to Government and providing resources for councils to draw upon. There have been some positives for these services with the introduction of telephone registration for deaths and we would like to see this expanded into other registrar services, such as birth registration. COVID-19 will continue to have an impact on these services, and will be especially important as we look at the possibility of a second wave.

73. Prior to COVID-19, our work was focussed on funeral pricing in local areas. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been conducting a market study into the costs of funerals, looking particularly at crematoria costs (many crematoria are run by local authorities). The LGA contributed to the study providing a response on their proposed remedies, which included introducing price controls for funeral directors and crematoria and local authority tendering for a low-cost funeral service.

74. Their study has been significantly affected by COVID-19, including the proposed remedies for the market. The CMA has now released its provisional decision report, which includes a commitment to publish an annual review of revenues and sales volumes, which include

local authority crematoria. This would mean crematoria would also be required to publish price information to ensure that people can access and assess prices for services. They have said that these proposed activities would hold the door open to price controls in the future when the circumstances created by the pandemic change to allow these to be considered.

75. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:

- Lobby for further flexibilities for registration services.
- Continue to engage with the CMA on their work.

Blue light services and civil resilience

Resilience

76. Following a series of high-profile tragedies in 2017 which a number of councils helped lead the response to - terrorist attacks in Westminster, Manchester and London Bridge, and the Grenfell Fire – the safer communities team has increased its resilience policy work. A key focus of this has been to promote awareness and understanding of councillors' role in emergency preparedness, response and recovery, and we have run a number of training events and developed several guidance documents on this matter. We were able to use these products to develop COVID-19 specific guidance for councils at the outset of the pandemic, and as the focus switched to transition and recovery. It's clear that COVID-19 has significantly increased awareness of emergency planning and preparation, and our future work programme will need to consider how we build on this to help embed the skills and knowledge that have been developed over the past six months.

77. Before the pandemic led to resources being diverted, a planned future focus for our resilience work was the theme of building community resilience. Again, the development of community resilience structures is something that has happened organically as a result of COVID-19, and a clear priority identified by the Board at the June 2020 meeting was to consider how the structures and capacity generated by COVID-19 could be embedded into the future.

78. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:

- Review and update the resilience training and support offer.
- Identify best practice approaches from COVID-19 and support councils to embed community resilience and engagement.
- Contribute to the Government's resilience review and make the case for any changes to local resilience structures.

79. Lead members have agreed that resilience should be a higher priority for the Board this year, with work focusing on learning the lessons of the early response to COVID-19 to help inform future responses, as well as good practice on embedding community resilience.

Fire and rescue services

80. The Fire Services Management Committee leads the LGA's work on fire, with the Fire Commission providing a forum for fire and rescue authorities to discuss issues facing the sector. The Fire Services Management Committee sits under the Safer and Stronger Communities Board.
81. Key issues for the Committee over the last year have been building safety, inclusion and learning from the first round of fire services inspections undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFS). A number of key issues were also identified by the Committee including the Spending Review, transparency and standards, governance, workforce development and climate change.
82. The Fire Commission will discuss the priorities for the coming year at their meeting in September 2020 which will then be discussed at the FSMC in October 2020. It is expected that the previous priorities and key issues will continue to be areas of focus.

Building safety

83. Since the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 a significant workstream for the safer communities team has been improving building safety, an issue that the Grenfell Task and Finish Group and FSMC in particular have an interest in alongside the Board. Over the last three years the LGA has been successful in lobbying for and securing changes to building regulations so that combustible materials are banned from being used in buildings over 18 metres in height, the 45 councils with high-rise residential buildings with aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding systems have received funding to remove it, and the creation of a building safety fund to allow private high-rise residential buildings to be remediated. We have also shaped the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's review of building regulations and fire safety, and been closely involved in the development of the legislation to implement the new building safety regime she recommended.
84. The draft Building Safety Bill published earlier this summer provides on paper the strong regulatory framework needed to improve building safety. However key aspects of the new regime will be set out in secondary legislation, which has yet to be drafted and getting this right will be important to the overall success of the new regime. There remain a number of areas of the future framework that in our view have not been satisfactorily addressed in the draft Bill, including the difficulty for building owners in paying for the building safety measures they will need to introduce without bankrupting leaseholders, the impact the government's Planning White Paper will have on the regulatory framework set out in the Bill, the scope of the Bill and the speed with which additional buildings can be brought into its remit, the charging provisions in the Bill to pay for enforcement activity by councils' building control teams and Fire and Rescue Services, and the relationship between the Bill and the Fire Safety Bill. We will therefore seek to further shape the Bill and its associated secondary legislation as they make their way through Parliament.

85. As the Bill begins its Parliamentary passage the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which will become the new building safety regulator, which is a key provision in the draft legislation, is in the process of establishing the regulatory body in shadow form. The HSE team leading this work recognise how dependent the new regulator will be on a close working relationship with councils and Fire and Rescue Services, and are keen to continue to work with the LGA around the detail of how the regulator will work on a day to day basis. The HSE are also aware of the need for councils to prepare not only for their regulatory role working in partnership with the new regulator, but also as duty holders with responsibility for improving the safety of their own building stock.
86. Alongside the Building Safety Bill, the government has introduced the Fire Safety Bill into Parliament. The Bill amends the Fire Safety Order 2005 (FSO) to clarify that the responsible person or duty-holder for multi-occupied, residential buildings must manage and reduce the risk of fire for the External Wall System (EWS, e.g. a cladding system) of the building and entrance doors to individual flats that open into common parts. This clarification will empower fire and rescue services to take enforcement action and hold building owners to account if they are not compliant. The Bill will also provide a foundation for secondary legislation to take forward recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase one report.
87. Although we welcomed the Bill we have serious concerns over the impact it could have on councils. Any current fire risk assessments (FRAs) councils have conducted on their residential buildings that do not cover the ESW could become invalid the day the Bill becomes law. If this is an affect of the Bill councils will have to obtain new FRAs with the associated costs of doing so, when there is no guarantee that they would receive new burdens funding to cover the cost. In addition there is a shortage of FRA assessors with the necessary skills and insurance to carry out the FRAs. If these concerns prove accurate, councils could be left with a legal obligation to replace large numbers of FRAs but no means to do so in a timely way. We will continue to lobby around this issue as the Bill continues through Parliament.
88. The Fire Safety Bill is unlikely to come into effect until spring 2021. Primary responsibility for encouraging those building owners who are taking time to put in place plans to remediate their high-rise residential buildings to do so faster will rest with councils for the next few months. The Joint Inspection Team, which the LGA is funded by MHCLG to host, is providing multi-disciplinary support to councils in using their powers under the Housing Act 2004, and after having had to put its inspections on hold during lockdown has now resumed inspection activity and has a forward plan for buildings to visit which stretches into the autumn.
89. Proposed priorities for 2020/2021:
- Continue our work around the Building Safety Bill to ensure it provides a robust new regulatory regime for building safety.

- Engage with HSE's programme to establish the new building safety regulator, and raise awareness amongst councils of their responsibilities as regulators and dutyholders under the new building safety regime.
- Seek legal advice on the implications for councils of not being able to obtain new FRAs once the Fire Safety Bill comes into force and lobby for changes to the Bill or secondary legislation as necessary to protect the interests of councils.
- Continue to support councils in taking enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004 through hosting the Joint Inspection Team.

Supporting transition from membership of the EU

90. The team is also working with the LGA's policy leads for EU transition (reporting into the LGA's transition task and finish group) in relation to the safer communities impacts of the UK's exit from the EU. With the current transition period due to end at the end of 2020, the team is currently engaging with councils and government departments in relation to the anticipated impact on regulatory services.

91. Port health authorities are expected to experience a significant expansion in the number of products of animal origin goods required to be inspected as these checks are applied to goods from Europe from July 2021, while inspection activity in other areas of regulatory services may also need to be scaled up to meet EU expectations for third countries. We are highlighting to government that much of this burden is likely to fall on environmental health services already operating at full capacity from COVID-19 activity.

Legislation and parliamentary work

92. The Parliamentary programme will drive work programmes in relation to the Domestic Violence Bill, Building Safety Bill and Serious Violence Bill over the course of the 2020/21 Board year.

Implications for Wales

93. We will work with colleagues at the Welsh LGA to identify areas where our work will be applicable to Wales in terms of non-devolved issues. Where work relates to devolved issues our focus will be on English authorities, with the WLGA leading on work in Wales, but we will share our work with WLGA should they wish to use it as a basis for Welsh specific work of their own.

Financial Implications

94. The work priorities identified for 2020/21 will be delivered within the planned staffing budget, which includes dedicated capacity to support work on cohesion, extremism and Prevent, and additional capacity to support Grenfell work.

95. Additional supporting projects may be commissioned subject to funds being available from a small directorate / team budget.

Next steps

96. The Board are asked to consider and approve the priorities for 2020/21.