

17 June 2021

## 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.

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## Update Paper

### Counter-Extremism

1. Lord Walney, Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption, recently opened up a call for evidence as part of his review into political violence and disruption. Our submission set out a number of councils' concerns about extremist activity, both on- and off line. We drew a distinction between protest activity which is disruptive only, and acts which are violent and/or target certain communities or those with particular characteristics, that can stoke division and mistrust between communities. Our response also set out concerns about the prevalence of violent language in online political discourse, highlighting the LGA's work on civility in public life, and emphasised the need for investment in long-term measures to build resilience and help prevent extremism and cohesion issues from emerging.
2. In March we concluded the delivery of two training courses for local authority practitioners on engagement and communication strategies to counter far-right extremism. The courses were very well received and explored audience segmentation; the issues that far-right actors use to mobilise support; strategies to build greater resilience to far-right mobilisation; and how communications and community engagement might be applied locally to diffuse and contain far-right narratives.

### **CIEH Workforce Survey report: local authorities in England / regulatory services**

3. In April, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health published its first [workforce survey](#) for 6 years. With environmental health (EH) teams having been at the frontline of the response to COVID, the survey is a useful illustration of some of the challenges facing the profession. The survey estimated that there are around 3300 full time equivalent EH professionals working within English councils, but also that a number of councils were struggling to recruit to vacant positions, with the use of agency staff widespread in response to this.
4. The findings of the survey mirror the findings of the resources, capacity and qualifications workstream of the regulatory services task and finish group, which the LGA has been supporting. The key feedback from that work is as follows:
  - 4.1 An ageing workforce that is shrinking due to both retirement and retention issues, with the loss of officers to other sectors and agencies common and exacerbated by COVID-19.
  - 4.2 Challenges in recruitment, with a limited pool of professional capacity available and an increasing gap between filled and advertised posts.
  - 4.3 Difficulty in bringing in new officers through available routes such as apprenticeships, with a lack of funding for training posts meaning these roles taking up a post in core staffing teams; alongside this, councils reported challenges in ensuring available management time for mentoring new

17 June 2021

officers. However, there is wide recognition of the impetus that new and younger officers can bring.

- 4.4 Concern about the loss of specialist expertise in a number of areas, with many officers now taking on generalist roles as councils are unable to carry specialist posts within their headcounts, and/or concern about the predominance of food work over other areas of regulation.
  - 4.5 Mixed feedback on the varying entry and qualification routes for the different services, but a recognition that this was not the primary challenge facing the services.
5. The task and finish group is considering options for addressing these challenges, including building the future pipeline of officers and strengthening regional networks.
  6. A full report on the work of the task and finish group will be shared with the Board once it has reported, and we expect to build many of its recommendations into our updated regulatory services spending review submission.

### **Shisha premises**

7. Officers recently attended a discussion convened by Westminster Council regarding issues linked to shisha premises. This followed a roundtable hosted by then Minister Jake Berry in 2019, and ongoing campaigning on this issue by Birmingham MP Shabana Mahmood MP due to issues linked to shisha premises in her constituency. We understand that that MHCLG are looking into this issue.
8. Councils raised concerns about the lack of effective powers to tackle ongoing nuisance, anti-social behaviour and criminality issues with many shisha premises, as well as about health issues linked to the use of shisha. There has been significant feedback over the previous year of some shisha premises being persistently non-compliant during lockdown.
9. The LGA has previously supported calls for the introduction of an adoptive (i.e not universal) licensing scheme for shisha premises and has offered to help support work on this issue. We would welcome feedback from any Board members about whether they have experienced related issues in their areas.

### **Pavement licensing**

10. The Government has published regulations that will extend the provisions in the Business and Planning Act 2020, which created an expedited process for securing a pavement licence for tables and chairs. The provisions will now be in place for a further year, to 30 September 2022. Measures in the Act to provide default permission for off sales of alcohol alongside on sales have also been extended for a further the year. Alongside this, the government has also published regulations which for two years will increase the number of temporary event notices (TEN) which alcohol licensed premises are entitled to apply for on an annual basis, from 15 to 20.

17 June 2021

With the statutory fee for a TEN significantly underestimating the actual costs to councils of processing the TEN, we are concerned that this will add to the financial impact of this package of measures.

11. We plan to raise these concerns with government officials in the coming weeks, and emphasise that any long term changes will need to be fully consulted on and cost neutral for councils.

### **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill**

12. On 18 May, Cllr Nesil Caliskan gave [oral evidence](#) to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee for the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill](#). During the session, Cllr Caliskan emphasised the importance of taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, investing in prevention and early intervention, as well as identifying the risk factors and drivers of youth violence. She highlighted our LGA ask for the Government to extend funding for Violence Reduction Units (VRU) to all areas and commit to funding VRUs for five years. MPs also raised questions about unauthorised encampments, youth custody, Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews, and the right to protest. We have submitted written evidence to the Committee, which will be published on the Committee website in the coming weeks. The Bill is expected to progress through House of Commons Committee Stage, until 24 June 2021, before moving to Report Stage.

### **Draft Serious Violence Guidance**

13. The Home Office has published [Draft Guidance](#) for responsible authorities on the serious violence duty. It sets out information on effective partnership working, advice on data sharing, information on monitoring and inspection and advice on working with the voluntary and community sector and young people.
14. The serious violence duty is being discussed as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently in Committee Stage in the House of Commons. Our House of Commons Second Reading briefing is [available here](#).

### **Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews**

15. The LGA has been invited to join the Home Office's Offensive Weapons Homicide Review Cross-Government design and pilot board. As observing members of the Board, LGA officers will continue to provide feedback to Government officials on the reviews, and put forward any local government queries or concerns.

### **Domestic Abuse Act**

16. On 29 April, the Domestic Abuse Bill reached [Royal Assent](#) and became an Act of Parliament. The commencement schedule of the provisions in the Act is [available here](#).

17 June 2021

17. The LGA held a series of workshops with local authorities in preparation for the new statutory duty to deliver accommodation-based support and services for domestic abuse victims and children. We will continue to hold workshops throughout the year, and work closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to support local authorities in setting up local domestic abuse partnership boards.
18. The LGA is also working closely with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office on the mapping of community-based support services. As part of the Commissioner's role, her office will now assess the current provision of community-based domestic abuse support services. We hope this will help to make a case for increased investment in these vital services, particularly those that focus on early intervention and prevention.

#### **All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Domestic Abuse**

19. On 24 May, Cllr Caliskan spoke at the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Domestic Abuse, following the Domestic Abuse Act receiving Royal Assent. During the session, Cllr Caliskan spoke about the new statutory duty placed on local authorities to deliver accommodation-based support and services for domestic abuse victims and children, and she highlighted some of the progress that has been made to set-up Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards and conduct needs assessments. She also welcomed the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's commitment to reviewing the need for community-based services and make provision for this vital support for domestic abuse victims. We continue to work with the Commissioner, the Government and councils to help implement the provisions outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act and help to improve the response to domestic abuse overall.

#### **LGA webinar on transforming the response to economic abuse**

20. In April, the LGA ran a webinar with the organisation 'Surviving Economic Abuse' to raise awareness about the indicators of economic abuse, and how to respond and ultimately prevent it. Our guest speaker Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Surviving Economic Abuse, outlined the recent changes to the Domestic Abuse Act, which include recognition of economic abuse as part of the new statutory definition of domestic abuse, and important changes on post-separation abuse. Over 200 delegates joined the session. Surviving Economic Abuse also provided a series of bespoke training sessions for local authorities to learn more about economic abuse, directly following the webinar. The full presentation is [available here](#).

#### **Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2021 – 2024)**

21. The LGA submitted a [response](#) to the Government's [consultation](#) on the development of the next Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG), highlighting the need for this to align with other strategies and legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Bill. We also reflected on the terrible news about Sarah Everard, and the wider concerns about public safety. The Government is expected to provide further information on the VAWG Strategy in the coming months.

17 June 2021

### **Violence Against Women and Girls inquiry – Home Affairs Committee**

22. The LGA has also submitted [written evidence](#) to the Home Affairs Committee [inquiry](#) into Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The Committee has held an initial oral evidence session with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, and will continue to hear evidence over the coming weeks, before producing a final report and recommendations for Government.

### **Tackling anti-social behaviour**

23. On 8 June, the LGA published a series of [case studies on tackling anti-social behaviour \(ASB\)](#), highlighting how councils have been working in partnership to deliver support for victims and tackle perpetrator's behaviour. Left unchecked we know that ASB can have a devastating impact on communities and individuals. We have also sign-posted to the [Home Office's guidance on the Community Trigger process](#), the formal Anti-social Behaviour Case Review putting victims at the centre of responses, and helpful resources and support from [ASB Help](#).

### **Safer Streets Funding**

24. The Home Office has announced that [some councils and Police and Crime Commissioners will share £18.3 million](#) to pay for projects to tackle crimes like burglary, vehicle theft and robbery, for example by increasing street lighting and CCTV. The Home Office has also announced the third round of the Government's Safer Streets Fund has also opened for local authorities to bid for a further £25 million for 2021/22 which will focus on projects to help women and girls feel safer on the streets.

### **Unauthorised encampments webinar**

25. In June, Cllr Katrina Woods is chairing an [LGA webinar on unauthorised encampments](#). The aim of the session is to provide an opportunity to discuss the response to unauthorised encampments and share the approaches that work well and examples of best practice from across local government. The virtual event is free for all councils.