

24 March 2022

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/s:

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

Action/s:

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

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Licensing Leadership Essentials

1. This month we hosted the second Licensing Leadership Essentials course which was attended by nearly 20 councillors. This is a two-day, interactive course, aimed at chairs and vice-chairs of licensing committees. The course focused on good quality decision making and how a good licensing committee is run. Attendees were also able to compare how their committee operates with other authorities and share best practice with other councillors. The course got excellent feedback: given high levels of demand, we plan on running another session in October.

Licensing Act inquiry

2. Cllr Jeanie Bell, one of the SSCB's Licensing Champions, provided evidence to a House of Lords Select Committee on the Licensing Act. Cllr Bell highlighted the training materials the LGA has produced to support members of licensing committees and spoke about the need to localise licensing fees, as well as the pressing need to find a solution to the challenges around the gov.uk licensing platform, where there remains considerable uncertainty about whether the current national platform for online forms will be maintained beyond next year. Councillor Caliskan has written to the Cabinet Office seeking an update on this issue.

Pavement licensing update

3. The LGA is continuing to work with officials at the DLUHC on what a permanent pavement licensing regime might look like. We have been clear that we do not want to see the temporary regime, introduced under the Business and Planning Act 2020, made permanent in its current form and are lobbying for a regime that blends the best parts of the temporary regime and the regime under the Highways Act to the benefit of businesses, residents and councils. Key provisions we are lobbying for include localised fees, a longer consultation and determination period, and effective enforcement powers for the authorities responsible for issuing licences. This needs to correct an anomaly whereby under the temporary regime, highways authorities retain enforcement powers but licences are issued by district councils.
4. We understand that the Government will be extending the temporary pavement licensing regulations for a further year to September 2023 and expect an announcement on this soon.

Tobacco review

5. Officers have been engaging with LGA public health officers in relation to the independent review by Javed Khan OBE into the Government's ambition to make

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England smoke free by 2020. The review will support work by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, and lead members from the Community Wellbeing Board met Javed Khan on Friday 18 March.

6. Although the CWB is the lead board for smoking cessation and the health impacts of smoking, there is an SSCB interest through the work that trading standards teams undertake to tackle illicit tobacco and under-age sales, both of which undermine the ambition to eliminate smoking. The Chartered Trading Standards Institute's lead officer for tobacco control has expressed concern that it appears that dedicated funding provided for many years by the Department of Health and Social Care to coordinate and support illicit tobacco work across the country is set to be withdrawn in the next financial year, a point that CWB members were due to raise during the meeting with Javed Khan.

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

7. The [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill](#) has reached its final stages, with the House of Commons considering Lords amendment to the Bill in February. The Government has put forward an amendment on expedited Public Spaces Protection Orders, following a successful amendment tabled in the House of Lords. Wider amendments have also been discussed on repealing the Vagrancy Act, several amendments on protests, and whether misogyny should be considered a hate crime. Further consideration of amendments will take place in the House of Lords, with Royal Assent of the Bill expected in the coming weeks.

Safer Streets Fund – Round 4

8. The [Home Office has opened applications for the fourth round of the Safer Streets Fund](#). This fourth round will combine and expand upon previous rounds of Safer Streets and the Safety of Women at Night funding, targeting neighbourhood crime and violence against women and girls, as well as including anti-social behaviour as a primary focus for the first time. In this round, £75 million will be available across 2022/23 and 2023/24 for councils, Police and Crime Commissioners and wider partners.

Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board

9. The Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board met in March 2022, with representatives from the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), the LGA, Resolve ASB, the NPCC and wider partners. The Board discussed current progress on tackling anti-social behaviour, including the Government's focus on ASB plans in the recently published Levelling Up White Paper. ASB Awareness Week 2022 is expected to be held in July 2022, further details from the Board will be published shortly.

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Tackling Serious and Organised Crime

10. In February, Cllr Mohan Iyengar, Vice-Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, chaired an LGA webinar on tackling serious and organised crime. The webinar reached over 160 delegates, from a wide-range of local authorities and partners in policing and community safety. There were speakers from the Home Office, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and best practice examples from a number of local authorities. The LGA will continue to work with councils, the Government, the APCC, and wider partners on tackling serious and organised crime.
11. Prior to the LGA webinar, the LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson met with APCC Victims' Lead Donna Jones PCC to discuss the importance of partnership working between the LGA and APCC to tackle serious and organised crime. Donna Jones will be speaking at the forthcoming LGA Councillor's Forum to outline the importance of the police, Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities and wider partners in tackling county lines activity, and wider serious and organised crime operations. The LGA continues to work with the APCC on this important issue.

Drugs inquiry – Home Affairs Committee

12. The Home Affairs Select Committee has [launched](#) an inquiry on illegal drug use and its effects on society and the economy. The inquiry will consider the UK's legislative framework on drugs and UK drug policy. The LGA will be submitting written evidence to the select committee inquiry, which is due to close 24 March 2022.

£125 million new burdens funding for domestic abuse statutory duty

13. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has [confirmed](#) councils will receive £125 million new burdens funding for the second year (2022 – 2023) of the Part 4 Domestic Abuse Act statutory duty to provide accommodation-based support and services. In addition, DLUHC have launched two consultations, one on the [local connection test](#) and the other on [joint tenancies](#).

Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Strategic Reference Group on Tackling Domestic Abuse Perpetrators

14. In January, the LGA's Domestic Abuse Champion Cllr Lois Samuel attended the third meeting of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Strategic Reference Group on Tackling Domestic Abuse Perpetrators. This meeting focused on the availability of data, regarding perpetrators and perpetrator interventions. Representatives called for greater focus on tackling perpetrators as part of the Government's forthcoming Domestic Abuse Strategy, which is expected to be published within one year of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 reaching Royal Assent.

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National Oversight Group – Domestic Abuse Act 2021

15. In March, LGA officers attended the National Oversight Group, which oversees the implementation and progress of the Part 4 statutory duty, as outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, for councils to provide accommodation-based domestic abuse support and services for victims and children.
16. The LGA plans to work with representatives from the National Oversight Group to hold a series of virtual workshops, to share best practice and guidance on “by and for” specialist domestic abuse services. Councils continue to implement their local domestic abuse strategies, informed by local needs assessments, with oversight and direction provided by the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards – set up by Tier 1 local authorities. Officers continue to work closely with councils on the implementation of this statutory duty.

National Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) campaign

17. On 1 March 2022, the Home Office [launched](#) a new, multi-year national communications campaign which says ‘Enough’ to violence against women and girls. The campaign includes television adverts, billboards, social media and radio advertising and will highlight different forms of violence against women and girls and the simple acts that anyone can take to challenge perpetrators of abuse. Forms of violence against women and girls represented include street harassment, coercive control, unwanted touching, workplace harassment, revenge-porn and cyber-flashing

International Women’s Day 2022

18. Ahead of a debate in the House of Commons to mark International Women’s Day, [the LGA briefed MPs](#) on the vital work the LGA and councils are doing to #breakthebias by supporting more women into local politics and positions of leadership, and ensure all local services actively work to overcome gender-based inequalities.

Government consultation on improving victims’ experiences of the justice system

19. The Ministry of Justice consultation on improving victims’ experiences of the justice system has closed. The LGA’s response to the consultation can be [found here](#). The Government is expected to lay a draft Victims’ Bill before Parliament in the coming weeks. The LGA will continue to work with the Ministry of Justice and wider partners on the development of the Bill, and wider non-legislative measures.

Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales 2022

20. In March, the Police Foundation [published](#) the Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales, chaired by Sir Michael Barber and carried out by the Police Foundation. The Review contains 56 recommendations urging reform to police culture, skills and training and organisational structure.

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21. The recommendations include:

- a. Creation of a new Crime Prevention Agency.
- b. Expansion of the role of the National Crime Agency so it in effect becomes a new FBI for the UK.
- c. Introduction of a new licence to practice for all police officers that is renewed every five years and subject to strict conditions.
- d. Merger of back-office functions across the 43 forces
- e. Investment in front line policing, training and technology to modernise the service from top to bottom.

State of Policing: HMICFRS Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2021

22. On 10 March, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) [published](#) its annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2021, based on inspections carried out between April and November 2021.
23. The Chief Inspector reflected on recent evidence of toxic behaviour and attitudes demonstrated by some police officers. He said that when public trust in the police is damaged, it is essential that public reassurance in the integrity and professionalism of the police is restored and reaffirmed as quickly as possible (page 33).
24. In his final annual report, the Chief Inspector described how demand on the police has changed very significantly, for example:
 - a. online crime is now by far the most prevalent type of crime; fraud has exploded, eclipsing all other crimes in volume (page 41);
 - b. total demand and public expectations cannot be met without sufficient funding (pages 42-43) and the public must decide how much threat, harm and risk they are prepared to tolerate; and
 - c. the rapid advancement of technology has provided opportunities for both criminals and the police, but the police have sometimes struggled to keep pace (page 56).

Modern slavery

25. Earlier this month, we published our new [guidance on how homelessness and housing services can support victims of modern slavery](#). The guidance was launched as part of a webinar attracting nearly 300 council officers and has been widely welcome as filling a critical gap in guidance for councils.
26. We are currently analysing the responses to our modern slavery survey. 116 councils, or 35%, responded, providing a good platform for supporting our update of the wider LGA modern slavery guidance.

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27. The Home Office has recently published [statistics on NRM referrals for 2021](#). 12,727 potential victims were referred, an increase of 20% on 2020. Local authorities accounted for 25% (3,229) of referrals, the vast majority of which related to child potential victims. The Independent Anti-Slavery Commission Dame Sara Thornton has recently called for the Home Office to be stripped of its decision making powers in relation to NRM referrals due to decisions taking an unreasonably long amount of time, with some victims waiting as long as 500 days for a decision. Dame Sara has said that councils should be responsible for NRM decision making.

Levelling up white paper

28. As Board members will be aware, the Levelling Up white paper was published at the start of February. The [LGA's briefing](#) provides a full analysis of the twelve missions set out in the paper. Alongside the commitment to consult on the appropriate tier of local government to manage taxi licensing (see item 4), the eleventh mission, pledging to reduce homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime in the worst-affected areas by 2030, is also of direct interest to the Board. The mission is focused on creating safer neighbourhoods, by reforming the safer streets fund, bringing forward plans for a National Spring Clean and publishing a new plan to tackle anti-social behaviour and quality of life issues.

Cyber security

29. The LGA has been awarded £1 million from the National Cyber Security Programme to fund local government officers in England to undertake a professionally certified course, as part of a sector-wide skills uplift. Councils are invited to apply for grant funding for an officer to undertake a professionally certified cyber security qualification. [Further details and an application form are available on the LGA website](#), with a deadline of 1 April for applying.