

Meeting: Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Date: 22 September 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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Update Paper

Background

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

Draft Victims Bill

2. Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Cllr Nesil Caliskan, gave [oral evidence](#) during the pre-legislative scrutiny stages of the Draft Victims Bill, alongside the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime in London, and Association of Police and Crime Commissioner's Joint Lead for Victims, Sophie Linden.
3. During the evidence session, Cllr Caliskan indicated it was positive to see Government's commitment to improving services and amplifying victims' voices in the criminal justice process through this Bill, but highlighted that it is also important to ensure that the Bill does not lose sight of the need to ensure victims of all crimes are supported effectively. She explained a locally-led approach, which provides areas with the flexibility and resources to identify local priorities and take action, is one of the best ways to improve collaboration but it is essential that any proposed new duties are clarified by government and funded in full.
4. Our full [written evidence](#) to the committee is available here, alongside wider stakeholder evidence submissions. The Justice Committee's inquiry has now closed, and the committee is expected to publish its final report and recommendations in the coming weeks. Following the Government's response to the committee's recommendations, the draft Bill may be amended and is then expected to begin its process through Parliament.

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act – commencement schedule and serious violence duty

5. The [commencement schedule](#) for the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 has been published. The schedule outlines when each part of the Act is due to come into force. The forthcoming serious violence duty, as outlined in the Act, requires secondary legislation to come into force, and the commencement date will be updated when this has passed. The Government has been [consulting](#) on the draft statutory guidance for the serious violence duty, and is expected to publish an updated version in Autumn 2022.

National Expert Steering Group on Domestic Abuse

6. The Ministerially-led National Expert Steering Group, which has been convened to oversee the implementation of the Part 4 statutory duty on local authorities to deliver accommodation-based support and services to domestic abuse victims, held its second meeting in June.
7. During the session, LGA officers shared the learning from a series of local government best practice workshops, which included presentations from Imkaan, Women's Aid, and the National Housing Federation, with a focus on supporting "by and for" specialist services. Ahead of the next steering group meeting in November, the LGA plans to hold additional workshops with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Refuge, Mankind, and Galop, to help share best practice.
8. The third year of new burdens funding for the duty is still to be announced, so we will continue to press for an earlier update to help councils build in longer-term planning to their services.

Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance

9. The Government has published the [statutory guidance](#) for the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The guidance is aimed at statutory and non-statutory bodies working with victims, perpetrators and commissioning services, including the police, local authorities, and the NHS to increase awareness and inform their response to domestic abuse. The commencement schedule for the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is also [available here](#).

Tackling the Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) epidemic

10. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, Nicole Jacobs and the National Police Chiefs Council lead for VAWG, DCC Maggie Blyth spoke at the LGA Annual Conference session on tackling violence against women and girls, chaired by the Board's Domestic Abuse Champion Cllr Lois Samuel. The Commissioner touched upon the importance of having funding certainty for community-based support services, which she said many people are reliant upon for support. DCC Blyth explained this was a watershed moment to change the culture on VAWG issues. She highlighted the importance of improving the trust and confidence in policing, and outlined plans for a national policing framework to address this important issue.

Funding to support female offenders

11. On 1 September, the Government [announced](#) £24 million for services that work with women in the justice system to help those whose crimes have been fuelled by addiction, mental health issues and domestic abuse. Almost £21 million is expected to be invested in women's services to tackle the causes of female offending and cut crime. A further £3.6 million will be allocated to help local services, such as mental health support and drug experts, work more closely together to support female offenders.

ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 – statutory guidance updated

12. The Home Office has updated the [Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 statutory guidance](#), to include guidance on expedited Public Spaces Protection Orders, additional information on restorative justice and the community remedy, and updated wording on dispersal powers and community protection notices.

Law Commission report on Weddings Law

13. In July the Law Commission published its final response to their [review of weddings law](#). Members previously discussed the LGA's response to the consultation at the [SSCB in November 2020](#), with the LGA submitting a response calling for universal civil marriage, or at least universal civil preliminaries, as well as expressing concerns regarding the use of the word "dignity" in defining whether or not a location was suitable for a wedding.
14. The Law Commission's final report contains a number of recommendations including that couples will be able to give notice of their intended wedding online, though Anglican preliminaries would still be conducted by the Anglican Church. There are proposals around the contents of wedding ceremonies, including religious elements in civil ceremonies and giving couples greater choice on where they can be married. Though our comments on dignity were picked up, there were many respondents who felt that there should be a definition of dignity and its meaning in the context of weddings, The Law Commission still believe that officiants should approve premises, considering safety and dignity.
15. The Government has not just responded to the Law Commission's final report.

White Paper: "Reforming our fire and rescue service"

16. The LGA [submitted a response](#) to Government's Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service White Paper at the end of July. The response welcomed Government's ambition to improve the Fire and Rescue Service, welcoming reform that is introduced in the most effective and productive way. The response outlined that much could already be achieved without the need for further legislation. The Fire Services Management Committee expressed particular concerns around the proposals on fire governance, which the Committee felt was best determined at a local level, rather than mandating changes to governance without local support. It also outlined views on where proposals need further consideration, such as the balanced leadership model between chief fire officers and their governance, and provided practical solutions on how these could be developed to deliver reform. The response also set out potential barriers to reform and areas where the LGA believe change could be achieved more quickly.

17. Government is expected to respond although the timeline for this is unknown and is likely to be impacted by the change in ministerial team.

Democratic engagement in resilience case studies

18. The LGA has commissioned a series of case studies on effective democratic engagement in civil resilience, and is seeking examples from councils of how councillors are involved in local resilience activity at each of the planning, response and recovery phases. The recent levelling up white paper and post implementation review of the Civil Contingencies Act highlighted the importance of accountability and assurance of multi-agency local resilience work, and the forthcoming national resilience strategy is expected to explore this issue further.

Responding to disruption to fuel supply: guidance for resilience partners and the care sector

19. Following disruption experienced last Autumn, when media reports and panic buying disrupted access to fuel in some parts of the country, causing significant challenges for home care providers in those areas, officers have worked with the Care Providers Alliance to develop a short guidance note on the national emergency plan for fuel and best practice approaches to business continuity. The guidance is expected to be signed off and published shortly.

Regulatory services

20. With helpful input from members of the board, officers have developed a councillor guide to public protection services. The guide will be published shortly, and the board are encouraged to help share this within their authorities and groups.
21. Officers have also been engaging with the workforce team, who have commissioned work to explore what options are available for addressing the recruitment and pipeline challenges seen in a number of professions including environmental health and trading standards.

Independent inquiry on child sexual exploitation in Telford and Wrekin

22. In April 2018 Telford and Wrekin Council commissioned an [independent inquiry to look at child sexual exploitation](#) (CSE) in the borough during the period from 1989 to the present date. The inquiry looked at the response of the police and a range of council services, including social services and education. There was also a section of the inquiry which focused on taxi/private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing and the night-time economy.
23. On taxi/PHV licensing the inquiry found that, historically, the council's taxi/PHV licensing policies were not robust. This improved over time, and now the council demonstrates good practice and has an effective system of

licensing. It also found the licensing department had a poor relationship with the trade. This led to allegations of racism and a pause in enforcement activity when CSE perpetrators were active in the area. The inquiry concludes that while the council does now operate an effective system of licensing, it remains hampered by inconsistent standards on regional regulatory requirements and information sharing.

24. On alcohol and entertainment licensing, there were some concerning reports of children experiencing harm in nightclubs. However, the inquiry concluded that licensing officers were effective in tackling this and are taking steps to protect children in the night-time economy. The inquiry praised effective partnership working schemes operating in Telford and Wrekin, and the successful CSE training for staff working in licensed premises and hotels.
25. Within the report, there are many references to perpetrators being linked with takeaways and restaurants, and to associated residential premises being used for exploitation. The inquiry recognised that councils have limited licensing powers to regulate many of these premises, however regarded the lack of information councils had on these premises as a failure of information sharing.
26. The LGA produced a summary of the licensing section of the report. If you would be interested in reading more, please contact jade.hall@local.gov.uk

World cup guidance

27. The LGA has one again co-badged guidance produced by the British Beer and Pub Association for licensees are screening football matches for this year's World Cup.

Pavement licensing

28. Licensing authorities should have received new burdens funding for year two of the temporary pavement licensing regime introduced by the Business and Planning Act 2020. The LGA welcomes this funding, which has followed our lobbying to ensure councils are reimbursed for the costs of administering the regime.
29. The provisions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which outline proposals for a permanent pavement licensing regime are before the Bill Committee in the House of Commons. The LGA has worked closely with officials at DLUHC to ensure the Bill includes provisions which increase the licence fee cap, have a longer consultation and determination period, and improved enforcement powers for licensing authorities.
30. The LGA has also supported a Parliamentary amendment to the Bill which would provide councils with alternative enforcement powers, after some

councils expressed concern that the current enforcement provisions in the Bill – the ability to seize and remove furniture for licence breaches and recoup associated costs from the individuals involved- may create logistical challenges for councils who do not have the means to store or transport the furniture, and concerns that officers may be placed in a confrontational situation with business owners. The amendment would create a specific offence for non-compliance and enable councils to issue a fixed penalty notice.

Member support offer: licensing

31. The LGA is continuing to develop our support offer to assist officers with the process of inducting new members onto licensing committees. We have recently [refreshed our licensing e-learning module](#). We have also produced some scenario-based licensing training videos, which will be launched shortly.
32. In addition, we are holding a licensing leadership essentials course for chairs and vice-chairs of licensing committees 19-20th October. Due to the demand for the course, we plan to run another in March 2023.

Modern slavery event

33. To mark anti-slavery day on 18th October, the LGA is hosting a webinar to launch our refreshed council guide on tackling modern slavery. This webinar, which will be hosted in partnership with the Human Trafficking Foundation, will provide an overview of our updated modern slavery guidance and accompanying maturity index that. The Human Trafficking Foundation will also provide an overview of its recent report on approaches to tackling modern slavery in London. If this event is of interest, [you can book your place on the LGA's website](#).

Street naming legislation

34. As noted in the Board's June update, we responded to a DLUHC technical consultation in May on changes to street naming legislation. Our response argued that the proposals were both unnecessary and presented a number of practical issues. The Levelling Up Bill introduced in May included provisions to amend legislation in accordance with the consultation's proposals. In the [LGA's committee stage briefing on the Bill](#), we continued to express concerns about the proposals and current drafting of the clause.

Counter extremism

35. We have continued to support the SIGCE's programme of events, with practitioner roundtable sessions over the summer period on online misinformation and conspiracy theories, and on handling protest activity. A further interactive workshop was held for councils on responding to anti-

minority activism, which will inform the production of a toolkit for local authorities and further planned workshops over the coming months.

Police and Crime Panels

36. On 27 September we will be holding our next Police and Crime panels webinar with contributions from the Home Office, the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels and the North Yorkshire PCP.

Implications for Wales

37. Officers to work with the Welsh LGA as necessary.

Financial Implications

38. None.

Equalities implications

39. To be considered in relation to each individual policy area.

Next steps

40. Officers to continue progressing these issues as required.