

Meeting: Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Date: Thursday 10 November

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

Background

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

Member support offer: licensing

2. The LGA is continuing to develop its support offer to assist officers with the process of inducting new members onto licensing committees. We have [developed a licensing committee training resources](#) page on our website, which signposts members to useful training materials. This includes our recently [refreshed licensing e-learning module](#) and some [scenario-based licensing training videos](#).
3. In October, we hosted our third licensing leadership essentials course for chairs and vice chairs of licensing committees. The course focuses on how good licensing committees are run and received excellent feedback. Cllr Jeanie Bell, one of the Boards Licensing Champions, presented to the group about the work of her licensing committee in St Helens. Due to high demand, we are running another course Wednesday 8 - Thursday 9 March in Coventry. If your committee chair/ vice chair is interested, they can book their place by emailing grace.collins@local.gov.uk

Licensing Act

4. One of the Board's long-standing objectives has been for localised licensing fees. Fees under the Licensing Act have not been updated since 2005 and many councils incur a large deficit in administering the Act. LGA officers have been working closely with officials at the Home Office to make the case for localised fees, or a fee uplift, as a minimum requirement.
5. We are hoping that the Home Office will shortly be running a consultation on issues including licensing fees. The LGA is supporting the Home Office with this work.
6. Additionally, the Home Office has recently [published statistics on alcohol and late-night refreshment licensing](#) in England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2022. The statistics show an increase in personal and premises licences, and a decrease in cumulative impact areas and premises licence reviews.

Transport Bill

7. Although not referenced in the Queen's Speech itself, Taxis Minister Baroness Vere had made a commitment in Parliament that the Transport Bill would include a limited number of taxi/PHV licensing provisions to introduce

national enforcement powers and national minimum standards. However, the former Secretary of State for Transport, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, recently said the Transport Bill would not go ahead in this parliamentary session.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

8. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill includes provisions which legislate for a permanent pavement licensing regime. The LGA has worked closely with officials at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ensure the Bill includes provisions which increase the licence fee cap, have a longer consultation and determination period, and strengthen enforcement powers for licensing authorities, following feedback from councils about issues with the temporary regime.
9. The Bill has now completed its Committee Stage in the House of Commons. At Committee Stage, the LGA supported an amendment to the Bill which would provide councils with alternative enforcement powers. Some councils have 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 which 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 we supported would create a specific offence for non-compliance and enable councils to issue a fixed penalty notice for this.
10. The amendment was not put to a vote, however the Levelling Up Minister, Dehenna Davison, committed to meeting with the LGA to discuss our concerns.

Animal licensing

11. DEFRA are undertaking a post-implementation review of the Licensing of Activities Involving Animals regulations. The LGA has been working closely with DEFRA to ensure there are opportunities for councils to feed into the process.

Modern slavery

12. To mark anti-slavery day on 18 October, the LGA hosted a webinar in partnership with the Human Trafficking Foundation to provide an overview of our updated modern slavery guidance and accompanying maturity index. The webinar featured good practice examples from a number of different councils and was chaired by Cllr Caliskan. The webinar had over 100 delegates and received positive feedback.
13. A recent [report has analysed councils' work to tackle modern slavery in their supply chains](#). Although councils are not yet under a statutory duty to report

on this issue – it is expected that the planned Modern Slavery Bill will bring councils with budgets of more than £36m in scope of the Modern Slavery Act's transparency in supply chains requirements - many have done so voluntarily.

14. The report found that a total of 178 Councils have published a modern slavery statement which remains accessible online and that local authorities are leading the way in their disclosure of efforts to address modern slavery in their supply chain, both in the UK and beyond. However, as well as good practice, the report also found 'that lack of capacity, resources, financing, clear guidance and support are undermining the important efforts of councils to own their role and responsibilities in the prevention and combatting of human rights abuses in the production and provision of the goods and services they procure with public funding. '

Trading standards

15. The Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) have published a [report on the impact of trading standards services in 2021-22](#). Alongside this, a useful infographic summarises this work, noting that across the year, trading standards teams:

- Prevented over £548 million of detriment, equating to £5.50 saved for every £1 spent.
- Saved scam victims almost £47 million.
- Provided over 26,000 hours of advice to businesses through primary authority partnerships, an increase of 23%.
- Saw an increase in demand for the service compared to last year and 22% higher than 19-20.
- Carried out over 58,000 compliance checks to ensure businesses meet their legal responsibilities and to provide them with advice on site.

Avian flu

16. LGA officers have also recently discussed with ACTSO the unsustainable demands being placed on trading standards services following large numbers of avian flu cases.
17. Board members may be aware that the Government has announced that an aviation influenza prevention zone (AIPZ) has been declared across the whole of Great Britain following an increase in the number of avian flu cases detected in different parts of the country. This means it is now a legal requirement for all bird keepers in Great Britain to follow strict biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks from the threat of avian flu. The Animal and Plant Health Agency recently wrote to council chief executives seeking council support with the removal of wild bird carcasses to help contain the spread of the disease, and offering support for council officers accessing personal protective equipment if required.

18. ACTSO recently raised with LGA officers the unsustainable demands being placed on trading standards services following large numbers of avian flu cases. Some councils had communicated to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) that they are unable to continue foot patrols and mailshots to houses within a 3 kilometre zone of all detected cases – part of a response framework designed with smaller numbers of cases in mind - due to the unsustainable demands on staff and council funding that much larger case numbers are creating, and the lack of evidence that such measures are proving effective in containing the disease.

19. ACTSO recently wrote to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to raise concern about this, and included a statement agreed by the SSCB lead members following a discussion about this issue at their meeting in October:

The Local Government Association shares concerns about the significant and unsustainable resource burden being placed on already stretched local trading standards teams by the ongoing response to high numbers of avian flu cases. We urge officials at Defra and APHA to work closely with councils to consider what steps would constitute a more sustainable response taking into account the effectiveness of different measures, the resources available locally to councils and the continuing number of outbreaks in different parts of the country, which significantly exceed the case numbers anticipated in designing the current response framework. With ongoing cases and a prevention zone across the whole of Britain, there is also a need to ensure cross-border coordination across different countries.

The cost to councils of any ongoing local communication requirements such as mailshots should be reimbursed by Government, and we would urge Government to take the lead on regional and national communications to the public via television and social media. Resources should also be provided to councils to support further routine deployment of foot patrols, if that is the expectation. As the LGA has consistently highlighted, there is a pressing need for workforce investment to secure a sustainable pipeline of local regulatory competence and capacity in the long term.

20. Separately, the DEFRA permanent secretary has requested a meeting with LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd to discuss councils work on avian flu.

Domestic abuse workshops

21. The LGA has held a series of workshops for local government officers to provide feedback on the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' data monitoring form, which collects information on the accommodation-based support domestic abuse statutory duty. Over 140 officers attended the three workshop sessions, with additional written

feedback provided to the Department to help improve the data collection process. An updated data monitoring form will be made available to local authorities in due course, once it has been finalised by the Department.

22. In November, Cllr Nesil Caliskan will attend the third National Expert Steering Group meeting, which oversees the domestic abuse accommodation-based support statutory duty. The next meeting is expected to consider the first year's annual progress report of the duty. Further updates will be provided to this Board following the steering group meeting.

National Community Safety Partnership Conference

23. Following joint discussions with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and the LGA, we have agreed to jointly host a National Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Conference, taking place virtually on Wednesday 14 December 2022. The conference is free for all LGA members, and available for both elected members and officers. These virtual webinars will bring together local authorities, the police, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and wider community safety partners to discuss best practice in tackling community safety issues. The morning session will focus on CSP roles and responsibilities, governance, and landscape. The afternoon session will focus on community safety policy themes for example, the Serious Violence Duty. Registration for the conference is [available here](#).

Draft Victims Bill

24. In September, the House of Commons Justice Committee published its [pre-legislative scrutiny report](#) on the Draft Victims Bill. The Committee's report made a series of recommendations concerning the Bill, and highlighted several points raised by Cllr Nesil Caliskan as part of the oral evidence sessions that were held. The full oral evidence session can be found [here](#) and our written evidence submission [here](#).
25. The report outlined: "The APCC and LGA both drew attention to what they described as the myriad of other collaboration duties and multiple funding streams that already exist". Cllr Caliskan said, "it is crucial that the Government ensures its various recent and forthcoming strategies, guidance, and legislation in this space work cohesively with the draft Victims Bill." Cllr Caliskan also called for further clarity to understand how the Government's Victims Funding Strategy is expected to align with the new statutory duty to collaborate.
26. The Committee supported our funding points and recommended the Government use the Victims Bill and the guidance provided under the duty to collaborate to draw these different duties and funding models together, to ensure that they work cohesively on the ground. The report outlined "If this legislation simply adds new duties to an already crowded landscape, then it

will be incredibly challenging for the relevant agencies to deliver on all pieces of legislation effectively”.

27. The Committee called for the duty to collaborate on community-based support services to be strengthened, so that agencies should also commission community-based services and this should be accompanied by an appropriate, multi-year funding package. Without the necessary funding in place the Bill risks raising victims’ awareness of their rights only to leave them unable to access them due to the relevant services already working at full capacity.
28. The Committee’s report also recommended that victims of non-criminal anti-social behaviour who meet the threshold for a ‘Community Trigger’ should be recognised as victims for the purposes of the Bill and be entitled to rights under the revised Victims’ Code.
29. The Government’s response to the committee’s recommendations is expected in the coming weeks. Following this, the draft Bill may be amended, and the Bill is then expected to begin its process through Parliament.

Serious Violence Duty

30. The serious violence duty, introduced through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022, will place a legal duty on specific organisations across health, justice, local authorities, policing, fire and rescue known as specified authorities, to work together to understand, prevent and reduce serious violence. The Home Office plans to publish updated statutory guidance to accompany the duty, in the late Autumn. The duty is expected to commence in January 2023.
31. The Home Office have confirmed the Government intends to provide partnership funding to cover the new burden cost to deliver the duty; this will be provided to PCCs. Local policing bodies have been told the indicative funding allocations for their local area for the 2022/23, 2023/2024 and 2024/25 financial years and will be invited to apply for funding this Autumn. While local policing bodies will receive this funding, the expectation is that the funding is spent on early intervention and prevention activity across the health, justice, local authority, policing, fire and rescue sectors. However, other partners have not yet been told what the funding allocations are. The LGA is pushing for early transparency on this in the interests of collaborative working.
32. Separately, the Home Office had undertaken the process of identifying a supplier to provide tailored support to specified authorities and local policing bodies in implementing the duty. The support is intended to help local areas to establish suitable partnership arrangements and plans to deliver the duty with

a particular focus on; use of evidence, governance and systems leadership; data sharing and best practice.

33. The LGA will provide an update on the funding and support offer as soon as further details are made available. We will continue our discussions with the Home Office on the implementation of the duty and aim to reflect any councils' concerns or views ahead of the forthcoming duty coming into action. If you would like any further information, please contact Rachel.Phelps@local.gov.uk

Social housing anti-social behaviour advisory panel

34. The Social Housing White Paper committed to bring together a working group to shape the Government's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour perpetrated by people suffering from mental health issues, and alcohol and drug misuse. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities convened the first meeting of the advisory panel in October, which the LGA attended.
35. The main objective of this panel is to identify best practice which can inform the approaches of social landlords and partner agencies seeking to reduce the incidence of repeat offending by ASB perpetrators who suffer from mental health, alcohol, and drug abuse issues. Further updates will come to the Board when available.

CONTEST strategy refresh

36. The Government has announced a wholesale refresh of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. This follows a shift both in the UK and abroad towards self-initiated terrorists operating independently from organised groups, and a diversification in the tactics and methodologies being used. Other national consultations and reviews, including on the Protect Duty and the Independent Review of Prevent, are expected to inform the refresh, however this is a separate piece of work that will set the overall strategic direction and priorities for the UK's approach to counter terrorism.
37. Last month we facilitated two roundtables between Home Office officials and local government practitioners on Protect and Prepare respectively, to help inform the review.

Hate crime

38. The Home Office has published the latest [statistics on police recorded hate crime](#) for the year ending March 2022. The figures suggest there were 155,841 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales, a 26 per cent increase compared with the previous year - the biggest percentage increase since year ending March 2017 (although it is uncertain whether this

reflects a genuine rise, or the result of improvements to recording and more victims having the confidence to report).

39. As in previous years, the majority of hate crimes were racially motivated, accounting for over two-thirds of such offences (70%; 109,843 offences); with these types of hate crime increasing by 19 per cent between 2021 and 2022.
40. Also recorded were 8,730 religious hate crimes (an increase of 37 per cent), 26,152 sexual orientation hate crimes, 14,242 disability hate crimes and 4,355 transgender hate crimes.
41. Where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, two in five (42%) of religious hate crime offences were targeted against Muslims (3,459 offences). The next most commonly targeted group were Jewish people, who were targeted in just under one in four (23%) of religious hate crimes (1,919 offences).
42. From April 2021, it became a requirement for forces to provide the Home Office with the ethnicity of victims of racially or religiously aggravated offences. As this is the first year that the collection has been mandatory, these data are published as experimental statistics. Of the 71,602 racially or religiously aggravated crimes recorded by the police in year ending March 2022, information on the victim ethnicity was provided in 41,441 of the offences (58%). In year ending March 2022, where the ethnicity of the victim was known, the victim was identified by the police as being White in around a third of offences (33%). Just under a third of victims were identified as Black (30%) or Asian (also 30%).

Counter-extremism

43. We have continued with meetings of our practitioner forum for tackling asylum seeker, refugee and migrant hate crime and harassment, for councils and partners to discuss cohesion and extremism concerns in this space, and share approaches and learning in response, with the latest session on 8 November. For details of future sessions please contact cohesion@local.gov.uk.

Census 2021 release

44. The ONS has published a [Census 2021 data release on migration and demography](#), with a further release to follow on ethnicity and religion later this month.
45. To help councils prepare for any cohesion or extremism challenges arising from the publication of these reports, we held a SIGCE practitioner roundtable in October to support local work on engagement and communications strategies in response, with further support planned as additional datasets are released.

Cost of living

46. At the request of lead members, officers have developed a short briefing identifying the potential impact on policy/service areas within the Board's remit as a result of the cost of living crisis. This paper is attached as an appendix to this paper.

Implications for Wales

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

Financial Implications

48. None.

Equalities implications

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

Next steps

50. Officers to continue progressing these issues as required.

Cost of living briefing: impacts on services/issues within the SSCB's remit

The purpose of this briefing note is to help to inform LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board members of anticipated consequences to community safety of the rising cost-of-living, across England and Wales. (This a speculative paper, with a view to prompt wider discussion.)

Possible anticipated community safety concerns

Domestic abuse: Many domestic abuse services have reported that abusers are now using the cost-of-living increase and concerns about financial hardship as a tool for coercive control, including to justify further restricting their partner's access to money. There have been reports that perpetrators are increasingly using child maintenance payments as a means of controlling behaviour. There could be increased pressure on victim support services, including community-based support and emergency accommodation.

Women's Aid have [reported](#) that the increased cost of living has either prevented some victims from leaving an abusive relationship, or it has made it harder for them to leave. Refuge have [found](#) that many domestic abuse victims are questioning whether they made the right decision to leave their perpetrator due to struggles to afford the basics. Surviving Economic Abuse [highlights](#) there are also particular challenges of increased economic abuse, when an abuser restricts a person's ability to acquire, use and maintain money or other economic resources. For example, a perpetrator may sabotage their partner's economic situation, by turning on appliances unnecessarily to run up bills in that person's name or using the crisis as an excuse not to make child maintenance payments.

Acquisitive crime: It is [possible](#) that increased financial uncertainty could lead to more acquisitive offences, such as shoplifting, burglary and theft. There is the possibility that some offenders could exploit blackouts or take advantage of broken alarm systems or less secure properties.

Serious violent crime: There are concerns that increased costs could deepen deprivation and poverty, along with a lack of positive opportunities, could be a driver of violent crime. For example: The Mayor of London has [expressed concerns](#) the impact of the cost-of-living could jeopardise progress made in tackling violent crime.

Serious and organised crime: Organised crime gangs could take advantage of the rising costs and expand criminal activities by exploiting more children, young adults and vulnerable people; those most susceptible to coercive suggestion and intimidation. Increased cost of living pressures could help [county lines gangs](#) recruit more people into their networks. Potential concern that Warm Hubs could be used as a way of identifying more vulnerable people.

Fire safety: There may be [increased fire risks](#) involved as people find alternatives to using the cooker or central heating, to combat rising energy costs. For example, there may be a greater use of electric heaters, candles, or people may choose to just heat one room, which could risk accidental fire or carbon monoxide poisoning. There may also be additional fire safety risks created by people purchasing second hand white goods rather than new products with higher fire safety standards.

Water safety: [Local swimming pools](#) may reduce their opening hours or close, due to the high running costs. As a result, there may be more limited opportunities for learning or improving basic water skills and in extreme cases, this could result in more injuries and deaths in large bodies of water. The LGA Coastal Special Interest Group is also considering whether there is the potential for an increase in suicides in open water as a result of cost-of-living pressures.

Scams: Leading into Christmas, there could be a rise in the sale of cheaper, counterfeit goods. In particular, there could be safety risks involved with purchasing poorly made children's toys, for example: increase risks of contamination and choking. The Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit has [found](#) that fraudsters are impersonating authorities such as energy companies and councils offering tax rebates, and targeting older people who are trying to find ways of making their financial investments do better. The [Cyber Helpline](#), a UK charity that supports victims of cybercrime, has seen an 86 per cent increase in reports of victims being scammed while shopping online over the last three months. Loan sharks may also seek to exploit an increasing number of citizens.

Road safety: Drivers might look to buy older cars to save costs, or struggle with [vehicle maintenance and ownership](#), such as annual servicing, MOTs or replacing lights and important vehicle components. A [survey](#) by the RAC has found 37 per cent of drivers under 24 are putting off repairs to reduce expenses, due to cost-of-living pressures.

Drug and substance misuse: There may be an increased demand for [alcohol and drug services](#) as more residents face financial hardship. There could be longer term consequences for cycles of dependency and addiction.

Scrap metal theft: There could be a rise in crimes involving [metal and car part theft](#), as scrap metal values increase and thieves look to sell parts on the black market.

Extremism and terrorism: Periods of economic difficulty traditionally provide fertile ground for extremist narratives, stoking eg anti-immigration rhetoric around funding/housing/access to public services for new arrivals, those which seek to blame other groups for perceived economic grievances, and building on increased mistrust in government. There is potential for this to spill over into [violence or even terrorism](#).

Cohesion: Broader cohesion concerns could arise from quality of life generally being perceived as in decline and divisions between those seen as being more or less impacted by cost-of-living pressures.

Funeral costs: Increase in number of people unable to pay for funerals, could lead to increased demand for public health funerals or local authorities having to support families with funeral costs in other ways. Also [increased cost of running crematoria](#) especially with rises in fuel prices.

Closure of licensed premises: Some business groups have expressed concern about the impact of energy and food cost pressures on businesses, raising fears about closures. UK Hospitality [estimates](#) that more than a third of UK hospitality businesses, including pubs, restaurants and hotels, could go bust by early next year as energy bills surge and bookings decline.

Alcohol and tobacco: There are [concerns that sales and supplies of illicit and potentially harmful alcohol and tobacco may increase](#) along with the cost of living, prompting safety fears, undermining smoking cessation work and fuelling organised crime.

Street-lighting: Councils have [seen](#) a 37.5 per cent increase in the cost of running and repairing street lights over the last six months, with some authorities reporting that their running costs have doubled.

Safety at night: A [recent poll](#) by the Independent found that more women are walking home at night instead of getting a taxi despite safety concerns due to the cost of living. Out of the women surveyed, 61 per cent said they are walking more often and 49 per cent are taking fewer taxis.

Resources

- **LGA Cost of Living Hub:** [Cost of living hub | Local Government Association](#)
- **Scottish Community Safety Network:** Cost of Living and Community Safety paper: [SCSN-Cost-of-Living-Community-Safety-Briefing_compressed.pdf \(safercommunitiesscotland.org\)](#)
- **Neighbourhood Watch,** 6 ways to support your community through the cost of living crisis: [Six ways to support others through COL \(ourwatch.org.uk\)](#)
- **Electrical safety first, cost of living and safe products tips:** [Saving Money Safely | Electrical Safety First](#)
- **Refuge:** Data on how the cost of living crisis is impacting survivors of abuse: [Refuge data shows how cost of living crisis is impacting survivors of abuse – Refuge](#)
- **Surviving Economic Abuse – impact of cost of living and support resources for DA victims:** [Economic support during the cost-of-living crisis - Surviving Economic Abuse](#)
- **Women's Aid: impact of cost of living on domestic abuse survey:** [The cost of living - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)
- **National Fire Chiefs Council:** fire safety as cost of living rises: [NFCC urge people to stay fire safe as cost of living rises \(nationalfirechiefs.org.uk\)](#)

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- **London Fire Brigade:** Cost of living and safety at home: [Cost of living crisis: staying safe | London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](#)