

King's Speech

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Summary

The King's Speech earlier in the month set out the government's legislative programme for the new Parliamentary session. This report outlines the Bills of relevance to the Board, and the proposed prioritisation of those Bills for the LGA's lobbying activity which will be considered by the LGA's Executive Advisory Board in December.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

Recommendation(s)

That the Board:

- (a) Notes the Bills relevant to the Board included in the King's Speech; and**
- (b) Comments on the proposed prioritisation of the Bills within the LGA's lobbying activity over the coming Parliamentary session set out in paragraph 23.**

Contact details

Contact officer: Mark Norris

Position: Principal Policy Adviser

Phone no: 020 7664 3241

Email: mark.norris@local.gov.uk

King's Speech

Background

1. The King's Speech announced the Government's agenda for the next Parliamentary session of 2023-2024. The Speech contained some measures that will be of relevance to councils and this paper seeks to summarise the key Government Bills that will come before Parliament which relate to the Board's remit. The LGA's Executive Advisory Board will consider the prioritisation of the bills for the LGA's engagement at their next meeting.
2. The [full King's Speech can be found on the Government's website](#).
3. The Speech did not make any other significant policy announcements.

Bills relevant to the Board

4. There were a number of Bills relevant to the Board included in the King's Speech, predominantly within the theme in the Speech of keeping people safe.
5. **Criminal Justice Bill**. The Bill will contain a range of measures to provide the police and the criminal justice system with the ability to prevent new or complex crimes. It covers the work not only of this Board but also the Children and Young People Board. From the Board's perspective the Bill seeks to reduce violence against women and girls by increasing the sentence for offenders who murder their partner at the end of the relationship, criminalising the sharing of intimate images and expanding the offence of encouraging or assisting serious self-harm. To address anti-social behaviour the Bill will increase the maximum penalty for the sale of a dangerous weapon, and tackle persistent, nuisance and organised begging.
6. In the LGA's response to the King's Speech we highlighted that begging is often the result of homelessness, which is linked to the shortage of affordable housing leaving those unable to afford a place to live with very few options. We also identified the need for local authorities and other agencies to work together to identify and provide support to people living on the streets, and that some organised beggars are victims of modern slavery needing support. We suggested the criminal gangs behind this are better targeted. To eradicate begging and street homelessness, the focus should largely be on the wider context such as support into accommodation, prevention, multi-agency working and housing supply.
7. **Terrorism (Protection of Premises Bill)**. This Bill will seek to implement Martyn's Law which seeks to improve protective security and readiness at venues across the country by requiring those responsible for certain premises to consider the terrorist risk and how they would respond in the event of an attack.

8. The Board gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee when the draft Bill was given pre-legislative scrutiny by Parliament. Cllr Woodbridge raised a number of issues including the financial and other resources councils will need to commit to meet the new statutory duty. He also raised concerns about the potential impact of the legislation on local communities, community groups and small businesses. This was a point the Home Affairs Select Committee also made in their report on the draft Bill, so within the King's Speech documentation the Home Office announced there would be further consultation around the requirements for standards tier premises (public premises with a capacity of 100–799 people) are proportionate and not unduly burdensome.
9. Further clarity is needed however around a number of areas, including where the enforcement and regulation role will sit, the premises and events within scope and how the duty will operate in practice. It will also be important that those required to implement the new duty are given sufficient lead in time to implement it. Councils and others will need to be provided with support and guidance on how to implement the new duty.
10. **Victims and Prisoners Bill.** This Bill was carried over from the last session of Parliament and proposes that Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), health bodies and local authorities will be required to work together when commissioning support services for victims of domestic abuse, serious violence and sexual violence, to deliver a more joined-up support offer.
11. The Board has previously supported the objectives of the Bill but made the point local partners need to be provided with the flexibility and resources to commission the services needed in their area.
12. **Tobacco and Vapes Bill.** The Bill will introduce legislation to create a smokefree generation by restricting the sale of tobacco so that children currently aged fourteen or younger can never be sold cigarettes, and it will also restrict the sale and marketing of e-cigarettes to children.
13. The provisions in the Bill will mean that the age for sale is effectively raised by one year each year for children currently fourteen or under. It will also reduce the appeal and availability of vapes to children with measures currently being consulted on including regulating points of sale displays, regulating vape packaging and product presentation, and restricting the flavours and descriptions of vapes so they are no longer targeted at children.
14. Enforcement of the legislation will be the responsibility of local authority trading standards teams, and the Bill proposes new powers to enable retailers who sell cigarettes and vapes to underage people to be fined on the spot. There will also be enhanced online age verification requirements to stop online sales to underage people.

15. Alongside bodies like the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers, the Board will want to work with government to ensure that the new provisions are as easy to enforce as possible. Shortages of staff in key local government professions, including in regulatory services has been an issue that the LGA's Executive Advisory Board has taken a keen interest in, and the Board has previously contributed to the development of the LGA's plan to increase the numbers of people entering a range of professions such as regulatory services. In order to ensure trading standards teams have the resources they need, the LGA's response to the King's Speech called on the government to boost the pipeline of qualified trading standards officers through a dedicated apprenticeship fund, and to look at different funding models which enable councils to recover more of the costs of running regulatory services.
16. **Pedicabs (London) Bill.** The Bill will allow Transport for London (TfL) to regulate pedicabs in the capital through a licensing regime in a similar way that councils outside London in England and Wales can do. TfL will also be able to control fares, set standards for operators and drivers, introduce insurance requirements, and restrict the presence of pedicabs in certain areas at certain times.
17. Previous attempts to introduce similar legislation have been supported by many councils in London. In the LGA's response to the King's Speech we highlighted the importance of TfL as the licensing authority consulting London boroughs, and the new licensing framework is aligned with the existing Department of Transport taxi and private hire vehicle statutory standards. We also highlighted that the new regime should come within the scope of the National Register of Licence Revocations, Refusals and Suspensions (NR3S) database.
18. **Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Bill.** This Bill is designed to ensure the UK's investigatory powers framework remains fit-for-purpose, and that the powers the police and security services have are up to date with new technology. Although there are no proposals under the Bill that will impact councils it is possible that during the Bill's passage through Parliament amendments are tabled that would change the access councils have to communications data under the Investigatory Powers Act.
19. **Automated Vehicles Bill.** This legislation is intended to introduce one of the world's most comprehensive legal frameworks for self-driving vehicles, and results from the Law Commission's review of legislation in this space. It will set a rigorous safety framework for self-driving vehicles, with safety at its core designed to enable to safe deployment of self-driving vehicles.
20. The introduction of self-driving vehicles will have a range of implications for local authorities for example in areas where bus services struggle to support them. It is also likely to have implications for taxi and private hire vehicle licensing, and

provides further impetus to the Board's call for the nineteenth century legislation in this area being updated.

Proposal

21. Following a King's Speech, the LGA uses its business plan to prioritise the legislation and key policy announcements that the organisation will seek to influence. This prioritisation is based on cross-party political direction to ensure that, by focusing our lobbying, the best results are achieved for local government. This also provides councils with an early view of Bills they may wish to work with the LGA on to influence.
22. The LGA has the following system of prioritisation for our lobbying around Bills:
 - 22.1. **High profile engagement:** For a Bill identified as high profile, the LGA lobbies at each stage of the Bill's passage through Parliament, works with our network of MPs and Peers to table any relevant amendments, uses media, social media and stakeholder engagement to keep our priorities on the national agenda, and proactively engages with the Government department leading the legislation.
 - 22.2. **Medium profile engagement:** For legislation which is important, but does not require as much active lobbying, we will seek to ensure – through constructive engagement with Ministers and officials – that the proposals do not negatively impact on local government. For the Bills managed under the medium profile category, our engagement is usually limited to advising on the detail of the proposals and a general briefing on key issues to Parliament, if it is required. Should the Bill be amended to have a more significant impact on local government, it can be reclassified into the 'high' category.
 - 22.3. **Monitoring:** For legislation that has limited impact on local government or are not captured by our corporate priorities as set out in the LGA business plan, we will seek to monitor progress. The status of Bills and policy categorised under 'monitoring' will be reviewed to ensure that any changes do not require more active participation and lobbying by the LGA.
23. Taking account of the interests of a number of Boards in some Bills the proposed prioritisation for the Bills relevant to the Board are for:
 - 23.1. The Tobacco and Vapes and Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bills to be given high priority; and

23.2. The Pedicabs, Criminal Justice and Victims and Prisoners Bills to be given medium priority.

Implications for Wales

24. The territorial jurisdiction of a number of Bills crosses England and Wales and the LGA will be focusing on the provisions as they affect councils in England. Where need be we will update the WLGA as required, particularly if it becomes clear that a piece of UK Government legislation is significant for them.

Financial Implications

25. There are no direct financial impacts on the LGA from carrying out this work, which will be delivered through the policy and public affairs teams at the LGA. Some of the Bills such as the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill and the Victims and Prisoners Bill will have financial implications for councils, and we will raise these with the relevant Whitehall department.

Equalities implications

26. The equalities implications will be considered in more details once the Bills are published.

Next steps

27. Officers will feed back members' views on the proposed prioritisation of Bills to inform the decisions of the Executive Advisory Board in December.