

King's Speech

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Is this report confidential? No

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 provisions of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which is the only Bill of direct relevance to the Board, and its proposed prioritisation in the LGA's lobbying activity which will be considered by the LGA's Executive Advisory Board in December.

LGA Plan Theme: Putting people first

Recommendation(s)

That the Board:

- (a) Notes the inclusion of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill in the King's Speech; and**
- (b) Agrees with the proposed high profile engagement prioritisation of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill within the LGA's lobbying activity over the coming Parliamentary session.**

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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 be consider the prioritisation for the LGA's engagement with them at its 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 was only one Bill relevant to the Board included in the King's Speech, within the theme in the Speech of strengthening society.
5. **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.
6. 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.
7. The Bill also looks to strengthen enforcement activity and it 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.
8. In the LGA's response to the King's Speech we highlighted that we believed this Bill will have an impact on population level smoking prevalence and will ultimately reduce rates of smoking-related disease. We also stated that raising the legal age for tobacco purchase would only be effective if there are strict enforcement measures and tough penalties for selling tobacco and e-cigarettes. We also repeated our call for a ban on disposable vapes, and the need to discourage young people who have never smoked from using vapes.

Proposal

9. 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.
10. The LGA has the following system of prioritisation for our lobbying around Bills:
 - 10.1. **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.
 - 10.2. **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.
 - 10.3. **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.
11. Taking account of the interests of a number of Boards in some Bills the proposed prioritisation for the Tobacco and Vapes Bill is for it to be given **high priority**. As smoking cessation was agreed as a Board priority within the overarching priority of prevention and wellbeing, it is proposed the Board support this prioritisation, which will mean the Bill is a focus for LGA lobbying activity during this session of Parliament.

Implications for Wales

12. The Bill will extend to England and Wales, and apply to England. The government is working with the Devolved Administrations to understand whether they wish to implement the legislation, and support them if they intend to do so. If the Welsh government is supportive of the legislation applying in Wales we will work with the WLGA as required to ensure the views of Welsh councils inform it.

Financial Implications

13. 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.

Equalities implications

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

Next steps

15. Officers will feed back members' views on the proposed prioritisation of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill to inform the decisions of the Executive Advisory Board in December.