

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.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

Recommendation(s)

That the Board note and comment on the update.

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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.

Licensing fees

2. Officers have [updated the LGA's guidance for councils on locally set licensing fees](#). The guidance aims to help councils to understand the full breadth of issues that should be considered when setting local licence fees in order to meet legal obligations and provide necessary reassurances to local businesses.

LGA and Institute of Licensing training standard

3. The LGA and Institute of Licensing (IoL) have [produced a training standard](#) which sets out what the LGA and the IoL believe to be a basic level of licensing committee member training.
4. The aim of the training standard is to encourage licensing committee members to participate in training, drive consistency, and promote the training materials the LGA has developed. We hope the Home Office will promote the training standard when it next updates the guidance accompanying the Licensing Act 2003.

Annual licensing conference

5. Officers are finalising arrangements for the upcoming annual licensing conference on 6th February. The conference will examine the government's plans and expectations for licensing as well as exploring the challenges facing licensing authorities, highlighting innovative work being undertaken by councils and their partners and discussing how we can build on best practice. [The agenda can be seen on the event webpage](#). If any Board members are interested in attending the conference, please contact jade.hall@local.gov.uk

Primate licensing

6. Government has [introduced legislation into Parliament](#) which will create a local authority led primate licensing regime. This means keeping primates as pets will be banned in domestic settings and a licensing scheme will set strict rules to ensure that only private keepers who can provide the highest welfare standards will be able to keep primates. The changes have been introduced via secondary legislation under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Government expects the new regime to come into force in 2026. Officers will engage with Government to understand what support they will be providing to councils.

Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing

7. In preparation for the expected consultation on the Government's proposal to transfer control of taxi and private hire vehicle licensing to combined and upper tier authorities (as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper), officers will send a brief survey in early January to licensing authorities who will be affected by this proposal. To support this work, we are also hosting a roundtable discussion at the end of January with some county councils who would be likely to be given this responsibility to understand their views. This follows a Board request for officers to take a proactive approach to this consultation.

Licensing hours consultation

8. The [Home Office has launched a consultation](#) on whether to relax the licensing hours for certain matches (the semi-final and final) of the 2024 UEFA European Championship contingent on the England men's national football team and/or the Wales men's national football team and/or the Scotland men's national football team playing in those matches. The LGA has responded positively to this consultation.

Gambling

9. Board members have been invited to attend ICE, London, which is the UK's largest gaming and betting exhibition held at the ExCeL centre 6-8th February 2024. The Gambling Business Group would like to share details of their High Street Hub with the Board. Please let jade.hall@local.gov.uk know if this is of interest.

Spiking prevention

10. The Home Office has committed to amending the Criminal Justice Bill and updating the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 to make clear that spiking is illegal. The Section 182 guidance which accompanies the Licensing Act 2003 has also been [updated to provide a definition of spiking](#). Accompanying Home Office factsheets also signpost to [LGA best practice guidance](#) for licensing authorities on spiking prevention.

Modern slavery

11. In December officers hosted a meeting of the LGA's modern slavery network for council officers. This network is for officers leading on work to tackle modern slavery and shares best practice. At this meeting, we had a presentation from officers at the Modern Slavery Regional Coordinators for Eastern Region Special Operations Unit, discussed effective approaches to training council staff on modern slavery (awareness and prevention), and best practice on housing victims of modern slavery. Officers will schedule another meeting for March and will also set up a working group on modern slavery training to scope out further work the LGA can undertake to support councils in this area.

XL Bully Ban

12. New restrictions on XL Bully dogs are now in force (31 December) making it a legal requirement for all XL Bully dogs to be kept on a lead and muzzled when in public. It is also illegal to breed, sell, advertise, gift, exchange, abandon or let XL Bully dogs stray. Officers are still in discussion with Defra about new burdens funding to support councils with their new duties under the ban.

Prevent

13. New statutory [Prevent duty guidance](#) came into force on 31 December 2023, which applies to councils and other specific authorities under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, and sets out expectations for each of the main statutory sectors and the ways in which they should comply with the Prevent duty. This [reflects the recommendations, accepted by Government](#), set out in the Independent Review of Prevent, published last year. This sits alongside the (non-statutory) [Prevent Duty toolkit for local authorities](#), which was also updated last autumn.
14. The Home Office has published the latest set of [Prevent statistics for year ending 31 March 2023](#). Key headlines include:
- 14.1. an increase in referrals of 6.4 per cent compared to the previous year, and the third highest number since the first period reported on (2015/16).
 - 14.2. 82 per cent of the 6,817 referrals made were not deemed suitable for multi-agency Channel panel consideration; of which the majority (79 per cent) were signposted to other services; 16 per cent of referrals were discussed at Channel and 9 per cent adopted as a Channel case (a decrease when compared with the previous year)
 - 14.3. where gender was specified (6,801), most referrals were for males (6,125; 90 per cent). Females accounted for a higher proportion of Islamist referrals than for Extreme Right-Wing concerns.
 - 14.4. where age was known (6,796), those aged 15 to 20 again accounted for the largest proportion (32 per cent); with those aged 14 and under the second largest proportion (31 per cent) of referrals. Those aged between 11 and 15 account for 39 per cent of referrals where age is specified. Nearly half (46 per cent) of referrals that became adopted cases are for individuals aged between 11 and 15.
 - 14.5. the category 'vulnerability present but no ideology or Counter Terrorism risk' accounted for the largest proportion of referrals (2,505; 37 per cent), up from 33 per cent the previous year.
 - 14.6. for the third year running, the number of referrals for Extreme Right-Wing concerns (1,310; 19 per cent) is greater than referrals for Islamist concerns (781; 11 per cent). Of the 645 referrals that went on to be adopted as a Channel case, 296 (46 per cent) were for Extreme Right-Wing concerns,

115 (18 per cent) were for Islamist concerns, and 103 (16 per cent) were for those with a Conflicted ideology.

14.7. referrals discussed at Channel for individuals with 'Other' concerns were adopted as a case at the highest rate (66 per cent; 23 of 35). Referrals discussed at Channel for those with School massacre ideology were adopted as a case at the second highest rate (64 per cent; 18 of 28). 61 per cent (296 of 484) of referrals discussed at a Channel panel for individuals with Extreme Right-Wing concerns went on to be adopted as a case; 52 per cent (115 of 222) of those discussed at a Channel panel for Islamist concerns went on to be adopted as a case.

15. A new 1½ day free residential [Leadership Essentials course for elected members on Prevent and counter extremism](#) has been scheduled for 14-15 March to explore local government's role in this space. Featuring a range of inputs and workshops, the programme will explore themes including national and local approaches to Prevent delivery, counter extremism and cohesion work, including exploring changes to the Prevent duty; national and local threats, including the online and conspiracy theory space; emerging and evolving challenges; and communications and community engagement on divisive issues. Further details and booking are via grace.collins@local.gov.uk

Community cohesion

16. At the November SSCB meeting, members discussed council concerns on community cohesion. Since the meeting, officers have held a roundtable for over 130 council and statutory partner practitioners, and a separate session for council chief executives. We are continuing to provide/signpost support and guidance to councils as issues evolve, with a further practitioner session planned for February.

Victims and Prisoners Bill

17. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) have been seeking the views of councils on draft guidance. Volunteer councils from the Community Safety Advisors Network (CSAN) gave comments and these were shared with lead members for sign off before submitting.

18. The comments included the need for continuity of long-term support for children, that victims voices are included wherever possible and existing structures should be used where appropriate.

19. Comments also included the need for the guidance to reflect different local governance models.

Domestic Abuse

20. The LGA have received requests from both Home Office (HO) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to collaborate

with councils on best practice in tackling domestic abuse. The LGA will be hosting a series of webinars. The first is scheduled for 30 January 2024 and will focus on domestic abuse amongst those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The second will focus on commissioning and the third on children as victims in their own right.

21. MOJ and the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) will be attending.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

22. In collaboration with the DAC Office, the LGA will soon be issuing a survey to councils to gain a better understanding of the cost and pressures in organising DHRs.

23. The research will inform the future of DHRs going forwards.

Building Safety

24. The Joint Regulator Group (JRG) was formed to bring together regulators in the runup to the establishing of the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). This LGA takes part in this group despite not being a regulator.

25. The JRG have been discussing ways of dealing with the recruitment challenges the different regulators have in having a skilled workforce for individual safety cases.

26. Furthermore the JRG are establishing a method of prioritising buildings for these cases. Primarily this will be based on height but the challenges of a bias towards London, the resourcing implications and the fact that height does not necessarily equate to being unsafe are all challenges being worked through.

Decisions made outside of SSC Board meetings

27. Lead members signed off updated guidance on locally set licence fees, as well as the LGA's response to a targeted DCMS consultation on white collar boxing and agreed that the LGA should respond positively to a Home Office consultation on extending licensing hours for the 2024 UEFA European Championship (*approved 6th December*).

28. Lead Members agreed that the LGA would put its name to some cross-government guidance on information sharing with regards to taxi/PHV licensing (alongside some other Government agencies/ wider stakeholders). The guidance outlines the council role around licensing (to assist police officers), how the police shares information and what their thresholds are, and seeks to try and encourage more collaborative working. LGA officers inputted into the development of this guidance (*approved 22nd November*).

Implications for Wales

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

Financial Implications

30. A number of the items within the Update paper may incur additional costs for councils and the LGA will seek to raise these as part of its ongoing work.

Equalities implications

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

Next steps

32. Officers to continue progressing these issues as required.