

Safer and Stronger Communities Board – Report from Cllr Heather Kidd (Chair)

Licensing

1. At the start of November, we held our Licensing Leadership essentials course for chairs and vice chairs of committees. The course focuses on how good committees are run and where licensing fits into wider council priorities. The course received excellent feedback from delegates, who said it had left them enthusiastic about their role and with improved levels of confidence. We charged a fee of £200 to attend the course, and this did not impact on attendance, so we will continue this approach moving forwards.
2. We are also hosting our [annual licensing conference on Tuesday 6th February 2024](#). 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.
3. We have [produced a range of tip sheets to support members of licensing committees](#). There are four tip sheets which cover the role of the chair/vice-chair, alcohol and entertainment licensing, taxi and private hire vehicle licensing, and gambling licensing. They provide a brief overview of the role of committee members within each licensing framework and some best practice ideas.
4. We have also [updated the LGA's guidance on taking a whole council approach to tackling gambling related harms](#). The guidance provides an overview of the gambling harms landscape and the role of councils in addressing and preventing harms.
5. 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.
6. 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. 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.

7. We have responded to the first of the Government's consultations on how to make non-surgical cosmetic procedures – including Botox, laser hair removal and dermal fillers – safer for consumers. The Government is proposing a three-tiered licensing regime based on risk, with the highest risk (red) tier procedures being regulated by the Care Quality Commission, and the lower risk amber and green procedures being regulated by councils. This first consultation is primarily focused on what tier each procedure should be located in. Our response emphasised concerns around capacity in regulatory services teams, the need for adequate training and expert support where required, locally set fees, and the need to take a comprehensive approach and to incorporate and update existing local regimes.
8. 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 have sent a brief survey 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.
9. 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.

Modern slavery

10. [New modern slavery risk assessment and due diligence guidance for local authority commissioners of adult social care](#), produced by the University of Nottingham Rights Lab in tandem with the LGA, has been recently published. It provides advice on to how to set up effective local systems to identify and manage the risks of modern slavery in adult social care.
11. The LGA hosted a webinar in October to launch the guidance. The webinar was chaired by Cllr Heather Kidd, Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, and provided delegates with an overview of the guidance, as well as presentations from councils and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services. Around 180 delegates attended the webinar.
12. 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

13. 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.

Victims and Prisoners Bill

14. 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.
15. The comments included the need for continuity of long-term support for children, that victim's voices are included wherever possible and existing structures should be used where appropriate.
16. Comments also included the need for the guidance to reflect different local governance models.

Domestic Abuse

17. 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.
18. MOJ and the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) will be attending.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

19. 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.
20. The research will inform the future of DHRs going forwards.

Building Safety

21. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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.

Community cohesion

24. We have continued to provide support to councils on responding to community cohesion and extremism challenges, through our work with the [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism](#) (SIGCE). This has included a series of practitioner roundtables and guidance on the SIGCE's knowledge hub platform, with further events planned.

Prevent

25. 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.

26. A 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.

Police and Crime Panels

27. On 8 November, Cllr Sue Woolley attended the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry "Police and Crime Commissioners: 10 years on" to provide the LGA view on the role of PCCs and Police and Crime Panels. Cllr Woolley gave evidence alongside the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the Police Foundation. A second evidence session of the Inquiry was held on 10 January with the Policing and Fire Minister, Chris Philp MP in attendance alongside, Roger Hirst PFCC for Essex and Mark Hardingham, Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Fire Services Management Committee Update

28. The Fire Services Management Committee met on 6 December 2023. Presentations were given by the Home Office on their review of the National Fire Framework, by BT on the 999 outage and by Wayne Bowcock, National Fire Chiefs (NFCC) lead on leadership in the fire sector. Other items included LGA Fire Conference 2024, the Local Government White Paper, as well as the usual updates on pensions, workforce, building safety, the NFCC and the Fire Standards Board.
29. The LGA hosted a Fire Leadership Essentials Programme in Warwick on 1 & 2 November 2023. The programme included sessions on scrutiny and governance, the Home Office's work, building safety, responding to inspection, climate change, reflections from the LGA and an FRA Chair. Equality, diversity and inclusion is an important part of the programme, especially given the recent concerns regarding the culture of the fire service. The programme received excellent feedback, with all attendees being very or fairly satisfied. We will be hosting another Fire Leadership Essentials Programme in Warwick on 6 & 7 February 2024.
30. The LGA will be hosting its Annual Fire Conference in Bristol on the 12 & 13 March 2024. This is a key event in the calendar for fire and rescue services, and booking is open.
31. Councillor Frank Biederman, the Chair of the Fire Services Management

Committee, spoke at an event run by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) for chairs and chief fire officers of fire authorities. This is held twice a year and provides a forum for chairs of fire authorities and chief fire officers to come together to discuss key issues facing the fire and rescue service. Cllr Biederman spoke about his reflections on inspection, the key challenges for the sector, and considerations for HMICFRS to support fire services going forwards.

32. Councillor Biederman attended HMICFRS's Fire Performance Oversight Group in October, which provides enhanced monitoring for fire and rescue services that are not performing as expected. He highlighted the work the LGA has done to assist the services.
33. Councillor Greg Brackenridge (FSMC Vice Chair) attended the Fire Standards Board in December 2023. The LGA sits on the Fire Standards Board alongside the NFCC, the Home Office and the APCC. Agenda items included the Home Office's response to the White Paper, the Fire Standards Delivery Progress Report, implementation support for Leadership and People Fire Standards as well as general updates.
34. FSMC members have attended a number of Fire Customer Group meetings to discuss the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

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