

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 Safer and Stronger Communities 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

2. In February, Cllr Woodbridge chaired the LGA's annual licensing conference. The conference examined the government's plans and expectations for licensing as well as the challenges facing licensing authorities. We had around 85 delegates and the event generated £8,200 income for the LGA and received excellent feedback.
3. 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 surveyed licensing authorities who will be affected by this proposal. We received around 80 responses and the research team are currently analysing the responses. However key findings include:
 - 3.1. 60 per cent of all respondents reported that they did not agree at all with the proposal, whilst 16 per cent reported that they agreed to a great or moderate extent.
 - 3.2. Over three quarters of all respondents (77 per cent) reported that if the proposal went ahead, fewer licensing officers would be available in their authority.
 - 3.3. The majority of respondents (88 per cent) agreed to a great or moderate extent that the proposed policy would make it more difficult to ensure local knowledge can be fed into licensing decisions.
 - 3.4. Considering other potential aspects of the policy: 84 per cent reported that they wished to see comprehensive reform of taxi/PHV licensing, 81 per cent reported that they would like national standards for drivers and vehicles to reduce inconsistencies, and 58 per cent reported that they would like restrictions on out of area working.
4. To further support this work, we held a roundtable discussion at the end of January with county councils who would be likely to be given this responsibility to understand their views. The DfT are yet to begin stakeholder engagement on the proposals in the Levelling Up White Paper, but officers are well positioned to respond when they do.

Modern slavery

5. Cllr Saunders and Cllr Dawson, the Safer and Stronger Communities Board's anti-slavery champions, met with the new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC), Eleanor Lyons, to hear about her priorities and to brief her on the LGA's work to support councils to tackle modern slavery. The IASC agreed to attend a future Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting.
6. At a recent modern slavery network meeting, officers indicated it would be helpful to have LGA support around training. LGA officers facilitated an officer led training working group meeting and we will develop some support for councils as a result of this meeting. One option discussed could be for the LGA to collate council focused training resources in one place on its website, such as the free e-learning modules Coventry and Birmingham Councils have co-produced. We also hosted a further modern slavery network meeting on 14th March.
7. The House of Lords has set up a [special inquiry committee on the Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) and is inviting written contributions to its inquiry, which will consider the impact of the 2015 Modern Slavery Act, and its effectiveness in achieving its aims. It will also consider how the Act's provisions have been implemented, how the Act has been impacted by recent political developments, and whether the Act requires improvement. The LGA will be submitting a response to this inquiry.
8. The Home Office has [published data on the number of potential victims of modern slavery](#) referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) or via the Duty to Notify (DtN) process in 2023. 17,004 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office in 2023. The number of referrals for females were at their highest on record, as were the number of referrals for child potential victims. The most common nationality referred in 2023 was UK.

Water safety

9. Cllr Kidd and Cllr Dawson, the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board's water safety champions, [recorded a video](#) on behalf of councils to celebrate the RNLI's 200th birthday and to thank staff and volunteers for all of their work to keep communities safe. This was shared on the LGA's social media channels.

Domestic Abuse

10. Cllr Kidd chaired in January a webinar focussing on best practice in tackling domestic abuse and violence against women and girls amongst those with no recourse to public funds. Around 260 people attended.
11. Cllr Middleton chaired a second such event in February which focussed on best practice in forming joint needs assessments. Around 100 people attended.
12. The next event will be on 18 April 2024 and will focus on children as victims in their own right.

Victims and Prisoner's Bill Guidance

13. The LGA submitted comments to MoJ on the drafting of the Victims and Prisoner's Bill guidance. Many proposals have been accepted e.g. using existing partnership structures rather than proposed new governance.
14. The MoJ have asked the LGA for further comments on a reiterated draft. The Community Safety Advisors Network (CSAN) is being asked for volunteers to go through this with the LGA.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Guidance

15. ASB guidance is being updated by the Home Office in response to new powers being awarded in the Criminal Justice Bill. The LGA has volunteered to comment on the current draft.
16. CSAN are being asked for volunteers to give input.

Building Safety

17. LGA continues to support councils and HSE in preparation for the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) launch in April 2024.
18. The LGA has encouraged successfully for the Joint Regulator Group (JRG) to invite the Social Housing Regulator (SHR) to these meetings. Buildings have been placed into tranches and the BSR have started contacted councils explaining what individual safety cases they may be expecting in the first three months following launch. It is too early to say whether adequate resources are available.
19. The LGA is seeking assurances with regards to the number of building control inspectors who will have completed mandatory training to continue practicing.

Prevent

20. The Government has published a [progress report one year on from the publication of the Independent Review of Prevent](#). This sets out that 30 of the 34 recommendations are now complete, including updated statutory guidance, training and the assessment framework, the launch of a new [Standards and Compliance Unit \(STaCU\)](#) to handle complaints and provide oversight.

Community Safety Partnership Review

21. Board members will recall that in 2022, the Government's internal review of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) recommended the Home Office conduct a full review of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across England and Wales: the CSP Review. The CSP Review seeks to clarify the role of CSPs, and improve their transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, making it easier for CSPs to serve the needs of their communities in tackling crime, disorder, and antisocial behaviour.

22. Phase One of the CSP review launched in March 2023 alongside the Antisocial Behaviour Action Plan. Phase One comprised a targeted consultation exploring the relationship between CSPs and PCCs, with the aim of improving the way they work together and, strengthening the accountability of CSPs. On 14 November 2023, the Government response to the Community Safety Partnership Review and Anti-Social Behaviour Powers consultation was published. It sets out key trends in the consultation responses, based on which Government intends to bring forward a package of measures. Some of these measures will be taken forward in the Criminal Justice Bill, which is currently making its way through Parliament, and others will be delivered through secondary legislation and updated guidance.
23. In November 2023 the Home Office published its response to Phase One of the CSP review. In this it said it intends to create or clarify:
- 23.1. A requirement for the CSP to include in their strategic assessments how it has had due regard to the police and crime objectives set out in the police and crime plan.
 - 23.2. A requirement for the CSP to send a copy of its strategic assessment to the PCC or equivalent.
 - 23.3. A requirement for the CSP to publish the executive summary of their strategic assessment.
 - 23.4. How PCCs can best fulfil their duty to have regard to the priorities of the responsible authorities making up the CSPs in the police force area.
 - 23.5. A power for PCCs to make recommendations on the activity of CSPs to support the delivery of the objectives set out in the police and crime plan.
 - 23.6. A duty on CSPs to take those recommendations into account. A CSP will not be mandated to implement the recommendation but should demonstrate consideration.
24. The impact on councils is limited to its role within CSPs. Like all other partnership bodies, when influencing CSPs, councils will not be mandated to follow the views of PCCs or equivalent, but will be required to demonstrate consideration of recommendations where they have not been taken forward. PCCs or equivalent will be able to make formal recommendations on the activities of CSPs.
25. The Home Office has now scoped Phase Two of the CSP Review and gathered extensive evidence. This has included meetings with most Office of Police and Crime Commissioners (OPPCs), deep dive interviews with a wide-cross section of CSPs, over 100 survey responses from CSPs and sitting in on CSP meetings following an LGA call for volunteers via the Community Safety Advisors network (CSAN).

26. The CSP Review additionally has established a steering board (including representation from the LGA, APCC (Association of Police and Crime Commissioners), NPCC (National Police Chiefs Council), NFCC (National Fire Chief's Council), Welsh LGA, and Welsh Government) , and a CSP Practitioner Working group (comprised of 26 CSPs from across England and Wales, with representation from different local authority CSP sub-types which have been consulted on the recommended scope of Phase Two.
27. Phase two has taken a fundamental back to basics look at issues effecting Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and parallel partnership structures. As the LGA are members of the CSP Review Steering Board, the LGA will be engaged with as next steps are formed. The outcomes of Phase Two of the CSP Review will be announced in due course

Decisions made outside of Board meetings

28. Lead members signed off a letter to the Secretary of State at Defra and the Policing Minister regarding the XL Bully Ban (14/02/24).
29. Lead Members agreed a joint CAS-2 Accommodation Protocol letter with the Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board to the Ministry of Justice about the protocol in place between the LGA and His Majesty's Prison and Probation about community accommodation and possible changes to the protocol.

Implications for Wales

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

Financial Implications

31. 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

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

Next steps

33. Officers to continue progressing these issues as required.