

## **Safer & Stronger Communities Board – report from Councillor Simon Blackburn (Chair)**

### **Preventing Extremism**

1. I met the Security Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Hayes MP, in September to discuss the role of councils in preventing people becoming involved in terrorism and their access to communications data under the Investigatory Powers Bill. I highlighted the range of crimes councils were expected to contribute to tackling alongside their role in preventing terrorism, and the pressures this was placing on councils' community safety related activity and budgets.

### **Association of Police and Crime Commissioners**

2. I attended a meeting of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners' (APCC) Performance Standards and Accountability Standing Group to discuss draft guidance from the LGA and APCC to police and crime commissioners and police and crime panels. The Board's Lead Members will carefully consider any suggestions from the APCC to change the draft joint guidance.

### **Serious and Organised Crime**

3. I wrote a foreword to guidance for councillors on the role of local authorities in tackling organised crime groups, which was published at the end of August. The guidance sets out how organised crime groups operate, emerging trends in areas of activity for organised crime groups, the national policy context and how councils can contribute to tackling organised crime groups.

### **Advisory Board for Female Offenders**

4. Cllr Janet Daby attended the Ministry of Justice's Advisory Board on Female Offenders meeting in mid-October, which is chaired by Caroline Dinéage, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Family Justice. Cllr Daby highlighted the importance to councils of diverting women who are primary carers from prison given the impact this has on children, and the need to look at other forms of sentence for these offenders.

### **Cemeteries and cremations**

5. After the publication of a report by Royal London into the costs of burials and cremations across the UK, Cllr Ian Gillies, the Board's lead on bereavement related services responded by highlighting the costs facing councils in maintaining facilities and grounds maintenance, the need to buy new equipment to meet environmental standards for crematoria, and the expense councils incur in maintaining cemeteries that are either full or nearly full.

### **Taxi licensing**

6. I wrote to the Minister for Transport, Andrew Jones, to raise continuing concerns about the decline in the sharing of intelligence between and councils about prospective taxi drivers. The LGA is seeking a discussion between DfT, Home Office, and police officials to address this serious deficit in information. I also hosted a conference on Taxi and PHV licensing on 16 October, which updated councils on recent legislative changes and best practice options; Cllr Philip Evans provided the keynote speech setting out the LGA's lobbying work in this area.

### **Regulatory services**

7. Cllr Tony Page met with BACTA, the largest gaming association, to discuss issues of better regulation and concerns about the impact of poorly targeted legislation. Cllr Page also attended a session on problem gambling and gambling-related harm hosted by the Responsible Gambling Trust. Cllr Page also attended an Alcohol Leadership Board convened by Public Health England.
8. Cllr Linden addressed members of the Better Regulation Delivery Office's Business Reference Panel when the LGA hosted the meeting in early September. The meeting discussed themes including the extension of primary authority and devolution.

### **Trading standards**

9. Cllr Sophie Linden spoke at the opening session of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's annual conference. Cllr Linden provided a local government perspective on trading standards following CTSI's proposal for the creation of strategic trading standards authorities.

### **Ministry of Justice and EU Victim's Code**

10. I wrote to the Minister for Victims, Mike Penning, outlining the LGA's concern at the potential resource impact if council services such as trading standards were incorporated within the statutory Victim's Code. The MoJ has agreed not to include councils within the Code at this time, and will instead work with a group of councils to understand the support already in place and the additional impact of the Code.

### **Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service**

11. Cllr Jeremy Hilton, Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee, visited Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority. He outlined the role of the LGA, and had further discussions with member on the issues facing the fire and rescue service as we look to the future.

### **National FGM Centre's Advisory Group**

12. Cllr Lisa Brett chaired the National FGM Centre's Advisory Group. Members discussed the progress of the Centre against its key milestones as well as the potential impact of the introduction of mandatory reporting for known or disclosed cases of FGM.

### **Fire/Health Summit**

13. Cllr David Acton and Cllr Kay Hammond, Deputy Chairs of the Fire Services Management Committee, attended the fire/health summit on behalf of Cllr Jeremy Hilton. The Summit discussed the role of the Fire and Rescue Service in contributing to improving the health and wellbeing of their communities. The meeting formally signed off a consensus statement made between the LGA, NHS England, Public Health England, the Chief Fire Officers Association and Age UK, which affirmed our commitment to work together on this issue.

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