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# Updates to the Strategic Assessment arising from the King's Speech and Legislative Changes

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Committee considering report:	Joint Public Protection Committee
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Chair of Committee:	Councillor Iskandar Jefferies
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## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members and JMB Officers with proposed changes to the Strategic Assessment arising from the King's Speech and subsequent legislative changes.

## 2. Background

- 2.2 The updated [Strategic Assessment](#) was presented to Members at the June JPPC meeting.
- 2.3 It was noted in the concluding observations of the covering report that 'The 'horizon scanning' elements of the assessment give some indication of known new duties down the line. However, with the dissolution of Parliament the future and timing of these proposed measures is uncertain.'
- 2.4 On 17 July 2024, the King's Speech took place for the newly elected Government. There were 39 measures set out in this King's Speech and a number of them will impact on the work undertaken by the shared service. The government has also published additional information since the speech was made. These are as follows:

### Product Safety and Metrology Bill

- 2.5 The proposed Product Safety and Metrology Bill will update product safety regulation, supporting businesses and ensuring that consumers are protected. Product safety and metrology (weights and measures) are enforced by trading standards.
- 2.6 This Bill will apply UK-wide, and will:
  - **Respond to new risks and opportunities, such as AI and fire risks of e-bikes and lithium-ion batteries**, with new powers given to tackle these issues.
  - **Identify new and emerging business models in the supply chain and ensure that their responsibilities are clear**, such as with online marketplaces; this will enable the Government to protect consumers and encourage consumer confidence.

- **Ensure that laws can be updated where necessary** to recognise new or updated EU product regulations, including CE marking, to prevent additional costs for businesses and provide regulatory stability.
- **End recognition of EU product regulations where necessary** that will be beneficial for UK businesses and consumers.
- **Enable improvements to compliance and enforcement** reflecting the challenges of modern, digital borders. The Bill will enable greater sharing of data between regulators and marketing surveillance authorities, and ensure that the Regulator has enough capacity, and is able to provide national leadership on product safety and metrology issues.

2.7 As noted in the King's Speech, products in the scope of this Bill are used by every person in the UK, covering nearly all manufactured goods, and it is estimated that at least 220,000 UK businesses are currently affected by product safety legislation.

### **Tobacco and Vapes Bill**

2.8 The Government has announced a Tobacco and Vapes Bill with a view to improving health and life expectancy and reduce the number of lives lost to the biggest killers, including cancer.

2.9 The Bill will include:

- A progressive smoking ban to gradually end the sale of tobacco products across the country, (including herbal smoking products and cigarette papers). Children born on or after 1 January 2009 will never be able to legally be sold cigarettes.
- The stopping of vapes and other consumer nicotine products from being deliberately branded and advertised to children, meaning they are only available to assist in quitting smoking.
- Strengthen enforcement activity, allowing Trading Standards to take swifter action to enforce the law and close loopholes, preventing underage sales of tobacco and vapes by providing enforcement authorities in England and Wales with the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for the underage sale of tobacco and vaping products.
- On the 29th August the government confirmed that they were considering extending the smoking ban to cover a number of outdoor areas such as outdoor dining, pub gardens, football stadiums and hospitals. This would have implications for both environmental health and licensing.

### **Renters' Rights Bill**

2.10 The Government have stated that they value the contribution made by responsible landlords who provide quality homes to their tenants and believe they must enjoy robust grounds to gain their property back. They have however said that they will level the playing field between landlord and tenant by providing renters with greater security. This Bill is likely to provide additional duties for trading standards and the private sector housing team.

2.11 This Bill will therefore:

- **Abolish section 21 evictions** and move to a simpler tenancy structure where all assured tenancies are periodic – providing more security for tenants and

empowering them to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction. The new system will be implemented in one stage, giving all tenants security immediately.

- **Ensure possession grounds are fair to both parties**, giving tenants more security, while ensuring landlords can recover their property when reasonable. The Bill introduces new safeguards for tenants, giving them more time to find a home if landlords evict to move in or sell, and ensuring unscrupulous landlords cannot misuse grounds.
- **Provide stronger protections against backdoor eviction** by ensuring tenants can appeal excessive above-market rents which are purely designed to force them out. Landlords will still be able to increase rents to market price for their properties and an independent tribunal will make a judgement on this, if needed.
- **Introduce a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman** that will provide quick, fair, impartial and binding resolution for tenants' complaints about their landlord. This will bring tenant-landlord complaint resolution on par with established redress practices for tenants in social housing and consumers of property agent services.
- **Create a Private Rented Sector Database** to help landlords understand their legal obligations and demonstrate compliance (giving good landlords confidence in their position), alongside providing better information to tenants to make informed decisions when entering into a tenancy agreement. It will also support local councils – helping them target enforcement activity where it is needed most. Landlords will need to be registered on the database in order to use certain possession grounds.
- **Give tenants strengthened rights to request a pet in the property**, which the landlord must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse. To support this, landlords will be able to require pet insurance to cover any damage to their property
- **Apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented** sector to give renters safer, better value homes and remove poor-quality homes in local communities.
- **Apply 'Awaab's Law' to the sector**, setting clear legal expectations about the timeframes within which landlords in the private rented sector must take action to make homes safe where they contain serious hazards.
- **Make it illegal for landlords and agents to discriminate against prospective tenants in receipt of benefits or with children** – helping to ensure everyone is treated fairly when looking for a place to live.
- **End the practice of rental bidding by prohibiting landlords and agents from asking for or accepting offers above the advertised rent.** Landlords and agents will be required to publish an asking rent for their property, and it will be illegal to accept offers made above this rate.
- **Strengthen local authority enforcement** by expanding civil penalties, introducing a package of investigatory powers and bringing in a new requirement for local authorities to report on enforcement activity.
- **Strengthen rent repayment orders** by extending them to superior landlords, doubling the maximum penalty and ensuring repeat offenders have to repay the maximum amount.

## **Crime and Policing Bill**

- 2.12 This Bill will deliver on the Government's mission to 'take back our streets' and is designed to reduce serious violence and increase confidence in policing and the Criminal Justice System. It will give the police the powers they need to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour, whilst introducing new reforms to ensure that law enforcement agencies perform to the highest standards expected by the public and focus on front-line policing.
- 2.13 The Bill will also set out early measures to help deliver on the Government's mission to take action to tackle knife crime and violence against women and girls.
- 2.14 This Bill is likely to have implications for licensing and trading standards.

## **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill**

- 2.15 The Bill will deliver the Government's manifesto commitment to bring in Martyn's Law and strengthen the security of public events and venues.
- 2.16 This Bill will have implications as part of our role overseeing even safety through Safety Advisory Group and will also have implications for the licensing service,
- 2.17 The full briefing note that accompanied the King's Speech can be read on the [Government website](#).

## **3. Next Steps**

- 3.18 Officers will amend the relevant part of the Strategic Assessment in line with the legislative changes as and when they come into effect and will continue to update the horizon scanning element of the document.

## **4. Conclusion**

- 4.19 The shared public protection services will have new responsibilities in protecting the health, wellbeing and safety of residents. This adds to the extensive range of existing duties and responsibilities. The update to the Strategic Assessment will reflect the proposals and how they contribute to the cross-cutting and specific priorities set for the service by the partner authorities.

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## **5. Appendices**

- 5.20 None.
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