

**Safer and Stronger Communities Board – report by
Cllr Mehboob Khan (Chair)**

1. At the end of July, Cllr Lawrence met the **Home Office Minister for Crime Reduction, James Brokenshire MP**. The meeting with the minister had been requested to discuss the government's plans to restrict councils' abilities to use covert surveillance under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA), the coalition agreement commitment to regulate CCTV and the future of Community Safety Partnerships. Discussions centred on the use by councils of covert surveillance, and the proposal that councils should have to apply to magistrates courts to conduct surveillance and only in cases of serious crime. The minister understood local authorities concerns that too tight a definition of serious crime would prevent councils from investigating a range of crimes with a serious impact on the public, and would not be able to conduct test purchasing to tackle sales of alcohol and tobacco to children. It was agreed that the Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board would write back to the minister on whether test purchasing could be conducted on any other basis.
2. Cllr Lawrence was also able to raise the LGA's concerns about the Government's proposals to replace police authorities with directly elected police and crime commissioners at a lunch with **Nick Herbert MP, the Policing Minister**, hosted by Policy Exchange at the end of July. A range of bodies including the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Spectator and Guardian were represented at the meeting, as were the Home office and Number 10, which provided the LGA with an opportunity to outline its alternative proposals for improving police accountability, and where the government's proposals had weaknesses.
3. The LG Improvement and Development held a successful one day conference, entitled **Learning from the Best**, in late July to provide an opportunity for Councils to learn from those authorities which had been awarded a green flag in relation to community safety in the December 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment. Cllr Lawrence chaired the event and spoke about the future of policing.
4. In the second half of July the chair of the Board, Cllr Lawrence, met with the **Deputy Chair of the Association of Police Authorities** Cllr Mark Burns-Williamson to discuss the government's proposals to replace police authorities with directly elected police and crime commissioners. The meeting discussed the relevant positions of both associations in relation to the Home Office's plans and how a response to the government proposals when further detail was known would be developed by the APA and LGA. Cllr Burns-Williamson outlined the

meetings the APA planned in August and early September with their member authorities to agree their response to the government.

5. Lead Members of the Fire Services Management Committee met with the **CFOA Presidential team** on 4 August to discuss proposals that would see the LG Group and CFOA take on responsibility for coordinating and commissioning the limited number of functions that need a national perspective. The Committee has previously been clear that only those functions, currently owned and undertaken by the Department for Communities and Local Government, which could be reasonably accommodated and with minimum bureaucracy should be considered for this LG Group / CFOA approach.

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