

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

1. The Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board is using December and January as an opportunity to engage with member councils and discuss their community safety policy, regulatory and improvement priorities for 2011 / 12. This process has begun with a **Getting Closer event** held by Cllr Bettison for Berkshire authorities, and Cllr Fox's work on community safety issues across Yorkshire and Humber. The feedback from this engagement activity will be used to inform the Board's discussion of business plan activities for the coming year.
2. As part of the **Home Affairs Select Committee's** inquiry into police commissioners, in addition to Cllr Richard Kemp giving oral evidence to the Committee, Cllr Mehboob Khan attended a seminar in Cannock Chase to discuss commissioners, the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review on the police service as well as the proposals for a National Crime Agency. Cllr Khan took the opportunity to promote the LG Group's alternative model for police accountability and concerns about the impact on the frontline of the spending cuts.
3. The Home Office launched its new **Drug Strategy** at the beginning of December, with Cllr Duwayne Brooks, the Board's Deputy Chair, attending on behalf of the LG Group. The strategy has three themes of reducing demand, restricting supply and building recovery in communities. Features of the strategy are a commitment to support vulnerable families with specific mention being made of community budgets so that funding can be pooled. The strategy also looks for better coordination between the police and local partners in community safety partnerships, alongside locally commissioned tailored packages of care and support to help people live drug free, with Directors of Public Health commissioning drug and alcohol treatment.
4. The Board's Licensing Champion, Cllr Nilgun Canver, gave a presentation at a Westminster Briefing conference in early December on the government's proposed changes to the **licensing regime**. Cllr Canver appeared alongside speakers from the Magistrates' Association and the University of Greenwich and answered questions on broader issues, as well as the points made in her speech about the proposed late night levy, the fees regime and the power to suspend licences for non-payment.
5. Cllr Brooks chaired the **Burials and Bereavement Conference** held in the middle of December. This lively and well attended conference heard about reforms of the coroners' service, improving services to bereaved people while also delivering savings, improving the long term viability of cemeteries by re-using graves, and public health funerals. There were also workshops on war

graves and military burials, changes to registering deaths, and the roll out in England of Tell Us Once, a service which notifies a range of government and council departments that someone has died on behalf of the family.

6. LG Regulation has produced a newsletter to demonstrate the work councils have done under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The **Proceeds of Crime Council Newsletter**, the first issue of which was published in December 2010, includes an article by Cllr Paul Bettison, Chairman of LG Regulation, on how the Proceeds of Crime Act is a valuable crime busting tool for councils. The LG Group hope to get some national press coverage on this work over Christmas or early in the New Year.
7. LG Regulation has also recently published a short publication highlighting the work that some councils are doing with local credit unions in order to promote financial literacy. Cllr Mehboob Khan provided the foreword expressing the importance of this work, especially in the current economic climate. The document can be viewed via:
<http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/upload/25543.doc>
8. Bob Neill MP, Communities and Local Government Under Secretary of State, and the Minister responsible for the Fire and Rescue Service, attended the December meeting of the Fire Commission. The Minister spoke and fielded questions on a number of **issues relating to the Fire and Rescue Service**, including the impact of the Government Spending Review on Fire and Rescue Authorities and progress with the Government's Fire Futures project.
9. Subsequent to the Minister's attendance at the Commission, the Government announced that it would not be proceeding with FiReControl. A special meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee will therefore be held in January 2011 with member FRAs to discuss and consider future resilience options.
10. A cross-party group of Fire Services Management Committee Members met in November 2010 to formulate a Committee position to contribute to the wider LG Group submission to the **Independent Public Service Pension Commission**, whose remit covers Firefighters' Pension Schemes. The Group submission was sent on 13 December 2010, and is available to view via:
<http://www.lge.gov.uk/lge/aio/9065328>

Contact Officer: Liz Hobson, liz.hobson@local.gov.uk, 020 7664 3229