

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

1. With the publication of the **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill**, and the important changes it looks to make to police accountability and licensing, there has been a range of activity by members to press for key changes that improve the provisions in the Bill. Baroness Eaton met the Home Secretary Theresa May MP in mid-January and made the case for locally flexible licensing fees to be introduced and for the proposed police and crime panels to have a greater ability to veto the police commissioners' precepts and candidates for chief constable.
2. Members have conducted a number of meetings with Members of Parliament to brief them on a number of LGA amendments. These included Cllr David Sparks and Cllr Mehboob Khan meeting the lead Labour MPs on the Bill Committee; Cllr Mehboob Khan met Ed Balls MP in his capacity as Shadow Home Secretary; Cllr Les Lawrence and Cllr Duwayne Brooks have also been meeting leading Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs on the Bill Committee. The activity ahead of the Bill Committee's examination of the Bill, culminated in Cllr Richard Kemp giving evidence to the Bill Committee on the licensing elements in the Bill. All of our amendments have now been tabled.
3. December's **local government settlement** indicated that the Home Office would continue to fund local authorities' community safety work, but not how much would be available. They committed to announce levels of funding in mid-January. The Home Office failed to make the announcement, leaving councils with no idea whether funding would be available to maintain services crucial to protecting their communities. Cllr Khan therefore wrote to the Minister, James Brokenshire, urging him to make an immediate announcement about funding levels.
4. Cllr Mehboob Khan met Sebert Cox OBE, the new Chairman of the **Probation Association** Board of Directors, to discuss the new Ministry of Justice Green Paper 'Breaking the Cycle' and other issues. The meeting covered how the two national associations could help probation trusts and councils build stronger relationships; what the government's policy changes might mean for the commissioning of services, including the commissioning of services from probation trusts by councils; and the performance measures that the Ministry of Justice are developing for probation trusts.
5. Cllr Mehboob Khan also met Cllr Rob Garnham and Cllr Mark Burns-Williamson, Chair and Deputy Chair of the **Association of Police Authorities** respectively, to discuss the policing elements in the Police Reform and Social

Responsibility Bill, and the detailed policy positions they are developing in relation to its various elements. In particular, discussions centred around lobbying objectives and whether there were any shared positions that both organisations could promote when the Bill moves to the House of Lords.

6. Cllr Les Lawrence chaired the LG Group's **Community safety and disorder conference** at the start of February to look at the new agenda on policing, re-offending and licensing. The well attended conference took a practical look at the police and licensing reforms the Home Office is introducing through the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill and the changes to reducing re-offending the Ministry of Justice is making through its Green Paper.
7. The LGA was invited last year to give evidence to the Equality and Human Rights Commission's **inquiry into disability hate crime**. Cllr Mehboob Khan gave evidence to the inquiry in the middle of January, highlighting the good work that councils do in this area, and the need for any recommendations to recognise the role local authorities have in this area, but to do so in light of the funding reductions councils are facing.
8. Members of the Fire Services Management Committee met with Chair and Chief Fire Officers from a wide range of Fire and Rescue Services on 24 January to discuss the **Government's recent decision to cancel FiReControl**. The seminar focussed on what Fire and Rescue Services were doing in the short-term to ensure that resilience capacity is in place, and on the role that the LG Group can play in sharing best practice at the local level in designing cost-effective and comprehensive resilience solutions for the first term.

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