

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

1. The March meeting of the Board is being held in Sunderland on 14 March 2011. Members will have the opportunity to receive a presentation from the Safer Sunderland Partnership on achievements in delivering the Local Innovation Award programme and providing direct support to Community Safety Partnerships. Community Safety Portfolio holders from local authorities in the North East have been invited to meet the Board to discuss the challenges they face and what the Local Government Group can do on their behalf.
2. The Lead Members of the Board met in February to identify the priorities for the Board for 2011-12, to feed into the LG Group Business Plan. A member of the Local Government Regulation Board also participated in the discussion. We have had positive feedback from colleagues around the country that the Board focuses on the issues which matter to them. A higher priority to help deal with funding cuts is a recurrent theme which we have prioritised and which we suggest needs to run through all our work over the coming year. Board members have also had the opportunity to comment and the proposed priorities for the year ahead reflect their views.
3. As part of the Board's work on **getting closer** to member authorities, the Board's Vice-Chair Cllr Les Lawrence met representatives from five councils in the South West in Plymouth at the end of February. This followed on from the event that the Board held in Exeter last July, and involved feeding back on some of the issues raised then. A number of matters were discussed, with one of the key concerns for councils being the relationship between police and crime commissioners and community safety partnerships. We will feed these concerns into our work around the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill.
4. The **police and crime panels** proposed to hold police and crime commissioners to account are drawing more and more interest and the Board's Vice-Chair Cllr Lawrence spoke at the South East Employers Forum about scrutiny issues. Cllr Lawrence explained what powers are proposed for the panels under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill, how the LGA believes these should be strengthened and then set out a number of practical issues around the setting up of the panels that the LGA believes the Home Office needs to address.
5. In mid-February the Board's Deputy Chair, Cllr Duwayne Brooks spoke at the Westminster Legal Policy Forum on the government's **rehabilitation revolution** and the Ministry of Justice 'Breaking the Cycle' Green Paper. Cllr Brooks set out

the LGA's belief that reducing re-offending and rehabilitating offenders is best delivered through multi-agency partnerships, and that locally-led commissioning by partnerships was the best way of delivering better services in a time when funds to reduce re-offending had been cut.

6. The Prison Reform Trust has established a taskforce looking at **women's justice** issues and how to ensure that women in trouble are a priority for the government. The intention is to look at how the 2007 report by Baroness Corston into vulnerable women in prison can be built on in the changed economic and political times. The Taskforce was keen to engage with the LG Group about this work and the role of local authorities in this area. Cllr Duwayne Brooks, met the members of the taskforce in early February for a constructive discussion about the work of the Board and local government's role in this area.
7. In the European Union, **domestic violence** against women remains the most consistent and pervasive human rights violation across the region. Cllr Ann Lucas, the Board's champion for domestic violence issues took part in an International Symposium on 3 March 2011 to discuss a proposed EU-wide strategy on violence against women and opportunities for local authorities from the UK to gain access European funding for projects to protect women and girls from all forms of violence.
8. The chair of the LG Regulation Board Cllr Bettison and the Board's Licensing Champion Cllr Canver met James Brokenshire MP, the minister responsible for licensing at the start of March. The meeting discussed the **licensing changes** the government is making through the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill and focused on the introduction of a late night levy and what councils could use the additional funding from this for, as well as the government's commitment to introduce a locally set flexible fees regime for licensing applications.
9. At the start of March, the Board's two Deputy Chairs Cllrs Goronwy Edwards and Duwayne Brooks attended a **Home Office community safety event**, which saw the Home Secretary setting out how the government sees crime being reduced in the future. The Home Secretary set out the government's case for change; what it means by a localist approach; reforming policing and accountability; work across government to prevent crime and what the national focus on crime will be including serious and organised crime, human trafficking and cyber crime.

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