

## **Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board – report from Cllr Mehboob Khan**

1. The Board's chair, Cllr Khan, gave evidence at the start of June to the Justice Select Committee which is holding an inquiry into the probation service. The inquiry is looking at probation in the context of the Ministry of Justice Green Paper Breaking the Cycle published at the end of last year. The main thrust of the Green Paper is to reduce re-offending by moving away from centrally set targets and performance monitoring and allowing local areas greater flexibility to pursue policies that work for them. The committee has looked in particular at the government's proposals to reduce the costs associated with tackling re-offending through payment by results schemes. During the evidence session Cllr Khan highlighted the important role councils have in reducing re-offending, the need to encourage local partners to pool their budgets for activities that reduce re-offending and our concerns that having too many bodies commissioning services will mean that efforts to reduce re-offending remain fragmented and uncoordinated.
2. With the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill starting its committee stage in the House of Lords, Cllr Khan had further meetings with Lord Hunt, the Shadow Deputy Leader of the House of Lords in mid-May and early June about amendments the LG Group has been looking to make to the policing and licensing sections of the Bill. Lord Beecham also attended the May meeting, which was a useful opportunity to discuss the amendments he had agreed to table for the Group around the appointment of deputy police and crime commissioners and the links between commissioners and community safety partnerships. The meeting in June with Lord Hunt concentrated on the licensing part of the Bill and the government's new clause allowing councils to set their own licensing fees.
3. The Board has also continued to be represented on the Home Office's Police and Crime Commissioners Transition Sponsorship Board by the Board's Deputy Chair Cllr Brooks. Cllr Brooks will also be representing the Group on the transition project looking at the handling of complaints about police and crime commissioners as police and crime panels will have a role in handling minor complaints against the commissioners. In addition to this transition work Cllr Brooks met with Home Office officials in early June to discuss support for community safety partnerships over the next year as they prepare for the introduction of police and crime commissioners from May 2012.
4. The Board's anti-social behaviour champion Cllr Lower spoke at the start of June at a Westminster Briefing policy and practice seminar on the government's proposals to simplify the powers available for tackling anti-social behaviour. The seminar looked at the range of new powers the Home Office has proposed replace the existing anti-social behaviour toolkit and, while Cllr Lower looked at what the

new powers and tools would mean in practice for tackling anti-social behaviour at a local level.

5. The difficulty of tackling anti-social behaviour in social housing was one of the main topics for discussion at a meeting in mid-May between Cllr Khan as the Board's chair and Cllr Loakes Vice-Chair of the Housing and Environment Board. The difficulty councils and registered social landlords face in evicting those who persistently engage in anti-social behaviour had been raised by the Board when it discussed the government's proposed new anti-social behaviour powers. Also discussed at the meeting were the use of covert surveillance to tackle persistent flytipping and the seriousness with which courts treat envirocrimes.
6. Cllr Lucas, the Board's domestic violence champion attended a roundtable meeting with voluntary sector organisations in mid-May to discuss the future of services to reduce violence against women and girls. The meeting was hosted by Baroness Hanham, part of the ministerial team at DCLG, to take forward some of the work arising from the government's violence against women and girls strategy. A key concern from the voluntary sector is the availability of funding in the future. Cllr Lucas highlighted some of the work the Group had been doing to improve the commissioning of services from the voluntary sector and the impact the move to giving police and crime commissioners responsibility for commissioning services would have.
7. Fire Minister, Bob Neill attended the Fire Services Management Committee on 16th May and took part in a discussion with members about the department's response to the Fire Futures review, forthcoming challenges and risks facing the sector and the importance of having plans for business continuity in place in the even of an emergency or disruption caused by industrial action. The Minister also noted the LGA's work looking into the future of the Fire Service College and welcomed the leadership and commitment it demonstrates.

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