

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

1. At the end of September, Cllr Anita Lower (the Board's Anti-Social Behaviour Champion) spoke at the Northern Housing Consortium conference in York on crime and anti-social behaviour. The conference was attended by a diverse set of delegates drawn from local authorities, housing associations, and legal firms. Cllr Lower set out the LG Group's views on the new tools and powers the Home Office outlined in the spring for tackling anti-social behaviour. In her speech Cllr Lower also set out how the introduction of police and crime commissioners would influence how councils and community safety partnerships tackled anti-social behaviour in the future.
2. Cllr Joanna Spicer was invited to speak at the East of England Strategic Authority Leaders' meeting in Cambridge at the end of September on the work the LG Group has been doing on the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act. At the meeting Cllr Spicer outlined the Group's lobbying work around both the policing and licensing sections of the Act. The presentation to the East of England leaders also outlined the role of police and crime commissioners and the issues that would need to be taken into account when establishing a police and crime panel.
3. Members of the Board also continue to participate in the Home Office's transition projects designed to ensure a smooth move from police authorities to police and crime commissioners. At the same time the Board, along with the WLGA, has also produced a short guide for councils to police and crime commissioners, which has been well received by councils and also picked up by other bodies with an interest in this government agenda. Demands from councils for further guidance has resulted in the Board planning to produce two further publications to explain aspects of the police and crime commissioner agenda later in the autumn. The issues arising out of the introduction of police and crime commissioners will also be explored at the conference the Group is holding on the 19 October, which looks like being extremely well attended.
4. The Board's Licensing Champion Cllr Nilgun Canver met the Magistrates' Association at the start of October to discuss a range of issues of mutual concern. This included the impact of court closures on the time for cases to reach court, the role that magistrates' courts will have in approving the use of covert surveillance, and how councils could build better relations with their local benches to resolve local issues around inconsistencies in approach over cases and the seriousness with which some crimes such as fly-tipping and other environmental crimes are treated by the courts.

5. Following on from the civil disturbances in August the Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions will be setting out what should be done to address gangs and serious youth violence at the end of October. Both departments convened a seminar with local authority, police and other bodies with experience of tackling gang violence to outline the government's proposals and seek views on what central government could do to remove barriers at a local level to dealing with this issue. The LG Group was invited to facilitate the event and Cllr Les Lawrence, the Board's Vice-Chair, introduced the event and helped facilitate discussions at it. The results from the event will be used to inform the government's final report.
6. The Fire Service Peer Challenge Working Group Chaired by Cllr Kay Hammond presented its interim findings to the Fire Services Management Committee. The Working Group's interim findings were accepted. They highlighted the continuing value of peer challenge in support of Fire and Rescue Services' self assessment. The working group noted that the peer challenge should focus on the operational issues identified through individual FRS's own self-assessments and the associated corporate health elements including leadership and corporate capacity.

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