

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

Police and Crime Commissioners Conference

1. Several members of the Board were involved in the successful conference the Board held on 19 October jointly with the Association of Police Authorities (APA) on preparing for the introduction of police and crime commissioners. The conference which was sold-out saw Board members Cllrs Mehboob Khan and Mark Burns-Williamson address the conference in their role as chair of the Board and chair of the APA respectively. The morning session was chaired by Cllr Les Lawrence. The conference discussed arrangements for the elections, setting up police and crime panels, and the future relationship between commissioners and community safety partnerships and other local structures and heard from the Policing Minister, Nick Herbert MP.

Transition Sponsorship Board

2. The Board was represented at the Home Office's Police and Crime Commissioners Transition Sponsorship Board meeting at the end of October by Cllr Joanna Spicer. The meeting looked at the future commissioning of community safety activity, links with health partners, and the merging of budgets, the timetable for setting up police and crime panels and Home Office funding for the panels. The Home Office indicated that they would be using their work over October and November with four force areas (Leicestershire, South Wales, West Midlands and West Yorkshire) to inform their guidance around the introduction of police and crime panels.

Metal theft

3. The Chair of the Board, Cllr Mehboob Khan, and lead members from the Environment and Housing Programme Board met in late October to discuss the issue of metal theft. Members from the two Boards agreed that the LGA needed to highlight the impact that metal theft was having on councils and the communities they serve, alongside transport and energy companies with an interest in this area. Members also felt that the legislative and regulatory framework around the licensing of scrap metal dealers needed to be strengthened, and that the LGA should look at ways of assisting councils to improve the operating standards with some scrap metal dealers.

Communities and Victims Panel

4. Following on from the Board's consideration at its meeting in September of the civil disturbances in August, at the time of writing the Board is planning to host a dinner with Darra Singh, the chair of the Communities and Victims Panel (CVP) at the beginning of November. This will give Board members the opportunity to hear about the work the Panel has been doing and to input thoughts and examples from members' own areas for the CVP report.

Fire Service College

5. Cllr Brian Coleman, Chairman of the Fire Services Management Committee attended a meeting with the Fire Minister to discuss the future of the Fire Service College. The Minister indicated that his preferred option for a public-private partnership was in line with the LGA's submission and the discussion centred on protective covenants to ensure training for firefighters continues in the long term.

Meeting with the Food Standards Agency (FSA)

6. Cllr Paul Bettison met with Rt Hon Lord Rooker, Chair of the Food Standards Agency, and Tim Smith, Chief Executive of the FSA. The meeting provided an opportunity to update the FSA on changes within the LGA and provide reassurance about the benefits of moving regulatory policy into the LGA core work since LG Regulation is no longer operating. The FSA outlined their intention to review the delivery of food safety controls in the UK, including the role of councils. The FSA stressed that the review would be evidence based and would not solely be looking at whether food safety enforcement should be centralised, but rather consider where the current system can be improved. The LGA will be working with councils to input into this review. The FSA also welcomed the increasing number of councils that have introduced the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme or 'Scores on the Doors'. The scheme has directly improved business compliance and is regularly used by consumers.

Launch of a new training tool for regulatory services

7. The LGA is supporting the launch of a new training tool for environmental health and trading standards officers. The training framework was developed in collaboration with councils. It provides a recognised route to support the development of regulatory staff and can be used flexibly with existing corporate development structures.

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