

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

ACPO Conference

1. The LGA was invited to attend the second day of the Association of Chief Police Officers' summer conference at the end of May. The day was themed around the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Board's chair Cllr Khan attended the morning session to speak alongside the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Bernhard Hogan Howe, the Assistant Chief Constable of West Midlands Police and David Cook the chief executive of Kettering Borough Council in his role as the police area returning officer for Northamptonshire. Cllr Khan was specifically asked to look at the issues around the first 100 days in office of any police and crime commissioner and pointed out that given the need to set the policing precept and agree the commissioner's police and crime plan, establishing a good working relationship with their police and crime panel should be near the top of any commissioner's list.

Just results

2. The Board's Deputy Chair, Cllr Duwayne Brooks, attended an event held by Make Justice Work at the end of May on the Government's introduction of payment by results for providers of probation and rehabilitation services. The event gathered together a range of experts to look at how payment by results contracts might work, the key issues with setting them up, the benefits and risks associated with this model for reducing re-offending, and what a payment by results scheme for community sentencing might look like.

Metal Theft

3. With the Queen's Speech failing to include a bill replacing the existing legislation on scrap metal dealers, members of the Board along with other leading members in the LGA, have been pressing the case for there to be a private members bill in this session that introduces a new licensing regime for scrap metal dealers. This work has included lobbying the Home Office to ensure they had prepared a bill that would provide any member who took this issue on with a comprehensive bill. Richard Ottoway MP, who came second in the ballot for private members' bills in the Commons, has announced he will be introducing a scrap metal dealers bill that creates a new licensing regime for scrap metal dealers which will be administered and enforced by local authorities.

Anti Social Behaviour White Paper

4. With the publication in May of the Home Office's long anticipated White Paper on anti-social behaviour the Board's Anti Social Behaviour Champion was asked to speak at two events in the North East on the White Paper and the LGA's views of the proposed changes.

Helping councils tackle rogue businesses

5. The LGA successfully overturned an amendment to the Freedoms Bill, which would have required environmental health and trading standards officers to seek a warrant through the courts to carry out basic inspections, unless given permission to enter by the business. If passed it would have meant a stop to on the spot inspections and delays before councils could respond to complaints made by residents. As the Government begins a wholesale review of council powers, Cllr Mehboob Khan, as Chair of the Stronger and Safer Communities Board, has written to Lord Henley to stress restrictions on powers could tie both councils and magistrates in red tape when trying to carry out basic delivery of services that are aimed at protecting consumers, targeting high risk activity and creating a level playing field in which responsible businesses can flourish.

Fire and Rescue

6. The LGA has secured two places on the newly established Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board, which met for the first time on 31 May. The Fire Service Management Committee (FSMC) has nominated Cllr Mark Healey and Cllr Jeremy Hilton to represent the LGA on the Board. The Strategic Resilience Board will assess risk, capacity and the appropriate approaches to addressing any identified gaps.
7. At this year's LGA Fire Conference, Fire Minister Bob Neill MP announced the Government's plans to sell the Fire Service College as a going concern to a private sector buyer. An LGA representative will act as an adviser to a panel evaluating bids for the College. Other representatives on the evaluation panel will be from DCLG and CFOA. This is an important recognition that the LGA has been instrumental in reviving the Fire Service College.
8. The LGA, the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA), the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (CFRA) and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) have agreed a new Service-led model for the production of national operational guidance for the UK Fire and Rescue Service. The LGA supports locally led and locally delivered services, and believes that this is an important step that demonstrates again to Government that 'fire' is a mature and capable Service.

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