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

Police and Crime Commissioners

1. The new Policing Minister, Damian Green MP, chaired his first and the last of the Home Office's Transition Sponsorship Board meetings at the start of November, which was attended by the Board's Vice-Chair Councillor Joanna Spicer. The Transition Sponsorship Board heard that, while much of the work to transition to police and crime commissioners had been completed, there were still some outstanding pieces of work on the handling of non-criminal complaints against PCCs by police and crime panels and regulations in parliament setting out what local government committee related legislation applies to police and crime panels. There will be one further meeting of the Transition Board in February to ensure all work is complete.

Ministerial Meetings

2. The Board's Chair, Councillor Mehboob Khan, has been meeting the new Home Office ministers. At the end of October he and the LGA's Chairman met Lord Taylor, the new Home Office Minister in the Lords, who is also the Home Office lead on local government and communities. A range of Home Office policy initiatives were discussed with the minister including the forthcoming Anti-Social Behaviour Bill, the Communications Data Bill and the Scrap Metal Dealers Bill, as well as a regular mechanism for keeping the minister informed of issues related to local government.
3. The second ministerial meeting took place in mid-November with Jeremy Browne MP, the new Minister for Crime Prevention. At this introductory meeting Councillor Khan discussed the proposals to update the tools and powers available for tackling anti-social behaviour, what can be done to further reduce alcohol related crime and disorder and addressing domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

Domestic Violence

4. The Board's domestic violence champion Councillor Ann Lucas and the LGA's Chairman will be meeting the Home Secretary again in December to discuss the impact of the election of police and crime commissioners will have on the provision of services for the victims of domestic abuse and how councils, the police and other public services can be provided with the appropriate financial incentives to ensure these services continue to be supported.

Peer challenge for Regulatory Services

5. The LGA peer challenge for Regulatory Services was launched in October 2012. It has evolved into a flexible model that helps councils examine whether their service can meet the challenges of the future.
6. Environmental health, trading standards and licensing services are intrinsically linked to local economic growth, public health and community safety. The LGA's 'future focused'

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approach considers how regulatory services can deliver the best outcomes for their communities across all of these areas in very difficult financial times, including options for other delivery models such as shared services.

7. The LGA currently have a limited number of challenges available at no cost to the council to trial this new approach.

Metal Theft

8. Members of the Board undertook some urgent lobbying work ahead of the Third Reading of the Scrap Metal Dealers Bill to persuade MPs not to talk the Bill out. This involved Members talking to local MPs, engagement with the LGA's Vice Presidents, sending briefing notes to MPs, liaising with other organisations with an interest in the Bill and meetings with the Home Office to reiterate the importance of the Bill successfully completing its passage through the House of Commons. As a result of this work the Bill completed its Report Stage and Third Reading on 9 November, and will now start its passage through the House of Lords.

Surveillance Powers

9. Following new requirements for councils to seek magistrates' approval each time they want to use powers available under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, Councillor Mehboob Khan stressed in an article for LG First the need for local authorities to make the case for surveillance powers increasingly transparent to their residents and highlighted good practice in councils including Sheffield City Council, Brighton and Hove City Council and Charnwood Borough. He stressed the LGA's continued role in explaining the importance of council use of these powers to government and correcting the misconceptions that frequently appear in the media.

Fire

10. Councillor Kay Hammond spoke at the Combined Fire Authority Conference on 17 October. In her address she outlined the LGA's role in addressing the most important priorities for the year ahead as defined by Fire Authorities and emphasised the importance of the sector dealing with these challenges as 'one voice'.

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