

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

Joint Strategic Partnership Board

1. The joint Strategic Partnership Board which the LGA agreed to establish with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners met for the first time in early September. The Partnership Board considered how the police and local authorities could work better to address child sexual exploitation, and also looked at links between police and crime commissioners (PCCs), councils and the health service following the health reforms implemented earlier in the year, which for example see clinical commissioning groups taking over from primary care trusts as the responsible body on community safety partnerships. As part of this discussion the Partnership Board heard from Hertfordshire on the structures they have established to link the councils, the PCC and the health structures in the county together.

Justice Select Committee

2. As part of the Justice Select Committee's inquiry into crime reduction policies and whether government departments are coordinating their approaches, the Board's Vice-Chair Cllr Joanna Spicer attended the Committee's evidence session in early September to talk about the links between government departments on reducing crime, how this affects local partners in their work and what could be done to ensure there is greater coordination going forward. Cllr Spicer was also able to highlight the importance of community budgets as a key plank in our Rewiring work and how this facilitates stronger local partnerships and multi-agency working.

Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013

3. The Board hosted a second fully booked conference on the new Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 in late-July. The conference, which was held in Leeds, resulted from a request for a repeat of the event held in London. The event was chaired by Cllr Michael Payne and addressed by Cllr Anita Lower. The delegates who came from across northern England and Wales received presentations from the Home Office and British Metal Recycling Association giving an overview of the Act, while speakers from Blackpool and Sandwell Councils, British Transport Police, Gwent Police and the Environment Agency looked in more detail at what the legislation requires councils to do. The Home Office were also able to provide details of the transitional provisions between the 1964 Act and the new one. The 2013 Act is due to come into effect on 1 October, from which dates councils will need to accept applications. Guidance on fees and the Commencement Order were made available by the Home Office in mid-August.

Regulatory services

4. In August, Cllr Khan wrote to Michael Fallon MP, the Minister for Business and Enterprise setting out the LGA's new vision for regulatory services, which outlines the cultural changes that will be needed as these services move to a new form of growth-focussed delivery. He has responded positively supporting this work.

Communications Data Bill

5. Following publication of the 2012 Report from the Interception of Communications Commissioner, which delivers a positive picture about the approach taken by councils, Councillor Khan and Councillor Spicer wrote to Home Office Ministers to reinforce the Commissioner's reassurance that there have been no instances of councils inappropriately using these powers and to highlight the lengthy waiting times for magistrates to approve requests. We again reinforced the importance of councils retaining access to this data.

Primary Authority Scheme

6. Cllr Kay Hammond met with the Fire Minister Brandon Lewis MP and representatives from CFOA on 9 August to consider the application of the Primary Authority Scheme to fire safety. The meeting was an opportunity to set out some of the Fire Services Management Committee's concerns, particularly around the timing of the implementation of the extension of the scheme to fire safety, and has led to the implementation being put back to April 2014.

CLG Select Committee

7. Cllr Kay Hammond gave evidence to the Select Committee on Sir Ken Knight's Review on 9 September, alongside the London Fire Commissioner. She highlighted the importance of service reform being designed and led locally.

Visits to Member Authorities

8. Over the summer period, Councillor Khan has undertaken visits to a series of authorities and partners to discuss community safety activity. These include Newham; Wandsworth; Cleone Foods to discuss regulation; and Matthew Grove, PCC for Humberside.

Industrial action in the fire service

9. Members will be aware that the FBU have been balloting their members for industrial action in relation to reform of the firefighters' pension scheme. Although this is a dispute between Ministers and the FBU, because of the potential risks to the public and businesses of industrial action, the Fire Services Management Committee has reminded FRAs about their responsibilities in relation to business continuity. The outcome of the ballot is expected on 30 August and an oral update will be provided at the Forum.

Contact officer: Helen Murray
Position: Head of Programme
Phone no: 020 7664 3266
E-mail: helen.murray@local.gov.uk