

Digest of Meeting

Title:	Councillors' Forum
Date and time:	18 July 2013, 12.30pm
Venue:	The Westminster Suite, Local Government House, Smith Square

Item	Action by
------	-----------

Welcome and Introductions

Councillor Sir Merrick Cockell, LGA Chairman, welcomed Members to the meeting.

The Chairman introduced Charles Farr, Director General of the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism at the Home Office.

1 Serious and Organised Crime

Members received a presentation from Charles Farr in which he spoke about serious and organised crime and the government's reworking of the organised crime strategy called 'Local to Global: Reducing the Risk of Organised Crime'.

Charles explained how the Home Office were in the process of rethinking their strategy on dealing with organised crime and invited Councillors to feed back their thoughts and experiences from a local level.

Charles assisted with defining this agenda and explained that all organised crime is serious but not all serious crime is organised. He highlighted that organised crime is very common in the UK, more than other countries, explaining that the precise levels of organised crime are currently unknown. However, it is estimated that 30,000 people in the UK are working as an organised criminal with around 3,500 organised groups.

Charles went on to tell the audience of the changes being made in the operational landscape in fighting organised crime. He highlighted that the National Crime Agency will begin its work in October 2013. This is being set up to better deal with the rising threat from organised crime and would bring together the operational and strategic approaches to tackling organised crime.

'Local to Global' is the current organised crime strategy launched in 2011. He hopes the new Strategy, due to be published this Autumn, will bring together collective efforts from across Government, the police and the security services to have a greater impact on serious criminality.

Charles highlighted the big role local authorities have played in counter terrorism operations and strategy and understanding of the CONTEST strategy and compared this with the limited levels of engagement around tackling organised crime. Home Office Ministers and senior officials are keen to change this and Charles would like to work with the LGA and local government to enable this to happen. He highlighted the important work local authorities can play in helping preventing and disrupting organised crime, such as using local government powers such as licensing and regulation and making links with other programmes such as the Troubled Families work. But he also highlighted how local authorities have a protective role as well in building resilient communities and tackling money laundering and recovering proceeds of crime. He urged Councillors to be involved in this work since work in Scotland has revealed that local government procurement contracts can inadvertently have links to organised crime groups.

Charles was very keen to provide local authorities with information and products to enable them to raise this up agendas. He referenced the success of the counter terrorism local profiles as a key milestone in local government having access to information on the Prevent agenda; and the regional organised crime units. He emphasised a two way dialogue and is committed to listening to the needs of local authorities and providing local leaders with information they need.

Charles Farr hoped with the LGAs involvement and support of this particular strategy we would together be able to prevent and reduce the amount of organised crime in the UK.

Sir Merrick Cockell then took to the floor for a discussion and questions in relation to the forum.

The following topics were mentioned:

- How much of crime is cyber-crime and noted that some organised crime is currently recorded in national statistics;
- The role of education and schools in preventing children and young people getting involved in organised criminal networks and what more can be done upstream;
- The levels of importing crime and the effect it may have; and
- The current legislative framework around proceeds of crime and offshore money laundering;
- The role of enablers – lawyers and accountants – in organised crime;
- The role of organised crime gangs in areas of deprivation and the status these have; and
- The importance of local government retaining communications

data powers.

The Chairman thanked Charles for his fascinating presentation and felt the LGA and local government as a whole could do a lot to help the Government's plans to reduce organised crime.

2 Chairman's Update

Members noted and accepted the Chairman's report.

3 Programme Board Chairs' Reports

Members noted the updates from each of the LGA's Board Chairs.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 12 September 2013, 12:30pm – 1:30pm
The Westminster Suite (8th Floor), Local Government House