

Safer and Stronger Communities

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This paper summarises the current work of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board and sets out proposed areas of activity for 2012/13 in line with the business plan priorities.

Recommendation

Members are invited to consider and comment on the proposed Safer and Stronger Communities Board activity.

Action

Officers to take account of any comments and actions arising out the discussion.

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

Safer and Stronger Communities

Background

1. After the economy, crime and the fear of crime remains a key concern for many local communities and their councils. Improving community safety is also one of the most of visible areas of partnership working, and one on which the public judges the success of councils. Councils have a strong track record on working with the police and other partners to deliver strong reductions in crime although as a consequence of the economic situation, some types of crime are now indicating statistically significant increases and holding on to gains remains challenging.
2. The Board has a wide remit, covering crime and anti-social behaviour, policing, domestic violence, alcohol licensing, sex establishment licensing and emergency planning. Over the past year Safer and Strong Communities Board Members have been involved in lobbying activity across this whole agenda, securing some hard fought successes such as changing the veto threshold for Police and Crime Panels; legislation to bring forward locally set licence fees; the implementation of gang injunctions for under-18s; and allowing councils to conduct enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks on taxi and private hire vehicle drivers applying for licences. On the improvement side, we have supported Community Safety Partnerships to make efficiencies, designed a desk top peer review and refreshed the fire peer challenge. This activity is supported by a range of materials and regular events which have been very popular and profitable.
3. Now that the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act is on the statute book, a significant proportion of this year's work around policing and alcohol licensing moves naturally into a new phase for 2012/13, advising councils about the implications of the legislation and supporting them to make the necessary preparations for changes.
4. Board Members discussed the priorities for the year ahead at the Board meeting on 16 January. Members considered the Government's planned legislation for 2012/13, particularly the lobbying we may wish to do in relation to anti-social behaviour legislation and community payback reforms; further work arising from Darra Singh's final report on last year's civil disturbances which is due in March; and the profile now accorded to metal theft. There are now further indications that crime levels, particularly acquisitive crime, are starting to rise and work to counter that will be of the utmost important to Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and communities. The Board also considered the new

Item 1

consumer landscape and how the Government's drive to reduce health and safety regulation will impact on councils.

5. Given this context, this paper sets out proposals for a Safer and Stronger Communities programme of work against the six priorities identified in the draft LGA Business Plan. Links will be maintained with the other relevant boards on a range of cross-cutting issues.

Public Service Reform

6. Supporting councils and CSPs to **prepare for Police and Crime Commissioners** (PCCs). The election of PCCs in November 2012 brings radical changes for councils and their work to reduce crime and disorder. Councils in England are responsible for establishing Police and Crime Panels and there is a Government imperative to have these arrangements in place by July. Work has already started through LGA seminars and publications but it is clear that dedicated bespoke advice, support and guidance is an area where the LGA can add real value. Over the next year the Board will be in a strong position to broaden and deepen this engagement with our member authorities through work on rules of procedure, and developing training and leadership packages. We also have an important role to play in mapping out interdependencies and debating how other Whitehall reforms, such as elected mayors, join up at the local level.

Growth and Prosperity

7. Working with councils to **strengthen community resilience**. Crime and disorder can impact both directly and indirectly on businesses and town centres, and can significantly affect the viability of enterprises. At a time when nurturing economic growth and helping businesses to develop is an important priority for communities, the Board will be helping councils and Community Safety Partnerships tackle crimes that can hinder such economic development and affect the economic prosperity of areas. Working with other public services such as Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), the Board will focus on preventing and tackling priority crime types such as metal theft, gang related violence, anti-social behaviour and alcohol related crime and disorder to clearly promote the economic as well as the social benefits of tackling crime. Close links with the work on families with complex needs, work on re-offending and tackling the corrosive effects of violence against women and girls will be important here.
8. An important strand of this work will be understanding the **underlying causes of the civil disturbances** in the summer of 2011 and supporting councils to tackle these issues. Following the disturbances in August 2011 an initial analysis of factors which led to the disturbances and recommendations to prevent further incidents was set out by Darra Singh and the Communities and

Item 1

Victims Panel. The LGA is submitting a response to the second phase of the work and the final report is due in March 2012.

9. Working to ensure that **regulatory services** can remain flexible and proportionate to the needs of businesses and communities. We will continue to influence policy through a number of advisory groups on a wide range of issues to ensure that communities are afforded proportionate protection through regulation.

Efficiency and Productivity

10. Working with CSPs to make them **more efficient and effective** so they are able to deliver safe and secure communities. CSPs saw grant funding from the Home Office reduce by 20 per cent this year and it will fall by a further 40 per cent in 2012/13 before being handed to PCCs the year after. The LGA will continue to work with CSPs to examine their structures and provide advice on alternative models such as merged partnerships, shared services and outsourcing. Support will be provided by paid for community safety peer reviews, conferences and events and through low-cost sector-led support through the peer mentor approach established over in 2011.
11. The Ministry of Justice are currently undertaking work to better understand **payment by results** in the crime reduction arena. Sharing the outcomes of the pilots and translating this and expanding this into other geographical areas is an area where the LGA can help.
12. Supporting councils to respond to **civil emergencies**. The LGA will continue to take a visible role in civil emergencies, and the Board will work with the LGA's 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Task and Finish Group on councils' preparations for the 2012 Games.

Sector-led Improvement

13. A refreshed peer support programme for FRAs is now in place with one free Peer Challenge available to all FRAs every three years. The community safety sector-led improvement offer is more limited, although we continue to provide the Community Safety Peer Challenge on a paid-for basis, and have developed a free national mentoring programme and desk top reviews for member authorities, and a range of other support work which will continue.

The LGA's own effectiveness and efficiency

14. With partnership working being vital to reducing crime, and the risk that existing partnership arrangements fragment with the election of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), bringing together councils and PCCs at a national level offers significant advantages in sustaining and developing collaborative work on

Item 1

tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. Under the direction of the Leadership Board, we are developing a compelling offer for PCCs which would see the LGA establishing a shadow national representative body for PCCs from the summer.

Financial Implications

15. Budget allocations for 2012/13 will be discussed in the context of all the Boards' proposed priorities.