

Notes of Decisions Taken and Action

Safer Communities Board

22 November 2004

Local Government House

Present

Chair: Cllr Dame Sally Powell (Hammersmith and Fulham LB) (Lab)
Vice Chair: Cllr Ann Stribley (Poole BC) (Con)
Deputy Chairs: Cllr Caroline Seymour (Hambleton DC) (Lib Dem) and Cllr Graham Brown (Powys CC) (Ind)
Conservative: Cllr Les Byrom (Sefton MBC), Cllr Roland Domleo (Congleton BC), Cllr Victor Lyon (Barnet LB), Cllr David Smith (Lichfield DC) and Cllr Andy Sutton (Isle of Wight Council)
Labour: Cllr Mark Burns-Williamson (Wakefield MBC), Cllr Milkinder Jaspal (Wolverhampton City Council), Cllr Mehboob Khan (Kirklees MBC), Cllr Ann Lucas (Coventry City Council) and Ms Val Shawcross (LFEPA).
Liberal Democrat: Cllr Christina Jebb (Staffordshire CC), Cllr Audrey Jones (Greater Manchester FCDA) and Cllr Patrick O'Connor (Lincolnshire CC).
Substitutes: Cllr Anne Burns (Cumbria CC) (Lab).

1. Police Reform

The Board received a presentation from Judith Million, Home Office, in relation to the Police Reform white paper that was launched on 9 November 2004. A copy of the presentation is attached.

In connection with the white paper the Government had announced a full review of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). This review was due for completion by the end of January 2005. Members expressed concern at the appearance that the review would not have enough time to be performed thoroughly, but were reassured that the Home Office was confident of conducting the best review possible in the timescale.

With regard to the LGA's contribution to the review of CDRPs, the Board noted that it would be possible for Members to discuss the LGA's response to the review within the review deadline. It was agreed that the LGA's response should be considered at the Board meeting on 24 January 2005. However, Member input into that response would be required at an earlier

stage. During discussion of how this could be best achieved, the Board agreed that those of its Members who were also Members of CDRPs locally should together lead informally on Member input into shaping a policy line. This work was likely to begin around mid-December

The LGA Executive, at a meeting in October 2004, had, on the recommendation of the Board, approved in principle the creation of a project and task group to work on the police reform agenda. The Board agreed that in view of the ongoing review of CDRPs, further discussion of a police reform project and task group was best deferred until the likely conclusions of the CDRPs review were known. The matter would, therefore, be discussed at the meeting of the Board on 24 January 2005.

In concluding discussion of police reform, Members noted that it was the responsibility of individual local authorities to ensure that Member appointments to police authorities were of a high quality.

Decisions

That:

- (i) Members of the Board who were also Police Authority Members take the lead Member role in shaping the LGA's CDRP for strengthening local authority Membership of police authorities;
- (ii) The LGA's response to the White Paper be brought to the meeting of the Board on 24 January 2005 for approval; and
- (iii) The Board discuss further the possibility of creating a police reform project and task group at its meeting on 24 January in the light of the emerging conclusions from the Government's review of CDRPs.

Actions

That:

- (i) Arrangements be made for the relevant Members to shape the LGA's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships recommendations on local authority membership of police authorities; DM
- (ii) the draft response to the police reform White Paper be reported to the meeting of the Board on 24 January 2005 for formal approval; and JRa
- (iii) the police reform project and task group be considered by the Board at its meeting on 24 January 2005. JRa

2. LGA Business Plan Project: Working with the Correctional Services (Prisons)

The Board received a presentation on the emerging recommendations from the Member task group on the Working with the Correctional Services (Prisons) project.

The Board welcomed the recommendations and raised the following specific issues:

- The need for offenders to have quick access to employment and

- housing on re-introduction to the community;
- The role of local authorities in facilitating offenders re-introduction to the community;
- The need for greater liaison between stakeholders to the benefit of the offender being re-introduced to the community;
- The role of the learning and skills councils in preventative work at an early stage;
- The type of skills which offenders were taught while in prison, in particular that there seemed to be an increased emphasis on academic skills to the detriment of trade skills;
- The need for the prison service and probationary service to become one agency;
- The importance of linking with the work of CDRPs (e.g. on data sharing) so as to avoid the duplication of effort and resources;
- The importance of giving focused and targeted models of good practice to reinforce the messages; and
- The role of the health services in dealing with the problem of drug abuse.

The Board, while supporting the thrust of the recommendations, was of the view that the message from the LGA should be stronger and more radical, in particular that the LGA should promote a duty on local authorities to co-ordinate the relevant agencies for the benefit of the offender and to seek to reduce re-offending. However, the Board emphasised that resources should match any new duty on local authorities.

Decisions

That:

- (i) the comments in the above minute be drawn to the attention of the project task group;
- (ii) the Board's office holders, in consultation with the Chair of the task group, be authorised to approve the final report; and
- (iii) a second phase to the project, focusing on promoting the messages in the report with Government and local authorities and their partners and seeking to influence thinking about the most effective future arrangements for managing offenders, be agreed as a major policy objective for the Board.

Actions

That officers:

- (i) report the Board's comments to the next meeting of the project task group; NE
- (ii) liaise with the Board's office holders to seek approval for final report from the project; NE
- (iii) take forward the second stage of the project, as approved by the Board. NE

3. Key Objectives for 2005

In discussing the report on key objectives for 2005, Members drew attention in particular to:

- Safer by Design – the Board was of the view that this issue was cross-cutting and could be taken forward more appropriately by a body that dealt with more than just fire issues; and
- Domestic Violence – similarly, Members felt that domestic violence was a cross-cutting issue and that all local public service providers that made home visits had a role to play in addressing the problem.

The Board noted that these matters were already being taken forward, and that a meeting was planned with Government ministers to discuss safer by design.

Decisions

That:

- (i) the vision identified in the report and the related recommendations be approved;
- (ii) the Board its key objectives for 2005 as:
 - Police Reform;
 - Working positively to reduce youth offending (in collaboration with the Children and Young People Board);
 - Developing a coherent approach to, and raising the profile of, regulatory services; and
 - Campaigning for local authorities to provide and commission services to resettle offenders and prevent re-offending.
- (iii) the issues proposed for promotion in pre-election debate and for inclusion in party manifestos be approved.

Action

That the Board's recommendations for its vision, key objectives and pre-election issues be submitted to the LGA Executive for consideration.

MW/JRa

4. Fire Services – LGA Member Arrangements

Decision

That:

- (i) the consultation paper and responses received be noted; and
- (ii) the Board be copied in on the LGA's response to consultation feedback and the eventual options paper, which would be submitted to the LGA Executive for consideration.

Action

Copies of the LGA's response to consultation feedback and the report setting out options for addressing the concerns of fire authorities be circulated to Board Members when available.

JRa

5. Gambling Bill

Decisions

That:

- (i) the recent parliamentary briefing and amendments submitted to date be noted; and
- (ii) work on the Bill be taken forward by the Board's office holders.

Action

The necessary arrangements be made for the Board's office holders to take forward work on the Gambling Bill. TO'F

6. Consultation on Fees under the Licensing Act 2003

The LGA on 10 November had circulated a survey questionnaire to all licensing authorities with the aim of gathering up-to-date evidence that would enable the LGA to challenge specific opinions expressed in the consultation document. Once the evidence from the survey was collated it was proposed that the LGA/LACORS and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) work together with a small group of local authorities to ascertain what issues remain outstanding.

The Board requested that it be informed of which local authorities were participating in the work with LGA/LACORS and the DCMS and that office holders be kept up-to-date with the progress of that work.

The Board discussed the options for ensuring that Member allowances sufficiently remunerated Members for the time that was likely to be spent on licensing work when the new arrangement came into force in 2005, particularly in the first few months.

Decisions

That:

- (i) the LGA survey and proposed work between the LGA/LACORS and DCMS be noted;
- (ii) information about which local authorities were participating in the work with the LGA/LACORS and the DCMS be circulated to the Board; and
- (iii) the Board's office holders be kept up-to-date on the progress on the work between the LGA/LACORS and the DCMS.

Actions

That information about which local authorities were participating in the work with the LGA/LACORS and the DCMS be circulated to the Board and the Board's office holders be kept up-to-date on the progress on that work. TO'F

7. Domestic Violence Project Update

Decision

That discussion of the Domestic Violence project be deferred to the meeting of the Board on 24 January 2005, that it be the first item on that agenda and that the project consultant be invited to attend that meeting.

Action

That the project consultant be invited to attend the meeting of the Board on 24 January 2005.

KM

8. Appointments to Outside Bodies

With the exception of appointments to outside bodies that had been recommended by the Fire Modernisation Task Group, the Board agreed that political group offices and office holders should deal with making appointments. In making appointments Members noted that:

- An analysis of the performance of the outside body and the currently appointed Member should be undertaken so far as possible prior to consideration being given to re-appointments;
- Bodies to which appointments were not made by the Board should be listed separately;
- Appointments should be politically balanced so far as possible;
- Appointments to bodies should be Board Members or substitutes unless an expert appointment was already in place; and
- If and where appropriate, attendance at outside bodies should be undertaken by officers.

Concern was expressed at the fact that the DTI Ministerial Advisory Group on Consumer Issues had not met for several years and it was agreed that this issue be raised in a letter to the appropriate minister.

Decision

That:

- (i) the appointments to outside bodies as recommended by the Fire Modernisation Task Group be agreed;
- (iii) appointments to all other outside bodies be undertaken by political group offices and office holders subject to the following points being satisfied:
 - An analysis of the performance of the outside body and the currently appointed Member be undertaken so far as possible prior to consideration being given to appointments;
 - Bodies to which appointments were not made by the Board being not considered;
 - Appointments being politically balanced so far as possible;
 - Appointments being Board Members or substitutes unless an expert appointment was already in place; and
 - If and where appropriate, attendance at outside bodies being undertaken by officers.
- (iv) a letter to the appropriate Government minister be sent

highlighting the Board's concern that the DTI Ministerial Advisory Group on Consumer Issues had not met for several years.

Actions

That:

- (i) Political group offices and the Board's office holders agree appointments to outside bodies, subject to the points in the above decision being satisfied; and
- (ii) A letter be drafted and sent on behalf of the Chair of the Board highlighting the Board's concern that the DTI Ministerial Advisory Group on Consumer Issues had not met for several years

9. Board Advisors

Decisions

That:

- (i) the list of fire advisors, as recommended by the Fire Modernisation Task Group, be agreed; and
- (ii) the list of advisors suggested in relation to other matters within the Board's remit be agreed, subject to the list being separated into strategic and specialist advisors.

Action

That the list of advisors on Board matters, excluding fire issues, be amended to identify where advisors were strategic or specialist.

KF

10. Other Board Matters

Members requested that as a matter of course project task groups within the Board's remit be invited to provide project updates at future Board meetings.

Decisions

That:

- (i) Cllr Victor Lyon be appointed as the Board's representative on the Urban Commission Steering Group;
- (ii) The ongoing Member Skills Audit be noted and amendments added as officers at the LGA were notified;
- (iii) The Board's calendar of activity to July 2005 be noted;
- (iv) The list of Government department/agency contacts be noted; and
- (v) Project task groups within the Board's remit be invited to update the Board on the progress of the project at future meetings.

Actions

That:

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| (i) | Cllr Victor Lyon be informed of arrangements for future meetings of the Urban Commission Steering Group and his details be added to the records for the Steering Group; and | CG |
| (ii) | Lead officers for projects within the Board's remit be informed of the Board's invitation to submit an update on project work at future meetings. | CG |

11. Notes of Previous Meeting

Decision

That the notes from the previous meeting of the Board be agreed.