

## Developing a coherent approach to Regulatory Services

### Decisions

1. *Agree that project should proceed as outlined and bid to be made to the LGA Executive; and*
2. *LGA Executive be asked to support the formation of a sub group of the Central Local Partnership on regulatory services.*

### Actions Required

3. *Officers to action decisions made by the Board.*

**Action by:** *LGA and LACORS secretariat*

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### Summary

1. *The Board is asked to note progress on this issue to date and to agree the next stages for the project.*

### Background

2. *In 2003 the Public Protection Executive (PPE) agreed a piece of work aimed at, firstly, raising the profile of regulatory services and, secondly, tackling the recruitment and retention crisis in Trading Standards and Environmental Health. The Regulatory Services Partnership, chaired by the PPE Chairman, was established comprising the LGA, WLGA and LACORS as well as the following external partners:*
  - *Employers Organisation for Local Government (EO)*
  - *Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)*
  - *Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)*
  - *Trading Standards Institute (TSI).*
3. *The overall vision for the Partnership was set out as follows: "The partnership is committed to raising awareness of local authority public protection regulatory services and enhancing their performance so that they can make a full and effective contribution to the well-being of citizens and their communities."*
4. *At the Safer Communities Board meeting of 22 November 2004, the Board agreed one of its key objectives for 2005 as "developing a coherent approach to, and raising the profile of, regulatory services."*

### Activity to date

5. *The Partnership published a ten point action plan in the document getting a slice of the action that was launched at the 2003 LGA Annual Conference. A copy of that document will be circulated with the Board agenda (see **enclosed**). The Partnership committed to:*
  - *Lobby for external funding from government for recruitment and leadership initiatives;*
  - *Develop a resource of best practice recruitment and retention case studies and maintain through a single website;*
  - *Request every local authority in England and Wales to make a public commitment to support the Partnership and to pursue a recruitment and retention strategy;*
  - *Develop advice and guidance to help councillors when scrutinising regulatory services;*
  - *Engage with politicians and officials in central government to enhance their awareness of the role and value of regulatory services;*
  - *Seek out champions and ambassadors from members and officers;*

- *Promote good practice examples of regulatory services' contribution to the broader well-being agenda;*
  - *Carry out research on the views of local authority senior members and officers about regulatory services and gather their views about service improvement;*
  - *Maintain a website to demonstrate the progress of the campaign and enable wider participation, and specifically,*
  - *TSI and CIEH committed to work together to review opportunities for closer integration of their qualifications and the viability for joint delivery arrangements.*
6. *A table setting out progress against the commitments is **attached** at Appendix A. There has been considerable success in relation to recruitment and retention in that the crisis in Trading Standards and Environmental Health seems to have been stemmed. However, this is seen as mainly due to the EHO Bursary and Capacity Building funding and concern remains that this success will not be maintained once the funding stops. There is a pressing need for authorities to invest in "self grown" staff rather than depending on external funding.*
7. *With regard to the raising the profile of regulatory services element of the work there has been some progress; work with local and central government has met with mixed responses. The LGA/LACORS research (2003) into leading members' and officers' views, a copy of which will be circulated with the Board agenda (extra copies are being printed and will be available at the meeting), provides a useful benchmark:*
- *The overwhelmingly majority of those interviewed believed that regulatory services were delivered to a high standard in their area;*
  - *The three elements of regulatory services which were perceived to have the highest impact on the quality of life are food hygiene, environmental protection and health and safety at work;*
  - *Services with the least perceived impact are private sector housing repair and petroleum safety/licensing;*
  - *Only half of those interviewed said that regulatory services had a high profile among Chief Officers;*
  - *46% of Members thought regulatory services had a high profile among them; and*
  - *Central government was least likely to be seen as viewing regulatory services as high profile (only 14% thought this).*
8. *It is felt that the Hampton review (the Treasury review of business red tape) will provide a lever for further work on this issue and our response to the Interim report was discussed at the January 2005 Board meeting. One issue raised in our response was the lack of co-ordination at the centre in deciding local priorities and there have already been one encouraging outcome from DTI in writing to councils setting out a cross-Government list of suggested priorities for Trading Standards in 2005-6.*

## **Next steps**

9. *It is now time to reassess the programme in light of progress so far, as well as the current situation with regard to the publication of the final Hampton report with the Budget on 16 March. An oral update on the Hampton report will be given at the meeting.*
10. *The recommendations of the Hampton report will have significant implications for local regulatory services. A suggestion, for example, to centralise core services like Trading Standards and Environmental Health would not only be contrary to the prevailing Government position as set out in the recent ODPM Five Year Strategy but would*

*contradict the LGA manifesto aim of further devolution of power to councils.*

11. *While it is clear that Hampton looks at regulatory services from one aspect - the impact on business, it is suggested that the next stages of the project focus on ensuring the central role of regulatory services in protecting the community is generally understood, as well as the need for these to be locally controlled and delivered.*
12. *With regards to recruitment and retention of Trading Standards and Environmental Health staff there are specific issues relating to professional "territory". For example, professional boundaries have meant that the careers materials developed with Capacity Building funding have had to be specific to Trading Standards or Environmental Health, rather than creating a single website or cd-rom. These are sensitive matters and we would expect progress here to be more incremental.*
13. *Some specific suggestions for future work are:*
  - *Development of 'regulatory services manifesto' to support the LGA's manifesto "independence, opportunity, trust";*
  - *Update key objectives messages to include: the benefits of local services and the challenge to those who think it is possible to centralise them;*
  - *Review of structures to provide for better co-ordination and approaches to supporting those services;*
  - *Seek support for the formation of a sub group of the Central Local Partnership on regulatory services;*
  - *More recent case studies given the new era of LPSAs and LAAs;*
  - *Developing a lobbying and awareness raising strategy based on the manifesto's key messages;*
  - *Continuing work on capacity building for leadership in regulatory services;*
  - *Investigating more sustainable funding for training, recruitment and careers materials; and*
  - *Central bodies to look at feasibility of shared foundation qualification for regulatory officers and new recruitment initiatives such as modern apprenticeships.*

### **Member arrangements**

14. *Members agreed initially that the Board would take responsibility for work relating to raising the profile of regulatory services. Members may now wish to consider whether it would be more appropriate for a member task group to be set up that would work within the policy framework set by the Board.*

### **Implications for Wales**

15. *The WLGA has indicated that it would like to remain a member of the Regulatory Service Partnership.*

### **Financial/Resource Implications**

16. *If the Board agrees this approach, a report and project scoping document will be presented to the LGA executive to ensure the appropriate resources are put in place.*

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