

21 March 2005

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## Other Business of the Board

### Decisions

That the report be noted and:

1. the proposed away day in July 2005 be endorsed;
2. the proposed Policy Review Group on road safety be approved on a date to be determined; and
3. the letter to the Rt. Hon Hazel Blears, MP, as suggested in para 9, be approved.

### Actions Required

That:

1. the necessary arrangements be made for a Board away day in July 2005;
2. if approved by the Board, a date be sought for a PRG on road safety; and
3. a letter be drafted and sent on behalf of the Chair of the Board to Rt. Hon Hazel Blears, MP, as set out in para 9.

Action by: LGA Secretariat

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## **Other Business of the Board**

### **Summary**

1. This paper provides a summary of other business relevant to the work of the Board.

### **LACORS Board/Management Committee**

2. On 4 March LACORS implemented its decision to disband the LACORS Management Committee and merge it with the Board of Directors. The new Board will now consider all LACORS policy and organisational business in a single meeting.
3. The Board membership is 6 LGA (2 Conservative, 2 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat and 1 Independent), 2 CoSLA (Council of Scottish Local Authorities), 1 WLGA and 1 NILGA. The LGA current appointments are:
  - Cllr Geoffrey Theobald (Con);
  - Cllr Lewis Rose (Con);
  - Cllr Reg Smith (Lab);
  - Cllr Caroline Seymour (Lib Dem); and
  - Cllr Phillip Evans (Ind)
4. There is currently one Labour vacancy remaining to be filled, and the political group office has been reminded of this.
5. At the meeting of the Board on 24 January, a Member sought clarification over whether there existed an LGA Member appointment with a specific focus on fire issues to LACORS Management Committee. As outlined above, the Management Committee has now been disbanded and all LGA appointments are now made through political group offices, with the approval of the LGA Executive.

### **Safer Communities Board Away Day**

6. At a meeting of Board office holders on 21 February 2005 Members discussed the proposal for a Safer Communities Board away day in July 2005. At present a date has not yet been found which meets all the criteria for the event. However, Members are invited to consider the idea of an away day, which it is suggested would be used to focus on broad horizon issues of interest to the Board, which in turn will help to shape the Board's future objectives and work programme.

### **Safer Communities Board – Future Policy Review Group Meetings**

7. When the Board last discussed the way in which it wished to engage with the wider Membership, there were a number of views expressed in relation to the use of policy review groups. Generally, Members were minded that policy review groups were a useful forum for engaging the wider Membership, but that the name policy review group did not correctly reflect the purpose of the event. Furthermore, the Board was minded that such events should only be provided

when appropriate and not as a matter of course and that attendance levels might be improved if more such events were held outside of London.

8. One emerging issue that might benefit from discussion with the wider membership is road safety, looking broadly at why “road crime” has such a low priority status and what contribution local government and the LGA can make towards challenging this. Members are invited to consider this suggestion. The Board may wish to provide additional ideas that could be the subject of a future PRG meeting.

## **Crime Reduction Centre**

9. In recent months the LGA has participated in a body set up to provide advice to the Home Office in relation to a review of Crime Reduction Centre. The outcome of that review has been that the centre is to cease operating in its present form with resources being diverted to support the provision of community safety training in other forms. Throughout this process the LGA has stressed the need for the level of resources allocated to training by the Home Office to be maintained, and this commitment has been given. There has been agreement that a group will continue to advise the Home Office on the process of reorganising training arrangements. In order to ensure that this effectively meets the needs of local authorities it is proposed that the Chair write to the Minister of State, Hazel Blears, recommending that a stakeholder group be established to steer the process of reallocation of training resources. One responsibility of this group would be to assess the current community safety training needs both for community safety specialists, local government personnel generally (bearing in mind particularly the requirements of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act) and elected members. It is suggested that the letter could also restate the LGAs expectation that the level of funding allocated to training would at least be maintained and if possible increased.

## **Consumer Credit (Amendment) Bill - Licensing Reform**

10. The Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on 16 December 2004. Passage through the House of Commons has now finished and we are hoping for introduction into the House of Lords this week. The DTI is working towards royal assent this session, but a lot will depend on the timing of the next general election.
11. The Bill is the culmination of a three-year review of consumer credit law and will reform the Consumer Credit Act 1974 to protect consumers and create a fairer, more competitive credit market by:
  - enhancing consumer rights and redress by empowering consumers to challenge unfair lending, and through more effective options for resolving disputes;
  - improving the regulation of consumer credit businesses by ensuring fair practices and through targeted action to drive out rogues; and
  - making regulation more appropriate for different types of consumer credit transaction by extending protection to all consumer credit and by creating a fairer regime for business.

12. The licensing provisions are also being reformed; the main proposals are that there will be a strengthened fitness test, which will enable a more forward looking approach, including a competence element where appropriate. The new test will enable the introduction of a risk based approach to assessment of fitness. There will also be provisions for intermediate sanctions, including undertakings and fines, licence conditions, improved investigations powers and information gathering powers. The OFT will be able to delegate certain investigative functions to Local Trading Standards Services and an independent tribunal will be introduced for appeals. Ongoing work is taking place on implementation issues to include structure, costings and fees.

### **Safer Communities Board – Task Groups and Project Work**

13. Attached as appendix 1 is an update on Board related task group/project work.

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