

Notes of Decisions Taken and Action

Safer Communities Board

24 January 2005

Local Government House

Present

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| 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) and Cllr David Smith (Lichfield DC). |
| 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) and Cllr Audrey Jones (Greater Manchester FCDA). |
| Substitutes: | Cllr Ann Gallop (Sutton LB) (Lib Dem) and Cllr David Williams (Merton LB) (Con). |
| Apologies: | Cllr Patrick O'Connor (Lincolnshire CC) (Lib Dem) and Cllr Andy Sutton (Isle of Wight Council) (Con). |

1. Hampton Review - "Reducing Administrative Burdens: effective inspection and enforcement"

The Board received a presentation from Philip Hampton, who was currently leading on the Treasury commissioned review; "Reducing Administrative Burdens: effective inspection and enforcement". A copy of the presentation is attached.

The Board discussed the presentation and the reviews report, and emphasised the following aspects of the LGA's response to findings:

- That local authorities favour a regulatory model that integrated the various inspection regimes;
- That Members support the devolution of regulatory powers in areas where local government's local knowledge and understanding would increase the effectiveness of protective services;
- That powers, if devolved, should in some way be accompanied by

- standardised services across authorities so as to ensure consistency and commonality between;
- That in supporting the establishment of a more integrated regulatory inspection regime and introduction of consistent and common standards between authorities, the Board was mindful that a “one size fits all” framework would not be appropriate and to that end urged the Government to engage fully with local government in discussion about the future model for inspection and enforcement;
 - That, in relation to the inappropriateness of a “one size fits all” model, the Board urged that with the devolution of power should come the power to use discretion;
 - That these changes should aim not only to provide better protective services to the local community, but to make the regulatory inspection regime clearer and more standardised for businesses; and
 - That with any additional powers and duties should come appropriate funding.

More generally, Members accepted that while the majority of businesses were not in breach of legislation, regulation and inspection were still important in order to identify where breaches were occurring.

Separate to the Board’s discussion of the Hampton Review, Members sought confirmation of whether the LGA currently had a link Member on fire at LACORS. It was agreed that this matter would be looked into and reported on at the next meeting.

Decisions

That:

- (i) the LGA/LACORS response to the Hampton Review interim report, incorporating the comments of the Board set out below, be endorsed:
- That local authorities favour a regulatory model that integrated the various inspection regimes;
 - That Members support the devolution of regulatory powers in areas where local government’s local knowledge and understanding would increase the effectiveness of protective services;
 - That powers, if devolved, should in some way be accompanied by standardised services across authorities so as to ensure consistency and commonality between;
 - That in supporting the establishment of a more integrated regulatory inspection regime and introduction of consistent and common standards between authorities, the Board was mindful that a “one size fits all” framework would not be appropriate and to that end urged the Government to engage fully with local government in discussion about the future model for inspection and enforcement;
 - That, in relation to the inappropriateness of a “one size fits all” model, the Board urged that with the devolution of power should come the power to use discretion;

- That these changes should aim not only to provide better protective services to the local community, but to make the regulatory inspection regime clearer and more standardised for businesses; and
 - That with any additional powers and duties should come appropriate funding.
- (ii) confirmation be sought on whether the LGA currently had a link Member on fire at LACORS and an update on this matter be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

Actions

That:

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| (i) | the LGA/LACORS response to the Hampton Review interim report, incorporating the comments of the Board, be submitted; and | TO'F/ LACORS |
| (ii) | details about the LGA Member link arrangements with LACORS on fire matters be reported to the next meeting of the Board. | KF/ LACORS |

2. Domestic Violence Project Update

The Board received a presentation from Anthony Willis, the Domestic Violence project consultant, on the project's work with local partnerships. The presentation focussed on the interim findings from the work with local partnerships, which had revealed the following trends:

- lack of corporate support at chief officer level and crucial partners missing;
- activity was led by the availability of funding which hampers a more strategic approach;
- strategies fail to focus on a limited number of achievable objectives;
- the absence of mainstream funding leads to insecurity and lack of corporate buy-in;
- outreach/advocacy services were fragile and under-funded;
- data collection is patchy;
- initial policing action remains old-fashioned and traditional;
- the voluntary sector was sidelined; and
- co-ordinators were often isolated within the community safety system and could, on occasions, be unable to develop their performance without effective managerial support.

The Board welcomed the report on the initial findings and was particularly concerned to note the evidence that local authorities did not always fully appreciate how tackling domestic violence contributed more widely to the Councils performance. Specifically, if adequate resources were allocated, effective work to tackle domestic violence could lead to significant savings in several areas of expenditure.

Members also focused discussion around the role of advocacy, especially within the first week after an incident, the use of Sanctuary type projects that help the victim and any children to remain in their own homes, the

impact that removal from the family home could have on the children involved and the importance of employers adopting policies in relation to domestic violence.

Decisions

The Board:

- (i) agreed the continuation of the project's consultancy work with selected local partnerships into a second, year-long programme of shorter more focussed interventions with a greater number of partnerships;
- (ii) highlighted the following issues for further work in the second year of the project:
 - the need to improve understanding at local authorities of the wider corporate benefits and cost reductions that result from working successfully to tackle domestic violence;
 - promote the role of advocacy, especially within the first week after an incident;
 - promote the use of sanctuary projects that help victims to remain in their own homes; and
 - promote the adoption of domestic violence employment policies by local authorities.

Actions

That:

- (i) the project's consultancy work with selected local partnerships continue into a second, year-long programme of shorter more focussed interventions with a greater number of partnerships; KM
- (ii) the bullet points listed in decision (ii) above be included in the focus of the project work in the second year; and KM

3. Police Reform

The Board received a report setting out a draft LGA response to the Police Reform White Paper. The report highlighted the key issues for consideration by Members. The highlighted issues were discussed in depth by the Board and it was agreed that the LGA's response to the White Paper should be amended to reflect debate and that the amended response should be circulated to the Board's office holders for final approval prior to submission. Office holders agreed that the wider Board Membership should be copied in on the new draft response.

Decision

That:

- (i) the draft response to the Police Reform White Paper be endorsed subject to the following amendments and comments being incorporated:
 - in relation to community engagement (paragraphs 15 and 16), while recognising that there should be a duty on local authorities to fulfil this role, the Board was keen to emphasise

the need for flexibility in how this was done since local authorities were best placed to know how to engage with the various sections of their community, especially those sections that were “hard-to-reach”;

- while supporting a specific role for Councillors as community advocates (paragraphs 18 and 19) the Board requested that wording state more clearly that this was a role being suggested for all elected Members and not one specific group of Members. The Board also suggested that the LGA should submit with its final response details of what the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) was able to offer by way of support for Members in this role;
 - in supporting the principle of the a trigger mechanism (paragraphs 20, 21 and 22) the Board emphasised that communities should only be able to access the trigger mechanism through the ward Member and that the mechanism should be a last resort only;
 - in supporting the introduction of statutory scrutiny of local community safety activity by the local authority Members requested that the model of health scrutiny be explored to see if any elements would be applicable or useful. The Board emphasised the need to avoid duplicating the scrutiny work that police authorities already undertook; and
 - while supporting the principle of strengthened local authority representation on police authorities the Board noted that there were a variety of views about how this might best be achieved, which was made especially complicated by the variety of structures that existed nationally. There was a consensus around the need for the Chair of a police authority to be an elected Member, but on the more general issue of the practical changes necessary to strengthen local authority representation on police authorities the Board agreed that the LGA’s response should reflect the differing structural arrangements.
- (ii) the amended response be circulated to the Board’s office holders (and copied to the wider Board Membership) for final approval.

Actions

That:

- (i) the LGA response to the Police Reform White Paper be amended so as to reflect the Boards comments set out in decision (i) above; and DM/KF/
JRa
- (ii) the amended response be circulated to the Board’s office holders (and copied to the wider Board Membership) for final approval. DM/KF

4. Safer Communities Board Work Programme 2005

Decisions

That:

- (i) the following issues be included under a standard “other business” item on all future Board agendas:

- update of task group activities; and
 - update on activities of the Chair, leading Members and outside bodies.
- (ii) an update on the Licensing Act and Gambling Bill be included in the “other business” item on the next Board agenda; and
- (iii) the Board receive a copy of the LGA’s response to the Government’s consultation on draft regulations for Emergency Planning once agreed by the Task Group.

Actions

That:

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| (i) | the “other business” report for the next meeting of the Board include an update on the Licensing Act, Gambling Bill, task groups and the activities of the Chair, other leading Members and outside bodies | KF |
| (ii) | the LGA’s agreed response to the Government’s consultation on draft regulations for Emergency Planning be circulated to Board Members. | TO’F |

5. Notes of Previous Meeting

Decision

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