

16 January 2006

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## Neighbourhood Policing

### Decisions

1. *Members are requested to approve the principles on which work relating to the introduction of neighbourhood policing should be based (paragraph 11), and make recommendations on developing the next stage of this work in tandem with the LGA Executive project on neighbourhood governance (paragraph 13).*

### Actions Required

2. *Plans for further work to be developed on the basis of members' recommendations*

**Action by:** *Safer Communities Board Secretariat*

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## Neighbourhood Policing

### Summary

1. *This report provides members with information on the proposals for, and actions to develop, neighbourhood policing and its links with the work on developing neighbourhood governance and proposes a set of principles upon which the LGA's future approach to neighbourhood policing should be based and invites members to consider and make recommendations on the way in which this work should proceed.*

### Background

2. *The concept behind neighbourhood policing – that of ensuring that policing policy and practice reflects and serves the need of communities - is not new. Specifically, for example, it was embodied in the development of Police Community Consultative Committees set up by statute following the recommendations of the Scarman report into the Brixton riots of the early 1980s. However, these arrangements have in general been judged not to have delivered the expected results, leading to a recommitment by the government to the introduction of new and more effective arrangements for ensuring sensitivity of policing policy to community needs.*
3. *This formed a central part of the major proposals for police reform launched in the 2003 Green Paper 'Policing: Building Safer Communities Together' followed in late 2004 by the White Paper 'Building Communities: Beating Crime'. This included a commitment to the introduction of neighbourhood policing in all neighbourhoods by 2008, with initially the designation of one 'pathfinder' neighbourhood in each of the 43 police authority areas by the end of 2005.*
4. *The key features of neighbourhood policing, as set out in the White Paper are:*
  - *Dedicated resources for neighbourhoods which include the extended police family, but where numbers, staffing mix, skills and powers available are appropriate to the particular needs of the neighbourhood;*
  - *An emphasis on local problem solving with mechanisms in place to identify and respond to neighbourhood level priorities and to draw in additional resources from other levels and partners where necessary;*
  - *Mechanisms in place to target resources at local priorities and to hold police and partners to account for tackling neighbourhood problems; and*
  - *The police constable to play the pivotal, problem-solving role within the neighbourhood policing team.*
5. *More details of the proposals were announced in the publication 'Neighbourhood Policing you police; your community; our commitment' in March 2005. This recognised that in many areas the diversity of arrangements that would need to be made to reflect needs of different communities. 'Neighbourhoods' would be defined according to the needs of local circumstances with a range of methods being used to ensure effective consultation with communities. A Neighbourhood Police fund of £37m for 2005/6, £88m for 2006/7*

and £340m for 2007/8 would be made available to police authorities to support the recruitment of community support officers, with a target of 24,000 in post by 2008.

6. *The development of policy and guidance for neighbourhood policing is being carried out by an Association of Chief Police Officer led Neighbourhood Policing Programme Team. The Director of the Team, Jerry Kirkby, will be attending this meeting of the Board.*
7. *The proposals were broadly welcomed by the LGA and we have subsequently been represented on the Neighbourhood Policing Programme Board and its sub groups. However, we do have concerns over two particular issues, which have underpinned our input into the development of the proposals:*
  - *To increase the emphasis placed on the role of elected Councillors and existing local authority arrangements for community consultation in the arrangements; and*
  - *To ensure that the distinction between 'neighbourhood policing' and overall neighbourhood community safety is understood. Policing activity forms a key part of a complex continuum of actions and interventions designed to permanently reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Whilst good policing will, by definition, create an awareness of the underlying causes of criminal behaviour, the solutions do not lie in policing alone. We have been particularly concerned that in draft guidance the terminology 'neighbourhood team' has been used, suggesting that the teams would have a generic responsibility for community safety. As the teams would have a specific policing function (albeit working closely in partnership with other agencies), we have argued for the more accurate term 'neighbourhood policing team' to be used.*

## **The 'trigger mechanism'**

8. *Alongside, and complementing, the introduction of neighbourhood policing was the proposal for the 'trigger mechanism', through which community groups could initiate action when it was felt that the response of police or other community safety partners had, in spite of requests to do so, failed to meet the needs of the community. Proposals for the wider application of this mechanism were subsequently announced in the joint ODFM and Home Office White Paper: 'Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter'. The LGA has supported the introduction of the mechanism, whilst seeking to ensure that the key role of the locally elected member is recognised, that it operates within a clear set of agreed service standards and is fairly applied. Our overall view is that effective community engagement should require use of the mechanism only in very exceptional circumstances.*

## **Neighbourhood governance**

9. *'Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter' forms part of a series of documents designed to set out the government's overall vision on the future of local government. The document sets out that the government wants to see:*
  - *opportunities for people to get involved in their neighbourhood everywhere;*
  - *local government at the heart of devolution to the neighbourhood level; and*
  - *continuing variety building on existing neighbourhood arrangements.*

*The LGA Executive has been closely engaged in these developments through its Neighbourhood Governance Project, and our input into the development of neighbourhood policing and the trigger mechanism has been integrated with this work. This link was underlined when the Chief Executives from the 43 local authorities in which*

*pathfinder neighbourhood policing arrangements had been established were invited jointly by the LGA and ODFM to consider widening the scope of their arrangements to include wider neighbourhood issues. This was discussed by representatives of these authorities at a seminar on 4 November 2005 and proposals for taking this forward are still being developed.*

10. *The LGA Executive will be taking a paper on the development of the Neighbourhood Governance Project at its meeting on 19 January. This will look at the possibility of developing a plan of action designed to help all authorities put in place arrangements to allow neighbourhoods (individuals and communities) to have a say in decisions about public service action in their area, and to hold service deliverers to account. Members may wish to consider how further action in relation to the development of neighbourhood policing would support this objective.*

## **The LGA's position**

11. *In summary, our input into the development of neighbourhood policing and the 'community call for action' has been based on the following principles:*
  - *Local communities should be given the maximum freedom to determine their own community safety and policing priorities and targets;*
  - *The views of all members of the community should be effectively represented during this process;*
  - *The number of centrally set targets should be kept to a minimum;*
  - *The arrangements must recognise the key role played by local authorities in the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour through the provision of mainstream services and full participation in community safety partnerships;*
  - *Locally elected members and local authority mechanisms should play a central role in ensuring that community interests are fully represented during the development of policing policy; and*
  - *The distinction between neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood community safety partnerships must be understood with neighbourhood policing providing a distinct activity within, not leading, the partnership.*

*Members are invited to endorse these principles and consider any further issues that should be added.*

## **Future action**

12. *Work will continue in representing the interests of local government during the development of these on the basis of agreed principles. In addition it is likely that the LGA Executive will develop further work designed to support the development of neighbourhood governance. Members are therefore invited to debate the issues raised in this report, and provide guidance on how they wish the work of the Safer Communities Board in this area to continue. Following this plans will be developed for the next stage in this work.*
13. *Suggested issues for discussion*

- *How can locally elected members best represent their communities in relation to neighbourhood policing?*
- *How can the links between neighbourhood policing teams and local authorities best be developed?*
- *What forms of consultation will be needed to ensure that all sections of the community are fully represented?*
- *How can we best harness information about existing neighbourhood policing arrangements that are working well?*
- *How can the development of neighbourhood policing best fit into the LGA's wider neighbourhood governance agenda.*
- *What are the Board's future priorities for neighbourhood policing?*

## **Implications for Wales**

14. *The arrangements apply to both England and Wales.*

## **Financial/Resource Implications**

15. *The work will be undertaken within existing resources.*

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