

12 March 2007

Update on 'Working together to build safer communities' Intervention – Decisions and Actions Required

Decisions

1. The Board is asked to agree the LGA's overall approach to the CDRP reform agenda and the principles of the Empowered and Effective leadership chapter set out in paragraphs 2 – 6.
2. The Board is asked to agree to the direction of work as set out in paragraph 13 – 17.
3. The Board is asked to agree the direction of set out in paragraph 19 – 21.

Actions Required

1. Officers to action as directed by the Board

Action by: Safer Communities team as required

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12 March 2007

Update on Community Safety Intervention

Summary

1. This paper provides an update on the main intervention of the Safer Communities Board 'Working together to build safer communities', the main areas of which are Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) Reform, reducing re-offending and respect/anti-social behaviour.

CDRP Reform

2. The aim of the LGA's work on CDRP reform is to ensure that the national standards for CDRPs are non-prescriptive and allow as much flexibility as possible for CDRPs to set and respond to local priorities.

3. The Crime and Disorder Act Review implementation programme is now in the Production and Implementation stage. The aim is for the regulations and national standards, and accompanying guidance to be effective from summer 2007.

4. The governance structure for the remainder of the implementation programme has been re-aligned. A Partnerships Steering Group is overseeing reform and providing strategic direction, and a working group is responsible for managing the production of national standards and guidance. The LGA is represented on both groups.

5. Guidance is being developed by stakeholders and the LGA has drafted a chapter on Empowered and Effective leadership. The principles set out are:

- The elected member portfolio holder for community safety must be a member of the CDRP at district/unitary level.
- The portfolio holder assuming the role of chair could help embed the principle of democratically accountable political leadership across the local partnership landscape, and provide visible leadership in a way that the public can understand and relate to. It can also help in securing resources and support for the partnership.
- The role of the portfolio holder should be to:
 - Attend CDRP meetings, and ensure that recommendations and decisions of the partnership are fed into the LSP
 - Keep the CDRP abreast of the wider picture on local priorities and targets, and on progress in achieving them, developed at the LSP level
 - Ensure the priorities of the CDRP are reflected in the work of the local authority
 - Encourage open discussion and transparent decision making within the CDRP
 - Given their level of democratic legitimacy, provide a steer in reaching difficult decisions (for which the local authority will be ultimately held to account at

the ballot box) on those issues which involve competing public interests, or which are proving contentious in an area

- Members of the CDRP must be empowered to take decisions on behalf of their organisations and commit any necessary resources to ensuring delivery.

6. It is proposed that the LGA will be chairing a working group involving the Home Office, DCLG and the Department of Health to oversee preparation of joint guidance on the new arrangements for overview and scrutiny committees and the Community Call for Action (CCfA) contained in the Police and Justice Act and the Local Government Bill. All of these provisions are effective from April 2008.

Decision

The Board is asked to agree the LGA's overall approach to the CDRP reform agenda and the principles of the Empowered and Effective leadership chapter.

Points for discussion

- What should the role of the Community Safety Portfolio Holder at district and county CDRP level be?
- How important is local authority chairmanship of CDRPs?
- What balance between prescription and flexibility should the national standards strike?
- The LGA has come out in support of a CCfA process. How should the CCfA develop to empower frontline councillors?

Reducing re-offending

7. The aim of the reducing re-offending work stream is two-fold. Firstly we need to raise the profile of the work of local authorities in reducing re-offending with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), wider government and other stakeholders. Secondly, we need to raise the profile of reducing re-offending within local authorities and encourage them to adopt the messages of Going Straight and Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood.

8. It is proposed that future work involves:

- A programme of research to assess local authorities' work in reducing re-offending and the barriers they face and the production of high quality case study examples
- The development of a local delivery model setting out the role of local authorities in reducing re-offending
- The LGA as part of the Coalition on Social and Criminal Justice working on a model for commissioning in the new arrangements contained in the Offender Management Bill
- The LGA as part of the Coalition on Social and Criminal Justice developing a programme of work around non-custodial sentences

Local Action to reduce re-offending conference

9. As part of our work to raise the profile of reducing re-offending within local authorities and to encourage them to adopt the messages of Going Straight and Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood, the LGA held a successful conference on reducing re-offending on 13 February.

The Coalition on Social and Criminal Justice

10. The Coalition on Social and Criminal Justice met on 26 February to discuss follow up work programme to Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood.

11. As part of the wider lobbying strategy for Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood the coalition will be presenting the publication and its key themes to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Penal Affairs on 20 March. The APPG, established in Parliament by MPs and peers as a focus for their interest in a particular issue, is an important opportunity to profile the document and the work of the coalition.

12. It was recommended that a future work programme includes working on a model for commissioning in the new arrangements contained in the Offender Management Bill developing a programme of work around non-custodial sentences.

The Offender Management Bill

13. Third reading and Report Stage took place on 28 February.

14. At previous stages of the Bill, the LGA has raised concerns about the lack of local accountability within the Bill and has called for greater recognition of the role which councils have to play in reducing re-offending. Consistent with the approach taken in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, we argued that LAAs need to be developed as the primary means of achieving joined up working at a local level, across agencies within and beyond the criminal justice system.

15. The Government has given assurances that it shares our commitment to local accountability, and is considering seriously the most effective ways in which it can meet our concerns and more appropriately reflect the need for local involvement in the management of offenders, as the Bill progresses. We have set out particular amendments which we would like the government to introduce during the next stages of the Bill in the House of Lords.

16. We are greatly encouraged by the assurances received from government. A bill amended in this way would clearly recognise the key role of councils and local partnerships in tackling re-offending, integrate new arrangements for NOMS and the probation service with LAAs and reverse the centralising approach, instead enshrining the principle of local accountability. This reflects wider LGA lobbying work on the legislative programme as a whole, where for priority bills – including the offender management bill – we have three key lobbying aims: to implement devolution across all legislation (not just the local

government bill); to ensure that all bills are consistent with (and do not undermine) the positive proposals in the local government bill, particularly LAAs and the wider performance management framework and to enhance the strategic leadership role of councils.

Research

17. We are planning to commission research to assess local authorities' work in reducing re-offending to inform our lobbying work of government and other stakeholders, and to help encourage local authorities to consider the contribution they can make locally to reducing re-offending. A survey of local authorities will increase understanding of the extent and nature of local authorities' role in working to reduce re-offending, as well as trends since the 2005 survey. The survey will help inform the identification of suitable authorities for more in-depth case studies (approximately 20). It is important that we build a strong evidence-based case to support our arguments about the role of local authorities.

Decision

The Board is asked to agree to the direction of work as set out in paragraphs 13 to 17.

Points for Discussion

- How can we encourage local authorities to realise their full potential in relation to tackling re-offending? What role should the board play in this?
- How can new arrangements for commissioning work in practice?

Anti-social behaviour/respect

18. On 23 January, almost a year after the launch of the Respect Agenda, the government's Respect Task Force released details of forty new Respect Action Areas. Forty local authorities across England and Wales have signed up to five key interventions.

- i. Family intervention projects to tackle 'neighbours from hell';
- ii. More parenting classes for parents struggling with troublesome children;
- iii. Face the People sessions where the police, local authorities and others can be accountable to their local public;
- iv. Keep up the relentless action to tackle anti-social behaviour by using the full range of tools and powers available;
- v. Using the Respect Housing Standard to prevent and deal with any problems in social housing

19. The LGA has welcomed the focus on intervention at the earliest opportunity and investment in sporting activities, volunteering programmes and parenting classes as constructive steps. Our press release noted that becoming a Respect Action Area did not mean that these authorities have worse problems than anywhere else; instead that they are tackling them effectively and the Government has recognised their efforts.

20. Related to this, the LGA has also submitted its response to the latest Home Office Anti-Social Behaviour consultation. We have welcomed additional frontline powers to tackle anti-social behaviour as beneficial on the proviso that they are twinned with appropriate multi-agency support measures to help perpetrators tackle the root causes of their actions.

Next Steps

21. We will continue to engage with the Respect Task Force and Home Office to monitor and evaluate the results emerging from Respect Action Zones. Anti-social behaviour is expected to feature heavily in the new Criminal Justice Bill, due in spring 2007 and we are meeting the Home Office Bill team later this month to discuss this forthcoming legislation in more detail.

Decision

The Board is asked to agree the direction of set out in paragraph 19 to 21.

Implications for Wales

22. The implications for Wales will be fully addressed in the development of the work streams.

Financial/Resource Implications

23. There are no exceptional financial requirements raised by these recommendations.

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