

Other Business Update - Decisions and Actions Required

Decisions

1. *To note the update on current issues not already reported elsewhere on this agenda and to agree next steps where indicated.*

Actions Required

2. *As noted within the update.*

Action by:

3. *LGA Officers and advisers as appropriate*

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Other business update

Emergency Planning

1. **Exercise Winter Willow:** *The LGA recently participated in Winter Willow – a national exercise to test the UK's ability to manage an influenza pandemic at national, regional and local levels. Building on the scenario tested in Exercise Shared Goal in June last year, Exercise Winter Willow tested the UK's crisis co-ordination in the event of the arrival of a flu pandemic in the UK. The LGA was represented at a national level at the Civil Contingencies Committee (COBR) (by Cllr Andy Sutton and David Wechsler CEx LB Croydon) and local authorities across the country participated in the exercise at a local and regional level. The exercise covered a number of key issues including:*

- *The medical response – vaccines, anti-virals distribution and use*
- *Policies in response to particular settings – schools, social care, prisons, transport*
- *Management of the dead*
- *Ensuring business continuity*
- *Communications*

2. *The outcome of the exercise is being evaluated and lessons learned will be identified and it is intended that a full report should be brought back to consider the policy implications of the exercise and also the LGA's own contingency plans in the event of national emergency.*

3. **Data Sharing guidance:** *One of the lessons identified in the Government's report on lessons from the 7 July 2005 London bombing attacks related to the management of personal data by local and regional responders. It was apparent that in some parts of the emergency response, the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 were either misinterpreted or over-zealously applied. Subsequent reports from the regions have indicated that the London experience in this respect is not unique. As a result, the Cabinet Office worked with a wide range of stakeholders across government to develop tailored guidance for the emergency community to dispel some of the myths and provide a useful resource to inform future emergency planning, response and recovery. Data Protection and Sharing – guidance for Emergency Planners and responders has recently been published and is available for download at: www.ukresilience.gov.uk. The guidance is being incorporated into training at the Emergency Planning College.*

4. **LGA conference: Meeting the Challenge of Civil Contingencies - 22 March 2007, London.** *We have had an excellent response to this topical one day conference that will look at the challenges ahead in maintaining momentum in the face of high profile risks and planning for the potential risks of a human flu pandemic, natural disaster and other scenarios.*

5. **Emergency Planning Beacons:** *Beacon authorities for Emergency Planning are due to be launched later in March.*

Coroners' reform

6. *Secretary of State at the Department for Constitutional Affairs, Harriet Harman has announced the Government's intention to take forward reform of the Coronial system and to bring forward a Bill as soon as Parliamentary time allowed. In practice this is unlikely to be during the current Parliamentary session. It is the Government's intention that the Bill will:*

- *improve the way that the system serves the public interest and meet bereaved families' concerns. The Bill will give families involved in the inquest process a clear legal standing in the system, including rights through a new appeals system, enabling them to challenge a coroner's decision, and a Charter for Bereaved People will set out the level of service in relation to information and consultation they can expect more generally.*
- *strengthen coroners' work. The Bill will establish a transparent appointments system for a new cadre of whole time coroners, who will have to be legally qualified, and will provide them with improved powers of investigation and local medical support.*
- *create a national structure for coroners' work. For the first time there will be a Chief Coroner, supported by a Chief Medical Advisor, who will provide national leadership for coroners, as the Lord Chief Justice does for judges. This will be supported by national standards, a coronial advisory council, a proper inspection system and national training for coroners and their officers.*

7. *In the meantime the LGA will support an ACPO/DCA research project to provide guidance on the transfer of coroners' offices from police to local authorities.*

Stray dogs

8. *Protracted negotiations have been underway between Defra and the Home Office on the cost of transferring responsibility for stray dogs, including at evenings and weekends from police to local authorities as required by Clause of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. The Home Office is carrying out a survey to obtain more detailed information on the likely costs of the transfer to local authorities and savings to the police in three areas – Greater Manchester, Hampshire and Leicestershire. As this will be a new burden we will continue to press for funding and sufficient time for local authorities to provide for this transfer in their budgets.*

Cash Machines - Privacy Spaces

9. *On 7 February the LGA and the Home Office released joint guidance to local authorities on privacy space markings for cash machines or ATMs (Automated Teller Machines). Privacy space markings are a 1m square of clearly visible markings (e.g. painted, brass studs or different coloured paving) on the ground in front of the ATM.*

10. *Research, based upon evidence received from Greater Manchester, indicates that up to one in four street crime offences were geographically connected to an ATM and that on introducing privacy space markings, offences reduced by 66% within 150m of the ATMs.*

11. *Based on these results the LGA, Home Office and the Association of Payment and Clearing Services (APACS), which represents the banks on this issue, are encouraging local authorities to consider introducing such schemes into their area.*

12. *The banking industry is prepared to match funding with the local authority and local police force in order to take this initiative forward. Local Authorities may also wish to consider employing those people on community sentences, under supervision of the Youth Offending Team or Probation, to undertake the physical labour for installation of the Privacy Spaces.*

LGA Circular 36/2007 can be found at

www.lga.gov.uk Home > Publications > LG Alerts > Cash Machines 'Privacy Space' Markings

Implementing Smoke-free legislation (England only)

13. *The date for the implementation of smoke-free legislation has been set for 6am on Sunday 1st July 2007. The Department of Health has published two sets of regulations which set out some of the detail of the Health Act 2006. The Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations, which include definitions of enclosed and substantially enclosed spaces and details of enforcement authorities, were laid before Parliament on Monday 18 December 2006.*

14. *The Smoke-free (Signs) Regulations, which relate to required signage under smoke-free legislation, are currently being considered by Europe under the Technical Standards Directive and will be laid before Parliament after the 3 month consultation process is complete.*

15. *Three further sets of regulations will be published in the New Year containing: exemptions and vehicles; penalties and discounted amounts; and offences in vehicles and the format for fixed penalty notices. The last two sets of regulations will be subject to Parliamentary debate.*

16. *The Department has also announced the funding available to help authorities meet their responsibilities under smoke-free legislation.*

Minimum age to purchase tobacco raised from 16 to 18 years

17. *The Government have announced that the minimum age of purchase of tobacco is to rise from 16 to 18 years from the 1st October 2007. This follows a comprehensive consultation carried out during the summer to which LACORS responded.*

19. *LACORS supports the Governments proposal to raise the age of sale to 18 years as this will bring the age limit in line with a number of other age restricted goods such as alcohol, fireworks and gas lighter refills for which Local Authority Trading Standards already have responsibility. We believe that raising the age may assist retailers in complying with the law in as much as a common age limit for such potentially dangerous goods may help.*

20. *However, in terms of reducing the numbers of illegal sales of tobacco to young people, having an age limit of 18 in it self is not a barrier to such illegal sales. The recent alcohol misuse campaigns have shown that having an 18 age limit does not preclude illegal sales. Thus the role for Local Authorities remains an important one.*

21. *LACORS are pleased to note that the Government intends to implement a robust communications campaign leading up to the change. This will be important to reduce the burden of advising businesses that will otherwise be placed upon Local Authority services.*

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