

Home Office Crime Strategy - Decisions and Actions Required

Decisions

1. Members are invited to note the background set out in this paper as context for the Home Office presentation on the new crime strategy. It would be helpful to have Members':

- Reactions to the key features of the strategy, in particular around community engagement, partnership working and the balance between national and local priorities for crime reduction.
- Direction on the terms in which the LGA should respond to the strategy when launched. Subject to Members' views, it looks as though there will be much to welcome in principle and much to work through in detail to ensure that follow-up delivers on the strategy's intent.

Actions Required

2. LGA Officers to reflect Members' views in continuing engagement with the Home Office and other Departments.

Action by: LGA Safer Communities team

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Home Office Crime Strategy

Summary

1. The Government will launch a revised crime strategy later this month. Helen Murray, Head of the Home Office's Crime Strategy Unit will outline the strategy to Board members at the meeting on 14 May. This note provides some brief background as an aid to discussion.

Background

2. The new crime strategy is the first instalment of a suite of activity which will help to frame the national approach to crime reduction over the next few years and set the tone for the central/local relationship in this important area of activity. It will need to be viewed, in due course, alongside the Public Service Agreements emerging from CSR07; the set of national indicators being developed for the new LAA round; and development of performance assessment methodologies through the new CAA arrangements and the Home Office's complementary assessment of police and community safety performance (APACS). As part of the discussion on 14 May, Members may wish to explore the linkages between this strategy and other strands of work; and to seek an update on the development of the Safer Communities PSA (and other relevant PSAs).

3. The strategy is likely to be framed around a three-part vision, covering:

- approaches to deliver reduced crime levels and ensure safer communities;
- approaches to reduce the perception of crime and increase confidence in police and other community safety agencies;
- renewed emphasis on partnership working, with a clearer distinction between national priorities and flexibility at the local level to target areas of local concern.

4. Taking each theme in turn, potential areas of interest to Members include:

a. **Crime reduction/Safer communities:** The strategy brings a clearer emphasis on the importance at a national level of serious and violent crime; it is likely to emphasise the importance of taking a joined up view of the offender and not just the offence, with a renewed focus on multi-agency activity covering early intervention (especially for youth crime), prevention and action to reduce reoffending rather than a simple focus on enforcement. This is to be welcomed and Members may wish to explore the extent to which the Home Office has thought through delivery mechanisms as well as questions of principle – there is a role for councils here, which Members may want to discuss, both as convenors of partnerships and as direct providers of services. It would similarly be useful to probe the extent to which other Government Departments have bought in to the strategy.

b. Perceptions of crime: The strategy is likely to major on real engagement between local partners and their communities about what crime problems matter most to them and should be prioritised locally. It recognises the need to strike a balance between encouraging vigilance in communities and managing excessive fear of crime. This recognition of community engagement is to be welcomed but Members may wish to set out for the Home Office the range of ways in which councils and partners already engage in dialogue with individuals and local groups (to counter the potential impression that we are starting from scratch). It would also be useful to hear views on the scope for better joining up at the local level of outreach by councils, police authorities and the police. There is also a greater focus in the strategy on the victims of crime, specifically on young people as victims – this provides a welcome balance to some of the potential net-widening effects of approaches to anti-social behaviour.

c. Partnership working/local flexibility: The strategy aims to change the balance of the relationship between Government and delivery partners, with a new sense of working in partnership, backed up by a clearer sense at the national level of a smaller number of outcome-focused objectives and increased local flexibility to determine local priorities and deliver against them. There is specific recognition of the need to align target setting procedures with the LAA process. Members may want to examine how in detail the Home Office sees the interaction between national outcomes and local priorities working; and to question how (and where) potential issues of under-performance might be handled.

5. Overall, there appears to be much to be commended in the new strategy, with its emphasis on community engagement and partnership working (although it is less clear about the specific role of councils per se in driving this agenda forward). Against that background, it would be useful to secure Members' agreement to a positive reaction from the LGA on launch of the strategy, together with any additional messages we should be making. This is though the start of a dialogue; and there will be opportunities for LGA Members to influence the practical implementation of the strategy in the coming months.

Implications for Wales

6. The strategy covers England and Wales. It appears to acknowledge well the similarities and distinctions in approach in Wales (with specific recognition of the role of the Welsh Assembly, of Community Safety Partnerships (vice CDRPs) and of specific Welsh approaches to, say, tackling youth offending). Members may though wish to probe further how this relationship is expected to work in practice.

Financial/Resource Implications

7. The Home Office does not expect additional resources to be made available through CSR07 for delivery of this strategy; existing funding for the police, community safety and the LAA Safer and Stronger block would be available to take the initiatives forward. That is understandable; but there is also an assumption that an increased focus on serious and violent crime will be delivered through smarter and more efficient delivery of initiatives to tackle low level crime and anti-social behaviour (which by their nature may be a higher priority at the local level). Members may therefore wish to consider and discuss how this greater national focus on serious/violent crime will

drive resource and manpower prioritisation at the local level (in particular in terms of police priorities) and the implications that such an approach would have for genuine flexibility to set local priorities for crime reduction.

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