

The Best Commission - way ahead - Decisions and Actions Required

Decisions

- 1. Members are invited to:**
 - a. note the key recommendations of Lord Best's Independent Commission and the LGA's response to them;**
 - b. consider from a Safer Communities perspective the implications of relevant recommendations for the focus of the Board's agenda and its ways of working, with particular emphasis on how we might better engage the wider LGA membership;**
 - c. decide how the Board wants to take forward detailed work on the implications for its work, within the overall framework of the LGA's formal response.**

Actions Required

- 2. LGA officers to action as necessary.**

Action by: LGA Safer Communities team, engaging PD Development

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The Best Commission - way ahead

Summary

1. This note provides background for an initial discussion by Safer Communities Board members on the key recommendations arising from the Best review of relationships and the LGA's response to his recommendations.

Background

2. At the end of March 2007, the Independent Commission, chaired by Lord Best, made its final report and recommendations arising from its review of the LGA's relationships with Government, members and partners. In headline terms, the report concluded that the LGA had done well in - and was well placed to continue - arguing the case for local government at the national level, but that there was a disconnection between the central LGA and its wider council membership in the regions. There was, in particular, a need for the LGA to re-engage with Members, rebuild two-way lines of communication and take advantage of the talent and knowledge within member authorities up and down the country."

3. The full set of recommendations made by the Independent Commission is available on the LGA website www.lga.gov.uk >Publications>Books & Leaflets. The LGA has worked up its formal response to these recommendations, based on the views of Group Leaders, the LGA Executive and senior LGA management; these were presented to General Assembly in Birmingham and discussed in a number of sessions in the LGA's annual conference.

4. The recommendations of particular relevance to the Safer Communities Board include:

a. the establishment of Sounding Boards, headed up by Portfolio Leaders and encompassing a network of elected Member LGA Ambassadors to ensure that our policy development work is fully connected to, and draws on, the expertise and experience of councillors and councils across the country. The LGA accepts the thrust of this recommendation but intends to implement it through the existing machinery of policy boards and board chairs. There are opportunities here for the Safer Communities Board in how it might increasingly help to foster two-way dialogue with the broader LGA membership. We should think through the potential for increased use of Member task groups in this light. And the approach to Board Champions puts the SCB in a good position to deliver on the thinking behind the proposed Ambassador role.

b. greater co-ordination of input to policy development through the establishment of formal networks of advisers and through greater engagement with regional groupings of councils or special interest groups. We have in place

active networks of Community Safety and Emergency Planning advisers and are similarly developing a network of cohesion/extremism advisers, but there is scope to think through how they might be more formally tied in to the work of the Board. Member views would be welcome on ways in which the LGA could strengthen relationships with regional LGAs and other groups, for example by commissioning pieces of policy development of relevance to the Safer Communities agenda from such groups.

c. greater emphasis on the role of the LGA and central bodies in supporting performance improvement in councils (across the spectrum of performance) – this aligns well with the direction of travel under the “Raising our Game” initiative and is likely to be a major focus of activity in coming months. For the Safer Communities Board, building on discussions in the January round of meetings, we should think through how the Board members, both individually and collectively, and the Board agenda of work for next year’s cycle might best help to support councils’ performance – and perhaps more of a challenge, the performance of partnerships – in the community safety and regulatory services areas. There are further opportunities for enhanced co-operation between LGA, IDeA and LACoRS in this sphere of activity.

d. the formation of national strategic partnerships to explore how national action can help to support effective local partnerships. It would be helpful to have Member views on Safer Communities issues that might be of relevance to such a grouping and on whether there would be benefit in seeking to form any sub-partnerships at the national level themed around community safety work – for example, would there be merit in seeking to convene a National Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, mirroring the partners engaged in CDRPs at the local level?

5. Claire Holloway, the new Programme Director for Development, will join the Board discussion. She is leading the implementation of the Raising our Game and Best initiatives - it would be useful for her to get initial Member feedback first hand on how the Safer Communities Board can play its part. Members may also wish to consider how, in slightly slower time, they want to engage in working through the consequences of this agenda for the Board’s ways of working (building for example on discussion at the March meeting around the length and focus of the formal Board meetings).

Implications for Wales

6. There are no specific implications for Wales from this programme of work, although we should take the opportunity to think through more clearly our links with the WLGA in the community safety arena.

Financial/Resource Implications

7. The LGA’s response to the Best recommendations will bring a greater emphasis on deepening and strengthening relations with member councils and councillors. This and the other recommendations will have implications for the way in which our

resources are deployed. The details of that, and of any necessary reprioritisation that flows from it, will be worked through as part of this year's business planning cycle.

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