

Notes of Previous Meeting

Safer Communities Board

10 September 2007

at Local Government House

Present

In the Chair: Cllr Hazel Harding CBE (Lancashire CC) (Labour)

Deputy Chairs: Cllr Graham Brown (Powys CC) (Independent); Cllr Andy Sutton (Isle of Wight UA) (Conservative) and Cllr Allan Siao Ming Witherick (Hertfordshire) (Liberal Democrat).

Conservative: Cllr Les Byrom CBE (Sefton MBC); Cllr David Smith (Lichfield DC); Cllr Roland Domleo (Congleton BC); Cllr Robert Light (Kirklees MBC); Cllr Audrey Lewis (Westminster City); Cllr Joanna Spicer (Suffolk CC).

Labour: Cllr Ann Lucas (Coventry City Council); Cllr Mark Burns-Williamson (Wakefield MDC); Cllr Mehboob Khan (Kirklees).

Liberal

Democrat: Cllr David Goddard (Stockport City); Cllr Paul Sample (Salisbury DC).

Apologies: Cllr Steve Reed (Lambeth LB).

Substitute: Cllr David Lancaster (Salford City) (Labour).

1. Introductions and agenda setting for the day

The Chair (Cllr Hazel Harding) welcomed members to the board away day and introduced Sir Bill Taylor who would be facilitating the day's events. The Chair suggested that Members should consider arrangements for an away day at the start of the 2007/08 meeting cycle and whether it would be worthwhile to hold this away from Local Government House and include an overnight stay.

2. Crime & Disorder/Community safety – key issues for councils/communities

Sir Bill Taylor asked members to group themselves according to whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Members agreed that a more effective LGA safer communities presence will result in safer communities whilst the media was seen as the biggest obstacle to achieving safer communities.
- Members agreed that the police were more committed to partnership working than five years ago.

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- The Board disagreed with the propositions that the current frequency of meetings was acceptable and that fewer meetings that lasted longer would be an improvement.
- Members did agree that a greater frequency of meetings would be of use. Members also agreed that it would be helpful to hold Board meetings outside London.

Martin Davis (Hackney LB) gave members practical advice on the issues surrounding crime and disorder from the Community Safety officer perspective.

The term 'Community Safety' was coined by a Standing Committee in 1991, whilst the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act introduced a number of initiatives including audits of crime, 3 year plans, youth justice boards and anti-social behaviour orders. In 2006 the Crime and Disorder Act Review was constituted to undertake a review of this legislation.

A number of issues have arisen from this:

- There is an over reliance on police statistics for measuring the number of offences committed.
- New means of monitoring and managing crime and disorder reduction are required.
- Will local engagement be the correct way forward; the central vs. local debate is on-going and this has also been identified as an issue by the Flanagan Review.
- Locally elected members need a greater understanding of these issues in order for them to be managed successfully.

Stuart Douglass (Northumberland CC) suggested that continued crime reduction would be challenging but was still a key local issue. There has been increased harmonisation of local and national priorities, but there are still instances of conflicting approaches.

Overview and scrutiny and Community Call for Action created a great deal of interest amongst members. Challenging issues still need addressing with regards to scrutiny of the police service and neighbourhood policing in particular; overview and scrutiny needs to be embedded into the roll-out of neighbourhood policing. This process could be improved by reflecting the best practise undertaken in local authority's relationships with the local healthcare trusts.

David Williams (Programme Director) explained to members that the process of implementing the Police and Justice Act version of the Community Call for Action had paused pending the recommendations made by the Flanagan Review. The Local Government Bill, which contains CLG's interpretation of CCfA is still going through parliament. Discussions are continuing with the APA regarding the CCfA aspects of the Police and Justice Act.

Good practise has been achieved on overview and scrutiny and this should be disseminated even though the legislation has still to be fully implemented.

3. Discussion of challenges ahead – key issues for councils/communities

Key issues were identified as follows:

- Rehabilitation needs to be looked at in greater detail, including greater engagement with local probation services.
- More work should be undertaken on disseminating good practise by safer neighbourhood teams.
- Local authorities need to do more to measure the success and disseminate good practise on CDRPs.

4. Role of Board in engaging with the member councils

Members suggested that the board should engage with member authorities taking into account the following points:

- There is a need to move away from process and focus on the causes of crime and drug crime in particular.
- Publicise the work of the Children in Trouble project and pilot schemes.
- Communication between the LGA and member authorities, as well as other partner organisations at the national level, needs to improve
- The board to act as a conduit for information between government departments and local authorities.
- Dissemination of good practise.

5. Challenges ahead for wider issues in Board's remit: cohesion; regulation

Members identified the following challenges:

- Lack of clarity regarding the Board's place in the LGA structure and a lack of communication between different boards and committees.
- Need to re-engage with relevant ministers, maintain long-term dialogue and build relationships. More also needs to be done to engage with partner organisations such as the APA, NOMS and the probation service.
- Better use should be made of board members and their expertise. More should also be made of the expertise of local authority officers.
- Need to focus on a reduced number of issues.

6. How does the Board want to work - frequency/task groups etc

Members discussed how the board could meet effectively and efficiently in future:

- A greater role for task and finish groups – a means of addressing cross-cutting issues.
- 6 meetings a year with dates announced at the beginning of the meeting cycle.
- The board should not always meet in London; 3 meetings in London and 3 elsewhere was suggested.
- Some mixed views on extending board meetings to 4 hours.
- There should be an annual board away day including an over night stay.
- Annual community safety conference would provide a good opportunity to have political group meetings for community safety portfolio holders.
- It was suggested that the Fire Services Management Committee be detached from the Safer Communities Board.

7. Board objectives: purpose, priorities, programme/tasks

Priorities were identified as follows:

- Development of policy.
- Regular dialogue with central government and key stakeholders.
- Community safety.
- Domestic violence – ensuring a multi-agency approach to this.
- Managing out crime – leisure, planning, education, children in care.

The following tasks and objectives were identified for the 2007/08 meeting cycle:

- Drugs and crime – the role of the LGA, local authorities and the Safer Communities Board. Identify existing good practise.
- Restorative justice.
- Community sentencing – ‘breaking the cycle’.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Safer Communities Board will be held at Local Government House on Monday 26th November 2007.