

Safer Communities Board Business Plan Priorities 2010-11

Summary

The first LGA Group Business Plan was published in April 2009. Work is now in progress to develop the Group's business plan for 2010-2011.

This report outlines the proposed strategic priorities for 2010-2011 identified by the Board's Lead Members for the areas of work covered by the Safer Communities Board.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider and comment on the proposed priorities set out in the report.

Action

LGA officers to incorporate the Board's views into the work around the LGA Group's business plan for 2010-2011.

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Business Plan Priorities

Background

1. The first LGA Group Business Plan was published in April 2009, as the basis of work programmes and resource allocation across the Group during 2009-2010. Work has now started on preparation of the Group business plan for 2010-2011. A Lead Member away day on 19 November will consider the priorities identified by each LGA board and will review them to ensure they reflect the core priorities the LGA Group will have in 2010-2011. A draft business plan will be produced after the away day, with the intention that it will be presented to the LGA's boards in January.
2. The LGA Group has provisionally identified five core priorities, reflecting the sector's own priorities. These are:
 - **Economy** - supporting councils to lead the country out of recession;
 - **Reputation** - building the reputation of councils as outstanding service providers, community leaders and employers of choice;
 - **Value for Money** - supporting councils to greater efficiency and lobbying for the funding they need to deliver the job;
 - **Democracy** - ensuring local decision-making and local government-led improvement is at the centre of debate, particularly in election year; and,
 - **Customer Service** - a fit for purpose LGA Group, delivering excellent, value for money services to councils and councillors.
3. Though these might change, they are the basis on which the business planning process is starting and the Safer Communities Board's work programme for 2010-2011 needs to be firmly in support of them. Given the broad remit of these themes, and the broad nature of the Safer Communities Board, the challenge will be to identify areas where the LGA Group can add real value but also identify what it will reduce or stop doing.

Existing Safer Communities Board priorities

4. This year's Board's priorities are set out in the existing business plan. We have also added in other pieces of more work that have arisen throughout the year, where capacity allows, to ensure a degree of responsiveness to our Member authorities. Some of this work has included joint activity with other LGA Boards, such as the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board on the alcohol and licensing provisions included in the Policing and Crime Bill, which has been going through parliament this year. The priorities set out in this year's business plan are:

23 4

- **Policing.** Improving police accountability and the debate over reforms to the membership of police authorities dominated the Board's work in 2008. The LGA remains interested in this area as there is a continuing national debate about police accountability, as evidenced by the debate on the issue of police accountability at the LGA's annual conference. The Board has therefore sought to influence policy developments in this area, and the working group established by the Board in July will report back on its consideration of the issues in the New Year. The LGA Group through the IDeA has also invested significant resources in developing an exemplar programme around integrating neighbourhood policing with local authority neighbourhood structures.
- **Partnerships.** One of the impacts on councils of the recession has been an increase in acquisitive crime. The LGA has therefore been involved in the development of the 'Real Help in Hard Times' programme launched by the government earlier in the year, and in developing sector-led improvement and peer support on reducing burglary and robbery through the LGA Group's role in the Vigilance programme. The Board has also been involved with the development of the single police confidence target, in particular on the impact this could have on the reputation of local authorities.
- **Cohesion and preventing violent extremism.** For the LGA much of the policy work has been around the government's Prevent agenda, while the IDeA has been leading the work on cohesion.
- **Migration.** The issue for local authorities has been an accurate assessment of changes in migration patterns so that funding can more speedily and accurately follow where migrants have settled. The LGA has had considerable success in its lobbying in this area, and the research team at the LGA have moved on from producing evidence about the issue to monitoring changes in migration patterns.
- **Public protection.** This area of work has been led by LACORS and has included supporting the work on tackling acquisitive crime through work by trading standards on shops and market stalls selling second hand goods to improving security in private rented accommodation.
- **Fire.** Work here is led by the Fire Services Management Committee and has this year focused on the FireControl project, pay negotiations, equality and diversity, and national functions.
- **Emergency Planning.** This was a new priority and we are planning to launch a new strategy at our residential conference in January 2010. Lobbying focuses on ensuring the best possible outcome for local government in reviews of both the Bellwin scheme, and a possible review of the Civil Contingencies Act. The LGA has also been involved in supporting councils on developing their mutual aid arrangements, and representing their views on gritting and the supply of salt to keep roads open in the wintry conditions early on in the year, and over the swine flu outbreak.

Suggested Board priorities for 2010-2011

5. The Board's lead members considered the business plan for 2010-2011 at their meeting in October. Suggested strategic priorities are set out below. As resources are ever more scarce across the Group, it is vital that non-essential work is reduced and a sharp focus on outcomes is maintained and so we have also indicated where activity could be reduced or stopped.
6. Members' views are therefore sought on the priorities set out below:
 - a) **Public confidence** in local authorities to tackle the crime issues that matter locally. The lead members agreed that they felt the Board's work contributing to the Government's target was critical, and that this should be the major area of work in 2010-2011. This is a challenging aim but ensuring the public can see and feel the benefits of council's community safety activity, particularly around anti-social behaviour, is important and a visible area on which the sector will be judged on.

The recent Place Survey results show that on average in England only 26% of the public believe their council is successfully dealing with the crime and anti-social behaviour issues in their area. Helping councils address this lack of confidence would result in lifting the reputation of councils on an area that has consistently remained a top concern for the public over the last two decades. In contrast to the Place Survey results the police are performing much better with overall confidence in the local police running at 67% (as measured by the British Crime Survey). The challenge is therefore to analyse and interrogate the Place Survey results to identify high performing areas and to understand and share the success factors more widely. The outcome we would be seeking would be to raise the Place Survey percentages significantly, perhaps with an aspirational target.

Activity in this area would include producing a councillors guide and a practitioners guide to improving confidence with top tips on different methods of communication. LACORs will review the support it provides to council regulatory services, prioritising work that contributes to this theme, for example by facilitating better local communication of work that is being delivered. IDeA too will develop workstreams which would help deliver this ambition.

- b) **Police accountability.** Lead members noted that the Policing White Paper would look to strengthen police authorities and that the police accountability working group would be reporting back at the start of the New Year. Working with the Association of Police Authorities to ensure the best possible outcome for local government in any new accountability arrangements is important.
- c) **Financial literacy.** Lead members thought there was a smaller discreet piece of work to be lead by LACORS on increasing financial literacy, especially

23 4

amongst young adults so that they need not borrow money at exorbitant rates of interest when there was no need to do so, and they could obtain loans at more commercial rates. Financial inclusion has been an issue considered by the LGA's Regeneration and Transport Board, and this work will be linked in with that already in hand on financial inclusion.

- d) **Emergency Planning.** Lead members identified a lack of improvement support for members and senior officers around the emergency planning agenda. The IDeA suggested moving resources to develop a support package from the work they have been doing around cohesion, though they are contractually obliged to continue to work on the Prevent agenda on behalf of CLG.
 - e) **Fire.** The LGA Group's priorities in relation to Fire and Rescue Services are decided by the Fire Services Management Committee, which is already in the process of setting its forthcoming priorities.
7. As a result of successful lobbying, Lead Members considered winding down work on cohesion and migration, and to place this as area to monitor rather than actively promote. Other areas across the Group where we may reduce or stop our activity includes: coroners, some work on performance frameworks for probation, and some of the smaller areas of activity that the Board picks up such as the 101 non-emergency number, CCTV. In order to ensure sufficient resources for the main priorities, LACORS will be reducing or stopping work on recruitment and retention, animal licensing and animal welfare, civil registration, noise and health and safety at work.

Financial Implications

8. The importance of the Board's business for councils is well understood corporately. Nevertheless, pressures on the Group's finances mean we will need to look even more vigorously at focusing on the most important issues, and, above all through better programme working across the Group, making better use of the resources we have.

Implications for Wales

9. The proposed new priority around confidence is applicable to Wales as police forces there are sharing this target, as are the plans to strengthen police authorities in the Policing White Paper. We will therefore involve WLGA in developing the work programmes.

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