

Meetings with outside bodies

Summary

This paper is to inform the members of the Board of the activities that have been undertaken since the last meeting by Board members and officers.

Recommendations

Board members are asked to note the report.

Actions

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Meetings with outside bodies

Member activity

Meeting with David Hanson, the Minister for Policing about the Policing White Paper

Councillor Taylor, along with Councillors Jeremy Beecham and Richard Kemp had a friendly and constructive meeting with the Minister for Policing in the middle of September about the Policing White Paper. The Minister was able to confirm that there were no plans for reforming police authorities by introducing directly-elected crime and policing representatives. There was a discussion around competencies for police authority members and police authority chairs in particular, and it was agreed that a competency framework would be a positive way forward. The work undertaken by the Board's working group on police accountability on the competencies of police authority members has been fed into the Home Office for consideration. The discussion with the Minister also covered community contracts and public confidence and the views of the Board were fed in by Councillor Taylor.

Meeting with Louise Casey

At the start of October the LGA's Chairman, Councillor Eaton, met the Home Office's Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Adviser, Louise Casey. The meeting covered a number of issues being taken forward by Ms Casey's team. These included the further publicity this autumn to promote the policing pledge through the 'justice seen, justice done' campaign, so the public are more aware of what they are entitled to, along with a push on tackling anti-social behaviour and on providing more information on criminal cases. The Home Office were looking to ensure neighbourhood policing teams could easily access disposal information from the court service for particular cases, but they would also be looking to let councillors know that information too.

Safer Communities Conference

The Board's lead members, plus a number of other members of the Board attended the two day LGA Safer Communities conference in Bristol. Delegates heard from the Minister for Crime Reduction, and the Shadow Secretaries of State for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, about their immediate crime and community safety priorities. There were also stimulating speeches from Sir Norman Bettison, Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police on the future of neighbourhood policing, and Chief Constable Julie Spence on the police single confidence target, while a series of workshops provided delegates to learn about the Policing White Paper, integrating neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood management and tackling alcohol related disorder.

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A panel session on anti-social behaviour provided a timely opportunity for delegates to learn about the government's proposals for a greater focus on anti-social behaviour announced on the first day of the conference. The LGA responded on the day to the announcement with the main focus being our opposition to the proposed new minimum standards in addition to the National Indicator set. The Board's Programme Director, Helen Murray, will be part of the Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Senior Programme Board and will be continuing to make representations to the Home Office on this issue.

Next year's Safer Communities Conference will be on 12-13 October in Gateshead.

The Future of Scrutiny Conference

Councillor Lawrence chaired the LGA's conference on the future development of overview and scrutiny powers held at the end of October. The conference looked in particular at crime and disorder and LAA scrutiny. Speakers included Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, chair of the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee, the Deputy Director for Home and Foreign Affairs at the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit and a number of councillors involved in the scrutiny process.

National Crime Reduction Board

The National Crime Reduction Board meeting on the 15 October, which Councillor Lawrence attended on behalf of the LGA, was the first chaired by the new Home Secretary. At the meeting Alan Johnson set out his priorities as Home Secretary, with anti-social behaviour being top of the list. There were also discussions on violence against women and girls and what is being done to address this, along with an item on reducing alcohol related crime and disorder.

Meeting with Councillor Garnham, Chairman of the APA

The chairman of the LGA Councillor Eaton had an introductory meeting at the end of October with the new chair of the Association of Police Authorities, Councillor Robert Garnham. Councillor Garnham is Chair of Gloucestershire Police Authority, a Gloucestershire County Councillor and a member on Cheltenham Borough Council. The major item for discussion was the forthcoming Policing White Paper and what the proposals in this would mean for councils and police authorities. There was also a discussion around leadership on policing issues and how greater collaboration could be achieved through Total Place.

Future Member activity / events

The LGA will be holding its second annual Preventing Violent Extremism conference on 10 November 2009. The conference will showcase the work that Councils have delivered over the past year and discuss the challenges ahead for

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Prevent. Councillor Mehboob Khan will chair the conference and Councillor Les Lawrence will address delegates on behalf of the LGA.

Councillor Lawrence will be speaking at a Citizen Focus Policing conference on Achieving public confidence: towards the 60% single national target on 24 November in Liverpool.

Councillor Lawrence will also be speaking at “Leading through Challenging Times”, on 26 November in Nottingham at the annual conference held by the Association of Police Authorities.

Councillor Lawrence will also be meeting the ACPO lead on crime, Keith Bristow, towards the end of November.

Officer activity

Home Office Public Confidence and Satisfaction Board

Having started to look at the delivery plan to ensure that the police confidence targets are met, the Home Office has also been looking at how they will monitor (and manage) performance against the targets. The Home Office is proposing that performance is monitored by the Police Performance Support Group led by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, but which also includes the Audit Commission. The LGA and DCLG have been working with the Home Office to ensure that the performance monitoring framework is in line with local government performance framework and Comprehensive Area Assessment, and that there is clarity around which indicators will be used for assessing performance as the British Crime Survey results apply to the police and the Place Survey applies to councils.

S17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and reducing re-offending

The Policing and Crime Bill - making its last stages through Parliament - contains a provision extending the remit of bodies listed under S17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to reduce re-offending. The Home Office will be raising awareness of the provision in the Bill amongst councils ahead of the likely implementation of the legislation in April 2010, and we will also be providing information on what this new requirement will mean.

Body worn video

Local authorities are increasingly making use of video cameras worn by officers, such as wardens, as they carry out their day to day duties. The National Police Improvement Agency is developing some best practice guidance for the police, and officers have been discussing with the NPIA using this guidance for local authorities.

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Probation Association

LGA officers attended a meeting of senior managers at the Probation Association to provide an outline of the work the LGA does on behalf of its members, what the LGA anticipates the next comprehensive spending review will mean for local authorities, overview and scrutiny of the Probation Service by councils, and reducing re-offending targets in the National Indicator Set.

Fire Services Management Committee

At its meeting on 18 September the Fire Services Management Committee agreed its work programme and adopted a new position on Fire Control: "The Fire Services Management Committee is against the principle of the implementation of Regional Control Centres however will continue to engage with CLG to ensure FRAs are properly resourced, will afford effective oversight and review the programme regularly on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authorities and will continue to promote good industrial relations where applicable and asks LGA officers to develop alternative options in the event of project failure, to be brought back to the Fire Services Management Committee at a future date."

Account Management

From April, every local authority member, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, has a named LGA account manager, who will act as a first point of contact for the authority to signpost assistance or advice across the LGA Group. Working with the IDeA Regional Associates the aim is to make the LGA more accessible to its membership and identify the important issues facing authorities and what they would like the LGA to do. Most recently officers have met with the West Yorkshire Fire Authority members and a visit to West Midlands Fire Authority has been arranged. If you would like the LGA to visit your council or fire authority, please contact Paul Johnston (paul.johnston@lga.gov.uk)

Swine flu

We are now experiencing the second wave of swine flu, but it is likely to be less severe than initially anticipated, and in the vast majority of people swine flu continues to be a mild illness. On 22 October, the government issued revised planning guidance to reflect the current situation. Children under 16 are significantly more susceptible to the virus, and up to 30% may fall ill during this second wave. However, the worst-case clinical attack rate across the population as a whole has been reduced from 30% to 12% between now and the end of the normal flu season. This means that in the peak week of the pandemic up to 1.5 million people may become ill and 5% of people could be absent from work, compared to the 12% previously thought possible. Overall this is encouraging news, but it still means public services are likely to experience pressure caused by staff absences. The infection rate amongst children and the numbers of people needing intensive care are particular causes for concern at the moment.

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The swine flu vaccination programme started on 22 October, with at risk people in hospital the first to be vaccinated. The first wave of vaccination also includes at risk clinical groups and front line health and social workers. The Department of Health has agreed to make financial support available to councils for the vaccination of eligible staff. This is very good news at a time when councils' budgets are under pressure and the LGA has been working closely with the Department of Health.

The LGA's rota of councillors and chief executives continue to represent the sector at meetings of the Civil Contingencies Committee on issues such as the vaccination programme. The LGA's HR Panel met on 22 September and agreed that we should further explore the issue of re-deploying teachers in the event of an emergency situation such as pandemic flu. We have also helped to ensure swine flu stays firmly on councils' agenda with a feature in first magazine on 9 September. Later this month we will be carrying out a national survey to ensure that our work is fully informed by the sector.

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