

Notes of Decisions Taken and Action

Safer Communities Board

14 September 2009

Local Government House at 11.00

Present

Chair:	Cllr Les Lawrence (Birmingham City)
Vice Chair:	Cllr Sharon Taylor (Stevenage BC)
Deputy Chairs:	Cllr Duwayne Brooks (Lewisham LB), Cllr Graham Brown (Powys CC)
Conservative:	Cllr Roland Domleo (Congleton BC), Cllr Tom Fox (Scarborough BC), Cllr David Smith (Lichfield DC), Cllr Brian Coleman (Barnet LB / LFEPA), Cllr Joanna Spicer (Suffolk CC), Cllr Ian Gillies (City of York), Cllr Ann Stribley (Poole BC)
Labour:	Cllr Mehboob Khan (Kirklees MBC), Cllr Nilgun Canver (Haringey LB), Cllr Mark Burns-Williamson (Wakefield MDC), Cllr Dave Lancaster (Salford City)
Liberal Democrat:	Cllr Daisy Benson (Reading BC), Cllr Anita Lower (Newcastle City)

In attendance: Councillor Paul Shannon (Greater Manchester FRA); Helen Murray, Mark Norris, Liz Hobson, Trish O'Flynn, Paul Johnston (all LGA); Wendy Martin (LACORS)

The Chair welcomed all Members to the first meeting of the new Board meeting cycle for 2009 / 2010.

1. Safer Communities Board membership and terms of reference

Members noted the membership and confirmed Board Office Holders for 2009 / 2010.

Members noted the Board Terms of Reference, and made the following appointments:

- Cllr Mark Burns-Williamson was appointed as the Board's representative on the Urban Commission Steering Committee;
- All Members of the Board were appointed as the Board's social inclusion and equalities representative;

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- Cllr Nilgun Canver was appointed as the Board's representative on the European and International Strategy Group.

2. Appointments to Outside Bodies 2009 - 2010

The Board agreed the Member appointments to the outside bodies associated with the Safer Communities Board (*attached*).

Action

Officers to draft confirmation letters to Members appointed on outside bodies, setting out details of the appointment.

3. Update on Regulatory Services Issues

The Board heard a presentation from Wendy Martin, updating Members on the work that LACORS had recently undertaken relating to the activities of the Safer Communities Board. In concluding her presentation, Wendy asked Members for their view on areas of work that LACORS should be prioritising in going forward.

Members raised the following issues:

- The Board should receive updates on LACORS' activities more frequently. Members suggested that such reports should focus on what role regulatory services were playing to address the challenges faced by the Safer Communities Board, and Board Members should be continually apprised outside of the Board of LACORS' work via the monthly councillor update that LACORS provides.
- Concern was raised regarding certain sectors of the credit lending sector, and how young people in particular were being exploited by certain lenders. Wendy agreed that this was a concern, and suggested that representatives of the Office of Fair Trading could attend a future meeting on this point. Further details of the specific issues were to be provided to Wendy in order to progress this.
- Concern was also raised regarding the regulation of houses of multiple occupancy. Wendy responded that this remained an important issue for member Councils, and was likely to feature in future priority work areas for LACORS. Further to this, a query was raised over the nature of support from LACORS for Local Authorities with empty home strategies. The Chair noted that housing fell under the remit of the Environment Board, and that in general terms these issues should be relayed to Members of that Board. Wendy would however provide specific information on this to those Members who raised concerns.
- There was a short discussion about the role of the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) and its longer term future.

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- A query was raised regarding the recent government advice that the Video Recordings Act was unenforceable. Wendy explained the background to this, and added that officers were looking to compile information to establish the scale of the problem and implications for Local Authorities.
- A Member raised concern over qualifications and standards in the security industry. Wendy agreed to follow this up outside the meeting.
- Members asked whether LACORS were giving consideration to the issue of clustering of betting shops in the wake of the Licensing Act 2003. Wendy responded that LACORS worked closely with the gambling industry, and would look to provide Members with more information on this point in due course.

Decisions

The Board agreed that a report on previous LACORS activity be prepared for Members' consideration.

Action

Officers to prepare a report for the next Board meeting and to circulate current information on matters of concern raised at the Board to relevant Members.

4. Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

Mark Norris introduced the report to the Board, noting that the Home Office, having held a consultation between March and May this year, was looking to develop a strategy by the end of November to reduce violence against women and girls. The initial key points that the consultation had appeared to identify were subsequently outlined. Mark also noted that the Equalities and Human Rights Commission had published a report earlier in the year that was critical of how Local Authorities were tackling violence against women, and that, though the LGA had issued a response defending Local Authorities, the Home Office's consultation suggested areas of work Local Authorities could address.

Members expressed the following:

- The Board pointed out that if the strategy was not available until November, and there was no additional money associated with it then it would be difficult to implement. Members also felt the LGA should be looking to influence future governments in addressing violence against women. Helen Murray responded that officers were continuing to work with all political parties to ensure the LGA's voice was heard in future government activity.
- Members said it would be useful to have a clearer picture of the financial consequences of violence against women, and have a good practice guide for councils on tackling violence against women. Haringey was highlighted as an example of good practice.

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- Concern was raised that the strategy might result in increased central government influence in determining how Local Authorities addressed this issue. Different councils would require different solutions, and Members agreed that a 'top-down' approach would not be appropriate.
- There was broad support for the need to consider children in families in which domestic abuse occurred.
- Handling of domestic abuse cases in the criminal justice system was raised and Members reinforced the role of the Ministry of Justice in moving this agenda forward.
- The Board noted that it was important for funding to be distributed to Member Authorities appropriately, particularly to ensure that rural communities were funded adequately.
- The important role of voluntary sector organisations was noted by Members, and that authorities have a key role in commissioning services for domestic abuse. It was essential that partners across different sectors worked closely to tackle the problem of abuse.
- A suggestion was made to examine the system in Wales where domestic violence forums report directly into the CSPs.

Decision

The Board asked that the comments made at the meeting be fed into the Home Office, and that the Strategy should be a standing item on the agenda for the Lead Members group.

Action

Officers to provide information on the financial consequences of violence against women, and look to develop a best practice guide.

5. Policing White Paper

The Board noted that the Government was proposing to introduce a Policing White Paper in the autumn. One significant proposal potentially set out in the Paper was that the police confidence target would become a joint target for both police authorities and Councils.

Members expressed a range of views on this point. Although there was no enthusiasm for more targets to be added to the current National Indicator Set, it was felt that local authorities should take seriously their contribution towards the target and that expressing this in terms of taking a lead role in delivering qualitative outcomes was more acceptable.

The Board noted that a meeting would be held by LGA Members with the Minister for Crime and Policing on Thursday 17 September, and that Councillor Taylor would attend the meeting on behalf of the Board.

The recommendations were noted along with the points raised.

Action

Helen Murray to circulate a note of the meeting on 17 September.

6. Olympic Games Security Strategy

Discussions were held regarding the preparations in terms of policing and FiReControl for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Members expressed concern that the allocated security budget would be insufficient, and that local policing would be affected as resources were drawn into London to deal with security for the Games to the detriment of other areas.

7. Meetings with outside bodies

The report was noted.

8. Future agenda items

No future agenda items were identified under this item, though discussions regarding future matters for consideration were held under other agenda items.

9. Note of the last meeting

The note of the last meeting was agreed.