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New Governance Arrangements and the Safer Communities Programme Plan 2010-11

Summary

As part of the *Getting Closer* programme, changes are being made to strengthen the political governance of the LGA Group. This report outlines these changes as they affect the Safer Communities Board. It also presents the Safer Communities Programme Plan for 2010-11.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the report;
- Consider the remit and ways of working for the new LGA Group Stronger and Safer Communities Programme Board; and
- Confirm those aspects of the Programme Plan they wish to consider at Board meetings during 2010/11.

Action

- Officers to incorporate Members' views into their work around the new Strong and Safer Communities Programme Board.

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Getting Closer – Governance

Background

1. *Getting Closer* is a major change programme across the LGA Group, which aims to ensure that the Group is effective, delivers greater value for money and enhances the reputation of local government, by being more focused on councils and more integrated.
2. Effective political governance is absolutely crucial to this. The LGA Executive has therefore agreed to a number of specific changes to strengthen the LGA Group governance arrangements to give councils more influence and ensure stronger political direction of the Group and better coordination. Specifically, members agreed to:
 - strengthen the Executive to become the new governing body that sets the strategic direction and priorities for the Group, with expanded membership to include regional representatives, the three special interest groups representing district, county and metropolitan councils, and the chairs of the central body boards;
 - replace Strategy & Finance Policy Review Group with a new member briefing, as a more effective means of holding the LGA Group to account;
 - create nine Group programme boards, in place of the LGA policy boards, to deliver the business plan priorities through more active engagement with councils and to strengthen the link between improvement and policy/lobbying (through common membership with central body boards where relevant);
 - maintain the Rural and Urban Commissions and Fire Services Forum and Management Committee;
 - clarify the central body board roles and change the IDeA Board membership to 5 members (one from each group plus Welsh LGA) and 3 other directors (plus a CLG representative);
 - establish a governing body for the LGA, in place of Office Holders.
3. In light of these governance changes, the LGA Constitution, standing orders and political conventions have been significantly amended and will be recommended to the July General Assembly. For further details, see the March 2010 Executive Agenda: <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/9556709>.

Operation of the new governance arrangements

4. From September 2010 the LGA Safer Communities Board will become the LGA Group Stronger and Safer Communities Programme Board. The purpose of the new Board is to provide strategic oversight of all the LGA Group's policy and improvement activity in relation to crime, community safety, fire, offending, public protection, regulatory activities and emergency planning in line with the LGA Group priorities.

How is this different?

5. The boards will have **responsibility for more than just policy**. They will provide oversight of all the activity across the Group in relation to stronger and safer communities. This will require Boards to have a thorough understanding of council priorities and performance in their areas of responsibility, using strong networks and robust information.
6. The **business plan will determine what the boards do in a much more explicit way** than before. The board will have clear responsibility for overseeing a programme of work to deliver the strategic priorities set by the LGA Group Executive. That also means the board will have a responsibility to shape the LGA Group Business Plan by ensuring the priorities of the sector are fed into the process.
7. There is a much **stronger emphasis on being more outward focused and connected to councils** (through task groups, Commissions, Special Interest Groups, regional networks and other means of wider engagement). Boards are encouraged to find their own most effective way of working and not be restricted by formal meetings in London on a set timescale (but with a guide of 4 formal meetings a year);
8. The new **Group Executive will be much more representative of local government**, with regional and special interest group representatives. This provides an excellent forum for programme boards to seek views from across the sector on key issues that the board is responsible for.

Issues for members to consider

9. Members might wish to consider the following questions to help prepare for the transition to the new way of operating:
 - How will members ensure they develop an evidence-based understanding of the performance issues, improvement needs and priorities of the sector?

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- How can the board ensure stronger connections to councils? E.g. regional groupings, portfolio holders, use of task and finish groups
- What might be the most effective way of working for the new board? e.g. annual seminar with all portfolio holders, board meetings outside London, presentations from councils or stakeholders, use of technology to improve communications, connecting with other boards and parts of the Group
- What subject areas lie within the board's responsibility? Are there areas of overlap/duplication that need to be resolved?

Safer Communities Programme Plan 2010-2011

10. The Board considered the business plan for 2010-2011 in November, and agreed a number of priorities to be feed into the development of the LGA Group Business Plan. Since the Group Business Plan has been finalised, programme plans for each board have been drawn up setting out how the range of activity for each board during 2010/11 supports the themes in the LGA Group Business Plan. This provides, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of related activity in all parts of the Group. The Safer Communities programme plan for 2010-11 is attached at **Appendix A**.

Background

11. Building on the first LGA Group Business Plan for 2009-2010, the Business Plan for 2010-2011 has provided further opportunities to plan work across the Group on the community safety, public protection, emergency planning and fire agendas. The Group Business Plan provides a context in which to do this, identifying five core priorities: the economy; reputation - building the reputation of councils; innovation and value for money - supporting councils to deliver value for money; local democracy - ensuring local decision-making is at the centre of debate; and customer service - having an LGA Group fit for service.
12. The Board considered these Group priorities at its meeting in November and agreed suggested priorities for the inclusion within the Group Business Plan. These suggestions were fed into a Lead Member away day in November, which then informed the Group Business Plan. With the Group Business Plan being agreed in January the Programme Plan looks to deliver the priorities identified by the Board.
13. The Board's work features in the Reputation, Innovation and Value for Money, Local Democracy and Economy priorities of the Group Business Plan.
14. Key activities are:
 - Increasing the levels of public confidence in councils by identifying best practice;

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- Continue to provide community safety peer reviews to support and build capacity within local authorities, and expand the fire peer support programme;
 - Develop relations with NOMS, the Probation Service and the Probation Association;
 - Develop an emergency planning peer support programme with the Cabinet Office, and produce good practice guidance on attracting the widest range of candidates for fire service recruitment;
 - Lobby to ensure there are no further costs on FRAs as a result of the introduction of Fire Control;
 - Produce joint guidance with the APA on the new police authority regulations including a competency framework; and,
 - Lobby government about and raise the profile of financial skills and literacy among young people.
15. The Programme Plan priorities will need to be reviewed in light of the new government's policies to ensure that any policing and community safety commitments of relevance to local authorities are factored into the Board's work if necessary.

Reporting Progress

16. The Board will receive regular updates from officers in the LGA, LACORS and the IDeA on progress against the Programme Plan, and alongside the routine reporting of key campaigning, lobbying and policy issues to the Board will ensure the Board is kept apprised of any developments around the delivery of the Plan.

Financial Implications

17. The new governance arrangements are not expected to have any significant financial implications.

Implications for Wales

18. The proposals outlined above would strengthen recognition and involvement of the WLGA through a new LGA Constitution, with a seat on the LGA Group Executive whilst retaining its membership of the LGE, LACoRS and IDeA company boards.

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