

Update on regulatory services issues

Summary

This report contains some key information about regulatory services issues that are of interest to the Safer Communities Board.

Recommendations

That the Board note the activities outlined.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Update on regulatory services issues

Background

1. LACORS has been asked to provide the Board with an update of key regulatory services issues at each Board meeting. These items are for note only but LACORS' officers will be happy to answer any questions.

Summary of Key Activities

Burglary reduction in the private rented sector

2. Research conducted by the Home Office in early 2009, as part of their Real Help in Hard Times programme to stabilise and then reduce the increase in burglary rates seen in 2008, identified weaknesses in home security as a particular problem. 69% of burglars enter homes through the door, with burglars gaining access through open doors in 20% of burglary cases. Private rented housing was found to be particularly vulnerable due to the greater lack of security measures in rented accommodation.
3. LACORS is currently developing information for Councils' private sector housing services, which will examine various schemes for reducing burglary in that type of housing. These include schemes using existing assessment tools, such as Housing Health and Safety Rating System and a range of other initiatives such as target hardening and awareness raising.

Report of the Independent Investigation Committee into the *E.coli* O157 Outbreak at Godstone Farm in 2009

4. The Health Protection Agency (HPA) set up an independent investigation to look into the *E.coli* O157 outbreak at Godstone Farm in Surrey during 2009 and to make recommendations for the future management of such outbreaks and how to reduce the risk to those who visit "open farms". The outbreak was the largest linked to an "open farm" with 93 people affected, of whom 76 were under 10 years of age, with 27 admitted to hospital. Godstone Farm is situated in Tandridge District Council and LACORS has kept in regular contact with the council throughout.
5. The Griffin Committee, who undertook the investigation, will report to the HPA Board on 25 - 26 May. There is a commitment that the final report will be published, and it is anticipated there will be significant media attention. LACORS and Tandridge Council (with others) have been invited to comment on the factual sections of the report. However, the sections covering the management of the outbreak, the challenge of reducing risk and conclusions / recommendations have not been shared. It is not clear if we will get an opportunity to comment on such before it is shared with the HPA.

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6. LGA Group news and media teams have been kept informed of developments and we have worked closely with the HSE throughout.

Powers of Entry etc Bill

7. LACORS has been advised that Lord Selston has written to Council Chief Executives to ask for their support in connection with a set of proposals to regulate the powers of entry and powers in relation to the production of documents etc.
8. The Home Office and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills have done some work to review powers but not directly consulted with LACORS, councils or the public on this matter.
9. Whilst fully appreciating the need for councils to act in a proportionate manner and not to have their reputation damaged by any perceived inappropriate use of powers, the current proposals present significant concerns. For example, the draft Bill suggests that no power of entry would be exercised on a bank holiday and could only be exercised between 8am and 6pm Monday to Fridays, and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays).

Early morning alcohol restriction orders

10. The Crime & Security Act 2010 has received Royal Assent and we await the commencement date for the introduction of new powers for licensing authorities to allow the making of 'Early morning alcohol restriction orders', whereby councils can impose blanket bans on the sale of alcohol after 3am in entire streets or city centres affected by alcohol-related anti-social behaviour and disorder. These will override any premises licence, club premises certificate or Temporary Event Notices authorising the sale or supply of alcohol between 3am and 6am.

“Regional” Trading Standards and Environmental Health Services

11. Further to the update provided at the March meeting, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) have visited a wide range of council regulatory services' teams. Many of these have been recommended by LACORS. The BIS report is due to be put to Ministers after the election. We have been advised that it will not make any attempt to remove these services from local government nor impose any set model. LACORS anticipates that it will confirm that BIS has concerns about councils' delivery of services, specifically in relation to large complex trading standards investigations. BIS may consider implementing a framework for these services (similar to that already in existence for food and animal health work).

Financial Implications

12. None for the purposes of this report.

Implications for Wales

13. The issues outlined in this report apply to both England and Wales.

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