

Notes of Decisions Taken and Action

Safer Communities Board

17 May 2010

Local Government House, London at 11.00

Present

Chair:	Cllr Les Lawrence (Birmingham City) (Conservative)
Vice Chair:	Cllr Sharon Taylor (Stevenage BC) (Labour)
Deputy	Cllr Duwayne Brooks (Lewisham LB) (Liberal Democrat); Cllr
Chairs:	Graham Brown (Powys CC) (Independent)
Conservative:	Cllr Tom Fox (Scarborough BC), Cllr David Smith (Lichfield DC), 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: Helen Murray, Mark Norris, Trish O'Flynn, Wendy Martin, Liz Hobson, Paul Johnston (all LGA Group); Stuart Douglass (Sunderland City Council)

Apologies: Cllr Roland Domleo (Cheshire East); Cllr Brian Coleman (Barnet LB / LFEPA); Cllr Joanna Spicer (Suffolk CC)

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting, and offered his congratulations to those Members that had retained their seats at the recent local government elections.

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

The Chair asked Members to consider priorities for the Board in light of a new government, and added that he would be looking to meet with the new Home Secretary shortly.

Members felt that there were several areas that the Board should consider in the coming year, including:

- Members said that the Board had historically opposed Plans outlined by the new government in support of directly elected police commissioners, and would wish to continue to do so.
- Members asked that clarification be sought from the new government over funding and support for PCSOs and said that the important role that local

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government plays in funding and provision of PCSOs should be emphasised in discussions with central government.

- Members said that clarification should also be sought from the new government on Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). Members felt that the joint working that CDRPs had facilitated had helped to make communities safer.
- Members wished to see further exploratory work done on whether any of the current responsibilities of the Local Better Regulation Office could be undertaken by the LGA Group.
- Members said that the local government sector should have access to appropriate resources to meet the Government's stated aim of devolving further power to the local level.
- Members felt that it was important to secure an agreement that those authorities with low funding should receive at least the average funding raise in the future to prevent a larger disparity in funding.
- Members added that the Board should consider the PREVENT agenda and community cohesion. Officers noted that the new DCLG Secretary of State had asked for a roundtable meeting on community cohesion, and that the LGA Group would take in an active part in those discussions.
- Members suggested that the LGA Group participate in a benchmarking exercise on training processes for Members.
- Members asked about future inspection regimes and the future of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. Officers said that the LGA Improvement Board were continuing to take forward proposals on a more locally based inspection regime.

Members discussed the remit and ways of working for the new LGA Group Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board. Members agreed that the perception that the LGA Group was London-centric needed to be addressed, but said that meetings should be held in areas that were easily accessible for all Members.

Members felt that the Board should focus more heavily on licensing activities. The Chair said that proposals outlined within the new governance arrangements would see the Chair of LACORS sit on the new Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board, which would hopefully lead to closer working between the two bodies on regulatory services activities.

Members said that there also needed to be strengthened links between the Board and the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC). Officers said that the FSMC Chair sat on the Board to provide that link, but that a more formal reporting structure could be instituted, along with the appointment of a Deputy in the instance that the FSMC Chair was not able to attend the Board.

Members asked about joint working with partner organisations, such as the Probation Association and the National Offender Management Service. The Chair noted that he had had an initial meeting with the Probation Association, and asked that a joint feedback item be presented to the Board in July.

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Members said that proposals that saw the LGA Group working closer with its member Authorities were laudable, but that it would be beneficial for an officer / Member working group to look at best practice across the member structures to ascertain what worked well in securing improved engagement.

Decision

Members **agreed** the LGA Group Programme Plan on the Community Safety, Fire and Emergency Planning theme.

Members **agreed** that more formal reporting structure between the FSMC and Safer Communities Board be examined by officers.

Members **agreed** that a joint feedback item between the LGA Group and the Probation Association be prepared for the July Board meeting.

Members **agreed** that Cllr Mehboob Khan be involved in the DCLG roundtable discussions on community cohesion.

Member **agreed** that the Board Lead Members discuss further the ways of working for the new LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board.

Action

Officers to ensure that a joint feedback report between the LGA Group and the Probation Association be prepared for the July Board meeting.

Officers to consider means of strengthening the links between the FSMC and Safer Communities Board.

Officers to prepare a paper on proposed ways of working for the new LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board.

2. Local Innovation Awards – Public Confidence Theme

Members heard a presentation from Stuart Douglass, Community Safety Manager at Sunderland City Council. The Council had recently won the community safety theme award at the recent Local Innovation Awards, and Stuart outlined the measures that Sunderland had taken to tackle crime and disorder and to increase confidence in its communities.

Stuart set out Sunderland's context nationally. Unemployment rates were high following the decline of primary and secondary industry in the area, and reoffending rates were higher than the national level, which was the case across the North-East. Sunderland also suffered from high rates of binge drinking and Class A drug consumption.

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Stuart said that Sunderland had put into place a 15 year community safety strategy, which had shown significant success in reducing both the instances of reported crime and the perception of the risk of crime. The gap between perception and risk of crime had nonetheless, particularly in some communities, remained distinct for some time. Stuart said that Sunderland had focussed on the role and importance of partnerships in addressing crime and disorder, and that a range of programmes were available to victims of crime. Stuart said that the Sunderland Community Safety Partnership had funded advertising campaigns, which sought to inform the community of the actions that the Partnership was taking and the beneficial results from these actions, and that the LSP ran its own TV channel, which advertised a range of local and national news concerned with the sector. Sunderland also enjoyed the strong involvement of the Primary Care Trust within the CRDP, along with the involvement of the Leader, Executive Member and Chief Executive of the Council, the Borough Police Commander and the Chief Fire Officer.

Stuart outlined the programme of activity being developed by the Council in conjunction with the IDeA and Home Office. This would include producing best practice guidance, which would have to be tailored to ensure its relevance for all authorities, along with developing e-learning tools for Members. Sunderland would also be hosting events on public confidence, which would look at better partnership working and problem solving at the local level. Stuart added that the Council would develop further activities in due course.

Members thanked Stuart for his presentation, and raised the following queries:

- Members suggested that information to the public on crime needed to be sufficiently balanced to raise awareness of the risk of crime without causing unnecessary concern. Stuart responded that Sunderland City Council worked closely with the media to try to ensure this balance, and that such information should be targeted chiefly toward those who were most vulnerable to crime. Stuart added that the Council worked closely with the Police on ensuring positive messaging from Police officers to members of the public.
- Members said that the work that the Council were doing on ensuring provision of victim support programmes and initiatives was interesting, and asked how the Council ensured that the 'loop was closed' in each case. Stuart said that there were instances where people had been through every available initiative and remained unhappy. The Council had agreed that in these cases, people would be formally notified of the programmes that had been made available to them, and informed that no further options to secure a positive outcome were currently available.
- Responding to a Member's question on the role of scrutiny, Stuart said that the Council still had work to do on ensuring local level concerns were fed into Scrutiny Committee meetings.
- Members said that a number of guidance publications on community safety had been issued, and asked what the Council would do to make sure that their publication was both relevant and innovative. Stuart responded that the guidance would be short and to the point, and that it would incorporate the work

undertaken by other Authorities shortlisted for the public confidence theme award.

- Members asked about area-based working, and what architecture was in place in Sunderland. Stuart responded that Sunderland had a number of area meetings, which met every five weeks, that each held a local area budget. Issues that could not be addressed at the local area level were referred to the CDRP, which could coordinate intervention in areas where necessary.
- Responding to a query over the TV network run by the partnership, Stuart said that the network covered key messages such as local helplines, and the Council looked to ensure that the network was used to inform people of current matters of interest.
- Stuart said that the Council would need to continue to work closely with both registered social landlords and private sector landlords to address problems that arose. Members said that the Court system was still proving inconsistent in tackling 'rogue' landlords, and Cllr Canver informed the Board that Haringey Council had written to the Home Office to express these concerns.

Decision

Members agreed that officers reflect views expressed at the Board in any LGA work around the development and delivery of Sunderland's programme.

Officers to circulate Haringey Council's letter to the Home Office concerning the conduct of private sector landlords and the court system's response to any illegal behaviour on their part.

3. LGA Group Civil Emergencies Strategy

Trish O'Flynn introduced the report, noting that 2009 had seen an unprecedented number of civil emergencies. Trish noted that consultation on the strategy had been launched at the Emergency Planning conference in January 2010, and that the three-year strategy covered three themes and would look to establish further key relationships.

Members made the following comments on the strategy:

- Members suggested the omission of "your" on the second line of the strategy's introduction, so that the sentence reads "It draws on real life experience, at the national and local level, and responses to our consultation earlier this year." Members added that greater acknowledgement should be given to the Police as a vital partner within the strategy.
- Members suggested that the outlined intention to lobby for a review of the Bellwin scheme was an important strand of work, and that Lead Members of the Board should be involved within this work. Members added that both an urgent and effective response was needed on the future of the Bellwin scheme.

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- Members suggested that the strategy needed to produce greater clarity on Member roles in responding to civil emergencies, and that further training was needed for relevant Executive Members.
- Members asked over local government representation on COBRA, and that the need for the sector's involvement should be built in to the strategy. Officers responded that local government was currently involved by invitation only, but that implications for local government of the National Security Committee were awaited.

Decision

Members **agreed** the final strategy for publication, subject to Members' comments as cited above.

Members **agreed** that the Board should lobby for a review of the Bellwin scheme, and that the strategy make explicit the Board's production of a submission on the Bellwin scheme.

Members **agreed** that the LGA Group aim to secure the local government sector's involvement within the new National Security Committee.

Action

Officers to amend the strategy in accordance with comments from Board Members.

Officers to prepare a submission on the Bellwin scheme.

Officers to liaise with Government to secure the local government sector's involvement within the new National Security Committee.

4. Update on Regulatory Services issues

Members noted that the new Government was re-examining early morning alcohol restriction orders. Officers added that the Government would not seek to remove regulatory services from local government control nor impose any set model.

Decision

Members noted the report.

Action

Officers to circulate information to the Board on LACORS work on the private rented sector.

Officers to circulate the updated draft submission to DEFRA on the dangerous dogs consultation.

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Officers to circulate further information on the alcohol strategy consultation.

5. Meetings with outside bodies

Members noted the report.

Action

Officers to circulate a note of the Joint Lead Members' meeting of the Children and Young People and Safer Communities Board on March 2010.

6. Notes of the last meeting

The note of the last meeting was agreed as a correct record.

Date of next meeting: 12pm, 12 July 2010, Corn Exchange, Exeter