

12 July 2010

End of year Board report

Summary

This report provides an overview of the work of the Board over the last year. It sets out key achievements in relation to the business plan priorities within the remit of the Safer Communities Board for 2009-2010 and looks forward to next year's programme of work.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to note the achievements against the 2009/10 business plan and work underway on the business plan priorities for 2010/11.

Board Members are invited to note progress.

Action

LG Group officers to action as necessary.

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Background

1. Crime and the fear of crime has remained a top priority for councils and local communities. It is one of the most visible areas of partnership working, and one on which the public judges the success of councils.
2. At the start of the current Board cycle, the priorities for the Board, as set out in the business plan for 2009-2010, were for a renewed focus on helping councils tackle crime and build public confidence, and to continue work on policing and partnerships. The business plan included a range of other strategic priorities including supporting councils in large scale emergencies, sharing effective practice on community cohesion, supporting councils with preventing violent extremism and helping councils develop good quality regulatory services.
3. Priorities agreed by the Fire Services Management Committee included work to: engage with CLG to ensure that Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) are properly resourced to deliver the Fire Control project, develop a model for the transfer of national functions away from CLG, build up the sector led approach to improvement and support FRAs to improve equality and diversity in service delivery and workforce.
4. Notable successes for the year to the end of March 2010 include:
 - In response to our lobbying, the Home Office introduced crime and disorder scrutiny provisions in the Police and Justice Act 2006 in April 2009 in England and October 2009 in Wales. These provisions also included the councillor call for action which we have strongly supported;
 - The December 2009 Policing White Paper rejected directly-elected police and crime representatives. In order to strengthen police authorities, we developed and promoted new guidance and an enhanced competency framework for the appointment of police authority members;
 - We successfully lobbied for recognition in the Safe and Confident Neighbourhood Strategy that councillors should be an integral part of neighbourhood partnerships;
 - We developed a programme of local government sector led support for councils through community safety peer challenges, rather than by central government intervention, and this was incorporated in the Vigilance programme which was aimed at tackling the rise in acquisitive crime in 2009. Five peer reviews were undertaken, which resulted in acquisitive crime levels remaining low despite predicted increases due to the economic downturn;

- Reflecting responses from councils, we lobbied hard to ensure councils retain powers to catch serious offenders such as benefit fraudsters, fly-tippers and rogue traders under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000;
 - LACORS secured an additional £3 million to be paid in grants to councils to help them tackle problems associated with counterfeit and illicit tobacco which are often controlled by criminal networks. This funding has increased the level of tobacco control activity, with over 2,500 visits by trading standards services.
 - LACORS worked with the British Board of Film Classification to support a new law to restore prosecutions for selling violent or pornographic films and computer games to under-18s;
 - We maintained a strong voice for the local government at the Ministerial Civil Contingencies Committee during the swine flu, flooding and winter weather salt shortage emergencies;
 - Following the EColi outbreak at Godstone Farm, LACORS actively supported Tandridge DC, liaising with HSE and HPA media teams to try to ensure positive coverage for councils role in protecting the public;
 - We established strong and productive links with the probation service ensuring that local government is at the heart of any rehabilitation programmes;
 - We gave robust challenge and effective oversight to the Fire Control programme on behalf of FRAs, including giving evidence to the CLG Select Committee, resulting in a review of the project by the new Government)
 - The roll out of the fire service operational assessment programme, developed and delivered by the sector itself, has the support of the majority of services with extremely positive feedback from participants
5. The table in **Appendix 1** sets out the key achievements of the safer communities theme covering the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

Councillor and Stakeholder engagement

6. There have been a number of initiatives over the last year to strengthen engagement and communication with member councillors, councils, partner organisations and other stakeholders. We have:
- Held three successful two-day conferences on safer communities, emergency planning and fire;

- Organised well attended one-day events on: Tackling crime in a recession; the Policing White Paper; and a neighbourhood policing event run by the IDeA and National Policing Improvement Agency. LACORS also held events on tobacco control and animal health emergencies;
- Established positive relationships with Home Office and CLG including a programme of work to ensure local government remains central in the development and implementation of policy. We have continued to strengthen our links with government and partners including the Ministry of Justice, Association of Chief Police Officers, the National Improvement Agency, the Association of Police Authorities, the Probation Association, the Chief Fire Officers Association, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser.
- Represented the Local Government Group on a number of senior outside bodies including member representation on the National Crime Reduction Board and the Criminal Justice Council, the FiReControl Project Board and the Olympics Resilience Programme Board;
- Published crime scrutiny guidance and joint guidance for councillors with the Home Office on tackling anti-social behaviour;
- Published a series of articles in First magazine to highlight fire and community safety developments and best practice in member councils and FRAs;
- Supported the network for member champions for equalities and diversity in the fire and rescue service;
- Published a discussion paper on fire service leadership and a guide for members on residential fire safety.
- instituted an account management system for member councils in 2009, which sees an individual account manager within the LGA appointed to act as a first point of contact for every local council.

Programme of work 2010-2011

7. Building on this work, the Board agreed a number of priorities to feed into the development of the LGA Group Business Plan for 2010/11. A programme plan has been agreed which underpins each key workstream. This provides, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of related activity across the community safety agenda in all parts of the Group and ensures that links to cross-cutting themes are identified. The Safer Communities programme plan for 2010-11 is attached at **Appendix B**. The Board's work features in the Reputation, Innovation and Value for Money, Local Democracy and Economy priorities of the Group Business Plan.
8. Key community safety activities identified in the business plan include:
 - Increasing the levels of public confidence in councils by identifying best practice and producing guide to raising confidence;

- Making the case for the continuing involvement of councilors in police accountability structures;
 - Work with the winner of the community safety Local Innovation Award to share their winning ideas and good practice to other localities;
 - Continuing to provide community safety peer reviews to support and build capacity within local authorities, and expand the fire peer support programme;
 - Developing relations with National Offender Management Service, the Probation Service and the Probation Association;
 - Developing an emergency planning peer support programme with the Cabinet Office;
 - Producing good practice guidance on attracting the widest range of candidates for fire service recruitment and lobbying to ensure there are no further costs on FRAs as a result of the introduction of FiReControl; and
 - Lobbying government about and raise the profile of financial skills and literacy among young people.
9. The programme plan priorities are being reviewed in light of the new coalition government's policies to ensure that any policing and community safety commitments of relevance to local authorities are factored into the Board's work. One immediate priority is to respond to the government's proposal to introduce measures to make the police more accountable through oversight by a directly elected individual (see separate report on latest position). Going forward, the programme plan will also need to reflect the Home Secretary's decision (announced at the end of June) to scrap the police confidence target, and the Government's review of Councils' use of covert surveillance under RIPA.

Financial Implications

10. All work programmes are met from existing budget and resources.

Implications for Wales

11. A number of these issues impact on Wales and we will continue to work closely with the WLGA on those issues affecting both the English and Welsh local authorities.

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