

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: LG Group Safer & Stronger Communities Programme Board
Date and time: 11am, Monday 13 September 2010
Venue: The Westminster Suite, Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	Mehboob Khan	Kirklees MBC
Vice chair	Les Lawrence	Birmingham City
Deputy chair	Duwayne Brooks	Lewisham LB
Deputy chair	Goronwy Edwards	Conwy
Members	Brian Coleman	Barnet LB/ LFEPA
	Joanna Spicer	Suffolk CC
	Ian Gillies	City of York
	Nilgun Canver	Haringey LB
	Mark Burns-Williamson	Wakefield MDC
	Daisy Benson	Reading DC
	Anita Lower	Newcastle City
Substitutes	Gillian Brown	Arun District Council
	Iain Malcolm	South Tyneside DC/ LG Regulation
Apologies	Tom Fox	Scarborough BC
	Paul Bettison	Bracknell Forest (LG Regulation representative)
	Ann Lucas	Coventry City
In attendance	Helen Murray	LG Group
	Liz Hobson	LG Group
	Mark Norris	LG Group
	Wendy Martin	LG Group
	Sara Williams	LG Group
	Sarah Monaghan	LG Group

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	<p>The Chair welcomed Members to the first meeting of the new Programme Board cycle for 2010 / 2011.</p>	
<p>1</p>	<p>Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board membership, terms of reference and appointments to outside bodies 2010-11</p> <p><i>Decision</i></p> <p><i>The Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board agreed:</i></p> <p><i>The membership and confirmed Board Office Holders for 2010 / 2011;</i></p> <p><i>The Board Terms of Reference, and the procedure for appointing to outside bodies. Members made the following appointments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cllr Mark Burns–Williamson was appointed as the Board’s representative on the Urban Commission Steering Committee;</i> • <i>Cllr Les Lawrence was appointed as the Board’s representative on the Criminal Justice Council (Cllr Joanna Spicer to act as a substitute Member);</i> • <i>Cllr Anita Lower (Lib Dem), Cllr Ann Lucas (Labour) and Cllr Goronwy Edwards (Independent Group) were appointed as the Board’s representatives on the Local Government Panel – Health and Safety. Cllr Paul Bettison would represent Local Government Regulation on the Panel;</i> • <i>Cllr Duwayne Brooks (Liberal Democrat), Cllr Nilgun Canver (Labour) and Cllr Joanna Spicer (Conservative) were confirmed as the Programme Board’s nominations to the European and International Programme Board;</i> <p><i>That Lead Members would discuss champion roles further and bring back proposals to the next meeting of the Programme Board.</i></p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers to confirm the Safer & Stronger Communities 	<p>Paul Johnston</p>

Programme Board representative on the European & International Programme Board when Programme Board arrangements have been finalised.

- Officers to draft confirmation letters to Members appointed on outside bodies, setting out details of the appointment.
- Officers to update Members on 'champion' roles at the next meeting of the Programme Board.

Paul Johnston

Liz Hobson

2 Government and parliamentary consultations and inquiries

Mark Norris introduced the three consultations relating to areas that now came within the remit of the Board: Rebalancing the Licensing Act 2003; the Ministry of Justice's proposals to close a number of magistrates and county courts; and, the Home Office's publication 'Policing in the 21st century'; as well as the inquiry by the Justice Select Committee into probation.

Rebalancing the Licensing Act

As the consultation period for 'Rebalancing the Licensing Act' came to an end on 8 September, the LGA had submitted a final response to the Home Office. The final response incorporated Members' comments from the draft, which was circulated in early September.

Proposals on the provision of courts services

Her Majesty's Court Service (HCMS) was currently consulting on closing a number of magistrates and county courts throughout the country. Although there was no nationwide paper on the proposals to respond to, it was proposed that the Board write to the Ministry of Justice about the broad issues the court closure proposals raise.

Members expressed the following:

- As the Board had already stressed, it was extremely important that justice be seen to be done speedily and visibly within communities. There was a risk that court closures in local areas would negatively impact on this process.
- Members expressed concerns about the impact that the closures would have on the speed with which justice is delivered. In particular, victims and witnesses could be adversely affected by long delays in court proceedings and long distances to travel, and police officers would

- spend longer from their duties travelling to give evidence.
- Members said that, as local authorities were significant users of the courts system, delays in bringing cases to court could have some serious implications for local authorities' abilities to tackle some of the serious issues facing their residents, particularly in court cases involving vulnerable children.
 - There was support for the suggestion that some courts should be able to sit locally in other public buildings, particularly council chambers.
 - Members also questioned whether there would be a reduction in the number of magistrates and if changes would be made to sentencing as a result, and raised the need to address views of the impartiality of courts if they were held in other public buildings.

Justice Select Committee inquiry on probation

Mark informed Members that the House of Commons Justice Select Committee was going to hold an inquiry into the probation service, and had invited the LGA to submit written evidence. The context for the enquiry was the Government's commitment to introducing a 'rehabilitation revolution'. The LG Association draft response was tabled, and Mark stressed that Members' comments were sought urgently as the response was due the following week.

Members expressed the following:

- The shortcomings of the short sentence regime needed to be addressed as many of these prisoners had high reoffending rates. Members stressed that support for re-offenders was currently delivered through an ineffective, silo-based approach and that reducing re-offending required a more collaborative approach with the pooling of budgets.
- Members raised an issue with locating non-statutory short-term offenders. There was no information available to local services on where they are so provision of support to them is not easy.
- Members pointed out the importance of partnership work in reducing re-offending, and that probation trusts not only had to engage with CSPs but a range of other bodies as well in order to be effective.
- Members also pointed out that any savings resulting from

reductions in prison expenditure should be fed back into the provision of community sentences and those involved in their provision. This would help ensure that there is enough financial support for restorative justice projects to adequately help reduce reoffending.

Policing in the 21st century

The Home Office published 'Policing in the 21st century' at the end of July, which set out in detail the Government's proposals to replace police authorities with directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners. A draft response to the paper from the LG Association was with the Board papers, setting out the Association's concerns at the proposal and then responding to the consultation questions.

Members expressed the following:

- Members endorsed the concerns outlined by the LG Leadership Group. In particular, Members agreed that although police accountability needed to be strengthened, there were concerns about how PCCs would be able to hold chief constables to account with the powers which they are attributed in the proposals.
- Members were also concerned at the speed the changes were proposed to be made and they wished to stress the importance of councils in preventing crime. Members questioned how an elected individual could be subject to an investigation by the IPCC.
- Members were also concerned about why the Government had proposed referendums for PCCs, as they have for elected Mayors.

Decision

*The Board **noted** the submissions to the four government consultations, subject to the changes recommended by Members.*

Action

- Officers to finalise the LGA's responses and evidence submission in light of Members' comments.
- Officers to circulate a concise version of the LGA's response to the consultation questions in 'Policing the

Mark Norris

Helen Murray

21st Century.’

3 Revenue Support Grant (RSG) bid – Briefing for Programme Boards

Sara Williams introduced this report and updated Members on recent and future changes to Revenue Support Grant that will affect the Local Government Group.

Members supported the view that community safety is a key area where focused and effective self regulation can be an alternative to top down regulation and inspection. In particular members highlighted the importance of community safety peers in driving forward improvement in the future.

Decision

Members noted the report.

4 Update on Regulatory Services

The Board heard a presentation from Cllr Iain Malcolm, updating Members on the work that LG Regulation had recently undertaken relating to the activities of the Safer & Stronger Communities Programme Board.

Members expressed the following:

- Members were concerned that the Government’s current review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act suggested that councils’ abilities to get Magistrates Orders could be restricted to ‘serious criminal offences.’ Although it remained unclear over how the Government would define serious crime, Members stressed that crimes such as commercial flytipping, serious food fraud, rogue trading and illegal money lending should be recognised as ‘serious criminal offences’ by Government.
- Members discussed the current BIS review into the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) and endorsed the proposals which LG Regulation have submitted to BIS regarding the future of Council regulatory services.

Decision

Members noted the activities outlined in the report.

Members requested that a report be brought to the next meeting to provide an update on the financial literacy project.

Action

- The Board to write to the government about the changes proposed to authorising council use of surveillance setting out the concerns raised by members. Mark Norris/Wendy Martin
- Officers to update Members about progress on financial literacy in the next report to the Board.
- Officers to circulate the formal submission from LG Regulation to BIS regarding the review of the Local Better Regulation Office. Wendy Martin
Wendy Martin

5 The Spending Review and in-year savings impact on Community Safety Partnerships

Members **noted** the report and the LG Association's work around policing and safety for the Spending Review.

6 Meetings with outside bodies

Members **noted** the report.

7 Note of the last meeting

Members **agreed** the note of the last meeting.

Members noted that the Annual Safer Communities Conference and Exhibition would take place on 12 and 13 October and agreed to promote this within their own authorities.

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks for all the work that members had done over the last year, in particular Cllr Les Lawrence for his chairmanship of the Board. He hoped that the good work would continue in the year ahead.

Date of next meeting: Monday 11 October 2010, 3pm – 5pm, Thistle Hotel, Brighton.