

11 July 2011

Item 4

End of Year Board Report

Purpose of report

For noting and discussion

Summary

This report offers an overview of the issues and work affecting the Board over the last year. It sets out key achievements in relation to the priorities for the Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board in 2010/2011, and looks forward to next year's programme of meetings.

Recommendation(s)

Members are invited to:

- a. Note the achievements against the Board's priorities in 2010/2011; and,
- b. Agree the programme of meetings for 2011/12.

Action

LG Group officers to action as necessary.

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End of Year Board Report

Background

1. After the economy, crime and fear of crime remains a key concern for local communities and their councils. It remains one of the most visible areas of partnership working, and one on which the public judges the success of councils.
2. The political environment in the last year has been dominated by the formation of the new government after the General Election and the need to recover the public finances. The implications for councils of the Comprehensive Spending Review, along with concerns about the future of community safety partnerships, the end of the police confidence target, government commitments to reform police accountability, and improving community safety performance post-Audit Commission inspections, all provided early priorities for the Board.

Strategic Issues

3. Much of the focus of the Board has been responding to the wide ranging policy changes the government has sought to make across the Board's remit. At the heart of these changes have been the proposals to introduce directly elected police and crime commissioners and to give councils greater powers to tackle alcohol related disorder in their communities. Work around the 'Policing in the 21st Century' and the 'Rebalancing the Licensing Act' consultations and subsequently the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill has taken up a considerable proportion of the Board's time.
4. Linked to the changes in the Bill funding issues for councils and community safety partnerships have also been a consistent theme throughout the year, with the Board seeking to influence and deliver a good outcome for councils. Close political engagement with leading politicians in all parties has therefore been an important activity for Members. The Board has also worked on a range of other issues of importance to the sector including proposals to reduce re-offending, restrictions on councils' abilities to use covert surveillance and changes to the tools available to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.
5. Following the Board's efforts to improve its engagement with member authorities last year, it experimented this year with a number of different engagements strategies to build stronger links with the Group's membership. The lessons from these will inform the Board's engagement activity in the year ahead. The Board also continued to build links with other Boards on cross

Item 4

cutting issues including with the Environment and Housing Board and the Local Government Regulation board.

6. A number of the issues the Board has worked on have had implications for Wales, not least the proposals for police and crime commissioners and court closures. The LG Group has shared its responses with the WLGA, and has continued to work closely with the WLGA on issues affecting both English and Welsh local authorities.

Achievements

7. The Board has achieved some significant successes during the year. The changes made to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility as a result of the Board's activity, in particular the strengthening of the checks and balances on police and crime commissioners, and a locally-set flexible licensing fees regime based on cost recovery, are set out in the paper on the Bill. Other notable successes include:
 - 7.1 Building closer and more productive links with ministers in the Home Office which has assisted in lobbying work around licensing fees, councils use of covert surveillance and around police and crime panels.
 - 7.2 Making a strong case to the new ministerial team in the Home Office for maintaining community safety partnerships while reducing the bureaucracy around them. As a result ministers remain committed to strengthening and improving partnership working, and at the start of June amended the regulations governing community safety partnerships, to strip away requirements that, for example, dealt with the chairing of partnerships and the number of meetings they should have.
 - 7.3 Successfully lobbying the Home Office around calls to transfer responsibility for licensing matters back to magistrates' courts, so that responsibility for licensing remains with local authorities.
 - 7.4 Submitting evidence to, and appearing before the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into the government's police and crime commissioner proposals, with the Committee's report backing the Group's view that the police and crime panels should be made up predominantly of councillors.
 - 7.5 Influencing the outcome of the government's Review of Counter-Terrorism and Security Powers so councils can continue to use covert surveillance to tackle offences carrying a prison sentence of 6 months or more (rather than the higher thresholds the Home Office was considering), and for test purchasing to tackle sales of alcohol and tobacco to children.
 - 7.6 Attracting media publicity for the Group's proposal that magistrates' and other courts use council buildings in our response to the Ministry of Justice consultation on court closures.
 - 7.7 Pointing out the key role that councils play in reducing re-offending and the need for budgets around reducing re-offending to be pooled in our

Item 4

- appearance before the Justice Select Committee inquiry into the probation service.
- 7.8 Seeking commitment from the government in our evidence to, and appearance before, the Protection of Freedoms Bill Committee that there will be no conflict in guidance provided by the new Surveillance Camera Commissioner and the Information Commissioner on the use of CCTV, and that councils would still be able to clamp cars illegally parked on council housing estates. Home Office civil servants subsequently gave these commitments to the Group.
 - 7.9 Speeding up the announcement in the New Year by the Home Office about the amount of funding that would be available to community safety partnerships.
 - 7.10 Publishing 'The Lean Community Safety Partnership' guide setting out how councils and their partners could make their community safety functions more efficient and effective, and a guide to community safety and the Big Society.
 - 7.11 Holding nine peer mentor learning events assisted by the Safer Sunderland Partnership to help CSPs refocus on the best activities to make the most difference, create foundations for future support and networking.
 - 7.12 Piloting community safety desktop reviews – critical evaluation of key documents such as strategic assessments and partnerships plans by accredited peers on a voluntary basis with plans for national roll-out.
 - 7.13 Completing 20 safer communities peer reviews, which focused on productivity, with many leading to significant savings and reductions in crime further to adopting review recommendations.
 - 7.14 Producing written guidance and case studies on using private sector expertise in community safety drawing on the Safer Sunderland Partnership's and NHS South of Tyne & Wear's application of Toyota Rapid Improvement Processes.
 - 7.15 Having online resources available for practitioners through the community safety Community of Practice (CoP).
 - 7.16 Holding four conferences and events to lobby for, promote and support councils' community safety work and community safety partnerships, as well as their burial and bereavement work. This included another successful Safer Communities conference in Brighton themed around budget cuts and making community safety partnerships more efficient and effective.
 - 7.17 Board Members speaking at a range of events such as the Smith Square debate at Local Government House on licensing, and conferences on the government's rehabilitation revolution, on cutting crime in partnership, on the future of neighbourhood policing and on anti-social behaviour policy.
 - 7.18 Continuing to use the Board's Community Safety bulletin to highlight the work the Group is doing, making good use of our professional advisers on issues such as anti-social behaviour tools and powers, and raising the

Item 4

need to prepare for police and crime commissioners by hosting a workshop at the LG Group's Annual Conference.

- 7.19 19 media releases on subjects including the government's amendments to the powers of police and crime panels, CRB checks on taxi cab drivers, cuts in budgets for community safety, and sales of fake vodka.

Programme of work 2011/2012

8. Building on these achievements the Board agreed a number of priorities to feed into the LG Group Business Plan for 2011/2012. The Business Plan sets out the following priorities for the Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board:

- 8.1 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill;
- 8.2 Emergency Planning policy and strategy development;
- 8.3 Breaking the Cycle" Green Paper;
- 8.4 A flexible and locally-set licence fee structure;
- 8.5 Fire – redefining roles and responsibilities to improve local services while protecting national resilience.

9. And our priorities for helping councils to tackle their challenges are:

- 9.1 An effective approach to sector-based support in community safety through CSP peer reviews and other peer support; and
- 9.2 A programme of fire peer reviews.

Board Cycle

10. Lead members at their meeting in June considered the possible options for the forthcoming Board cycle. In order to balance meetings with engagement with member authorities and different ways for the Board to do business they propose the following programme of Board meetings:

Tuesday 13 September 2011 - London (for induction and business plan discussions)

Monday 7 November 2011 – an Away Day to consider the implications of the Police Reform and Social Responsibilities Bill

Monday 16 January 2012 – London

Monday 12 March 2012– Getting Closer to member councils (like the event held in Exeter in July 2010) in the North West

Monday 9 July 2012 – London

Financial Implications

11. All work programmes are met from existing budgets and resources.