

Item 6

Meetings with Outside Bodies

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper is to inform members of the activities that have been undertaken since the last update to the Board by members and LGA officers, on behalf of the Board.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

Contact officer: Mark Norris
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3241
E-mail: mark.norris@local.gov.uk

Meetings with Outside Bodies

Member Activity

Transition to police and crime commissioners

1. Since the last meeting Board members have been speaking to both local and central government about the transition to police and crime commissioners. Cllr Duwayne Brooks attended a stakeholder event held by Hampshire Police Authority in mid-February to talk about what is involved in setting up a police and crime panel. Later in the month Cllr Henri Murison represented the Board at the Home Office's Transition Sponsorship Board, which is chaired by the Policing Minister, the Rt. Hon. Nick Herbert MP. Cllr Murison raised the lack of progress in providing councils with a definitive list of the funding to be transferred to commissioners, and urged the government to rethink their decision not to use a free-post delivery of election material.
2. Cllr Goronwy Edwards, the Board's Deputy Chair, attended the project group meeting looking at elections. The issue of support for candidates in getting their message out to voters has been raised previously but the government has indicated that there will be no free-post delivery of election material due to cost. Instead, there will be an internet based alternative where details of the candidates will be provided, and a number which people can call to ask for the information to be put in the post to them.

Metal Theft

3. In early February the Board's chair Cllr Mehboob Khan, along with Cllr David Parsons, Chair of the Environment and Housing Board, and Cllrs Richard Stay and Budge Wells from Central Bedfordshire met Lord Henley the minister responsible for addressing metal theft at the Home Office. There was a discussion with the minister about providing councils with the power to make their own bye-laws regulating scrap metal dealers. The minister was supportive of this in principle although he wanted to take further advice. Since then LGA officers have been in discussion with Home Office officials about finding a possible legislative vehicle.

CCTV

4. Cllr Mehboob Khan appeared on Sky News in February opposite the TaxPayer's Alliance to defend council expenditure on CCTV, following a press release from Big Brother Watch on how much councils have spent on CCTV cameras over the

Item 6

last four years. Cllr Khan was able to point out that compared to Big Brother Watch's own figures, the number of cameras operated by councils has declined by 13% from 2009. He also highlighted the important role CCTV plays in tracking down offenders and securing convictions while making the point that councils consult with residents and partners on whether it is the most effective tool for tackling crime in an area.

Deaths, Funerals and Coroners' Conference

5. Cllr Les Lawrence, the Board's Vice-Chair, chaired a successful Deaths, Funerals and Coroners Conference in early March which looked at ways of improving burial and bereavement services, maintaining cemeteries, the impact of the government's decision not to abolish the post of chief coroner, and need for councils to appoint medical examiners as part of the reforms introduced to death certification after the Harold Shipman case. As well as a range of local government speakers delegates heard from the Ministry of Justice, the Department of Health, and the Coroners' Society.

Officer Activity

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act

6. Officers have continued to visit or meet with a range of member authorities to discuss the transition to police and crime commissioners (PCC). This has included councils in Berkshire, Cumbria, Devon and Cornwall, Hampshire, Kent and Staffordshire. Alongside these visits officers have also attended the Home Office PCC events in Leeds, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Reading and Swindon and have been able to engage with some areas the Board's officers had not yet visited. The police and crime panel group that has been established on the LGA's new Knowledge Hub also means that the Board's officers are engaging directly with those officers around England tasked with setting up police and crime panels.
7. In addition to this contact with member authorities the Board's officers have met with a range of other bodies heavily involved in the transition to PCCs, including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (with the LGA being invited to participate in their PCC Transition Reference Group), the Association of Police Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers. Officers have also met with Cambridgeshire Police Authority to discuss commissioning guidance for PCCs, and Home Office officials to discuss regulations for police and crime panels, as well as participating in workshops on PCCs at a Centre for Public Scrutiny conference and the District Councils' Network assembly.

Metal theft

8. Officers met with Cllrs Richard Stay and Budge Wells from Central Bedfordshire in mid-January to discuss their council's desire to explore the powers available to them to introduce their own licensing regime for scrap metal dealers ahead of any government legislation which could take a year to eighteen months before it came into effect.

Anti-social behaviour

9. At the start of last year the government consulted on changes to the tools and powers available to councils and the police to tackle anti-social behaviour. From a meeting in mid-January with Home Office officials, officers understand that the Home Office will shortly be producing a White Paper on addressing anti-social behaviour. This will provide the government's response to the anti-social behaviour consultation and will also set out the wider changes the government has made in other Whitehall departments to tackle anti-social behaviour. This will be followed by legislation in the new Queen's Speech anticipated in early May.

Ending Gang and Serious Youth Violence

10. The LGA continues to be closely involved in the Home Office's programme to implement the recommendations from the government's report on tackling gangs and serious youth violence. In addition to a place on the programme board the LGA has been invited to participate in the officials group overseeing the programme board. As reported to the last Board the LGA has been involved in the delivery of a pilot peer review in Enfield, will be assisting with three further peer reviews, and has run an accreditation process for the practitioners supporting the Home Office team with 32 practitioners so far accredited.

Employer Supported Policing

11. Following the consideration at the last Board meeting of the LGA's support for the National Police Improvement Agency's Employer Supported Policing Scheme to assist special constables, officers met with the NPIA to discuss what this support would involve. As a result of these discussions a report on the Employer Supported Policing scheme was included in the LGA's *first* publication in February.

CCTV

12. With the Protection of Freedoms Bill due to complete its passage through parliament very soon, the Home Office is already considering how to establish the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's post and the Code of Conduct for surveillance cameras. Officers have met with Home Office officials to discuss the

Item 6

work in this area, and how local government can feed into the Surveillance Camera Systems Steering Group that the Home Office has established to oversee work in this area.