

Item 7

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title:	LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board
Date and time:	Monday 16 January 2012, 11.00am
Venue:	Smith Square rooms 3 & 4 (Ground Floor), Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chair	Cllr Mehboob Khan	Kirklees MBC
Deputy Chair	Cllr Les Lawrence (Vice Chair)	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Duwayne Brooks (Deputy Chair)	Lewisham LB
	Cllr Goronwy Edwards (Deputy Chair)	Conwy
Members	Cllr Joanna Spicer	Suffolk CC
	Cllr Brian Coleman	Barnet LB / LFEPA
	Cllr Nilgun Canver	Haringey LB
	Cllr Lisa Brett	Bath & NE Somerset Council
	Cllr Paul Bettison	Bracknell Forest
	Cllr Tom Fox	Scarborough BC
	Cllr Robert Gordon	Hertfordshire CC
	Cllr Jim Harker	Northamptonshire CC
	Cllr Ann Lucas	Coventry City
Substitutes	Cllr Crada Onuegbu	Lewisham LB
Apologies	Cllr Brian Coleman	Barnet LB / LFEPA
	Cllr Mark Burns-Williamson	Wakefield MDC

Officers: Helen Murray, Mark Norris, Ian Leete, David Lock, Vicki Goddard, Stephen Service (all LGA)

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Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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Cllr Mehboob Khan welcomed Members to the meeting.

On behalf of the Board, he acknowledged the verdict of the Stephen Lawrence trial at which Cllr Duwayne Brooks had given evidence. Cllr Brooks thanked Members for their good wishes throughout.

1. Priorities 2012/13

Helen Murray, LGA Head of Programmes introduced this item. She said that as with last year's plan, the focus was on outcomes with a degree of flexibility built in. She asked Members to identify any gaps in the Safer Communities remit.

Members agreed that one of the Board's main priorities continues to be Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). While the LGA has submitted an offer to the Government to set up a representative body for PCCs, Members noted the separate bid from the APA and the APA's view that the LGA would be supporting the police and crime panels which will have the role of holding commissioners to account.

While Members supported the LGA's position, they took the view that there should be discrete arrangements within the LGA so that support for PCCs and panels was separated.

Members said that they would value more detail on the LGA's model and Cllr Khan agreed to arrange for the LGA's bid letter to the Home Office to be circulated.

On community payback reforms, Councillors agreed that it was appropriate for the Board to lead on this issue, but asked that the Housing and Environment Board remain involved.

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Action

Officers to feed back the Board's views on the draft Business Plan to the Leadership Board. **LGA Officers**

Officers to circulate to Board Members the LGA's bid letter to the Home Office to be the representative body for police and crime commissioners. **LGA Officers**

2. Home Office consultation – domestic violence disclosure scheme

Helen Murray summarised this item and emphasised the balance of risk that the scheme presented between giving would-be victims knowledge through disclosure and potentially triggering further domestic violence events. She proposed an LGA submission to the Home Office to show that the Association is engaging with the issue, but acknowledged that forming a decisive position could prove challenging.

Cllr Ann Lucas, Board Champion on Domestic Violence circulated copies of the draft response from Women's Aid. She explained that Women's Aid took the view that the police already have powers of disclosure and they suggested that improving and encouraging forces to use these powers more effectively was the most appropriate way of addressing the issue. Cllr Lucas emphasised that the police national database did not always contain information on offenders, who may be known to local police but have not been convicted.

Cllr Lucas said that the issue of relationships in domestic violence cases is frequently complex. Victims can fear disclosure and often say they want the violence to stop rather than the relationship to end. This means that even when their partner's history is disclosed, there is no guarantee that the victim will act on the information.

Members agreed that the proposals were problematic, saying that definitions of what constitutes domestic violence are not straightforward and that police require significant training to deal with the issue effectively.

Councillors felt that there was often a tendency for work areas to protect budgets and not work together, when a multi-agency stance is required. There was broad consensus that a cross-

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government approach is needed and that Government departments needed to make links with what is already available. Members had reservations about Options 2 and 3 in the consultation and suggested that the LGA response should pick up on existing legislation and what local partnerships do in relation to prevention, including work happening in schools, councils and the NHS.

Members asked how the current cuts were affecting organisations involved in domestic violence work. Cllrs Khan and Lucas responded that people were working hard to make resources go further. Members asked if there was anything that could be said on prioritising funding. Helen Murray said that the LGA's current position on cuts was to reject protection for specific areas of funding as this could prove difficult to justify over other areas in future.

Members felt support for victims was important in which ever option the government decided on, but preventing domestic violence was just as vital. They argued that the right to ask, should be strengthened with a clear and transparent system in place to examine requests. Cllr Khan contended that this may be a case where the existing system needs better promotion.

On the options outlined, some Members were in favour of strengthening Option 1, while emphasising that the work emerging from the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) needs to be well targeted. Cllrs supported drafting a response on Option 2 which emphasised the risks. There was general consensus that the Board would not feel comfortable supporting Option 3 as it was a high risk strategy.

Cllr Khan proposed that an article on the disclosure scheme and associated issues be written for First magazine. This should include how the scheme could save money for authorities in the long term.

On the subject of trafficking during the Olympics, Helen Murray confirmed that the issue of is being addressed through the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic task group, on which Cllr Lucas sits.

Action

Officers to draft response to the Home Office, taking into account Members' comments

**Helen Murray /
Mark Norris**

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Cllr Lucas/Officers to write an article on the disclosure scheme and associated issues for First magazine.

**Cllr Lucas/ LGA
Officers**

Officers to invite Javeed Khan to the Board to speak on victim support.

LGA Officers

3. Employer Supported Policing

Mark Norris, LGA Senior Advisor summarised this item.

Members expressed disappointment that public sector cuts in staff numbers and finances had not been acknowledged in the Government's proposals. The Board sought greater recognition that staff are already stretched and said that authorities' ability to honour employee requests for time to undertake voluntary work would ultimately come down to resources.

While recognising that the proposals had good intentions, the Board pointed out that training was not free and the fact that police forces had been asked to bear the cost was not mentioned in the letter.

Councillors voiced concern that encouraging employers to pay Special Constables for their time off could lead to a two tier volunteering system as not all employers could afford to do this.

Some Members suggested that other benefits, such as a reduction in council tax for houses with a Special Constable could provide a more democratic system for taking up the opportunity. However, others argued that this posed questions such as which voluntary schemes qualified for council tax credit and which ones should be prioritised for employee release. Members cited the good work of other similarly public spirited organisations such as the St John's ambulance and cautioned against a volunteering hierarchy.

Members endorsed the point made in the LGA Chairman's letter regarding unemployed people and suggested these volunteering opportunities could be advertised through job centres.

Cllr Khan asked for an article to appear in First magazine on

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this topic.

Action

Officers to write article for First magazine on this issue.

**Helen Murray /
Mark Norris**

4. Riots Communities and Victims Panel's Interim Report

Mark Norris began by saying that there was significant overlap between the findings of the interim report and the comments expressed by Members at the meeting with Darra Singh on 7 November 2011.

Chairman Khan asked if there would be another opportunity to influence the panel's findings before the publication of the final report. Helen Murray said that a meeting between Darra Singh, Cllr Khan and the LGA Chairman had been set up.

Cllr Khan said he would be meeting Darra Singh in Kirklees next week. He agreed to give a summary from Members at the Board into this discussion and asked Officers to provide this before the meeting.

Councillors cited the relationship between the IPCC and the family of Mark Duggan as a primary cause of the problems in Tottenham, arguing that the police did not handle the situation effectively. They suggested that greater clarification on the role and responsibility of the police was needed here.

While Members acknowledged that a repeat of the riots was always possible, they questioned whether authorities knew they had sufficient community relationships in place, emphasising that strong links with faith leaders, youth workers and others can often signpost tension points in communities before problems arise.

Members championed the work of Councils in the aftermath of the riots and said that the final report should reflect this.

On social media, Members felt Councils could be harnessing young people more effectively as a resource for countering negative messages. Councillors gave examples where online intervention and policing from young people had prevented disorder during the riots.

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Some Members noted the absence of any reference to the withdrawal of Educational Maintainance Allowances (EMAs) as a factor in the report and expressed the view that those commentators who had suggested EMAs as a cause should withdraw their statements.

Members felt that there was no mention of independent advisory groups in the interim findings and argued that this should be added to the final report.

Cllr Duwayne Brookes asked if a meeting between all lead Members and Darra Singh could be arranged before the publication of the panel's final report. Cllr Khan asked officers to check if this was possible before the submissions deadline.

Action

Officers to provide Cllr Khan with a summary of Member's comments in advance of his meeting with Darra Singh.

**Mark Norris /
Stephen Service**

Officers to check if a meeting between all lead Members and Darra Singh can be arranged in advance of the final report's publication in March.

LGA Officers

5. Update on Metal Theft

Mark Norris said that the LGA had met with Central Bedfordshire the previous week to discuss introducing a licensing scheme for scrap metal dealers.

Members stressed that under current legislation, fines for scrap metal businesses not undertaking checks were low in comparison to the high value of the metals bought and sold. This meant there was no clear financial incentive to uphold the law and made it easy for thieves to find a buyer.

Members commented that British Transport Police had been put in charge of the problem which suggested that only transport infrastructure was affected. They highlighted that many other areas were also targeted, including hospitals and war memorials.

Cllr Khan said that while a private members bill was in the process of going through parliament, any local powers that could be agreed would be useful as this was quicker to enforce

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than waiting for national legislation to be introduced.

Members asked whether there were any pilot schemes that the LGA was aware of. Cllr Khan said that there were examples of voluntary codes of practice for scrap metal dealers being introduced, such as keeping records of sellers and photographic identification.

Cllr Khan emphasised that a good LGA media and communications strategy was needed to back up the good work that the LGA has done in this area.

6. Update on Regulatory Services issues

The Board noted the activities outlined in the report.

On **alcohol**, some Members wanted to see a minimum cost per unit, stressing the health implications and anti-social behaviour issues caused by excessive drinking. Others felt that a minimum would unfairly penalise casual drinkers and interfere unduly with personal freedoms.

Members discussed what the LGA's position should be. Some wanted the association to highlight examples where state intervention has not succeeded in its aims, such as in curbing teenage smoking rates. Other Members said that the job of the Safer Communities Board was to emphasise the effects of alcohol on community safety in such areas as anti-social behaviour and domestic violence.

The Chairman agreed to send a note to the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that a joined up approach was taken on this issue.

On **Gambling**, Members said that the clustering of betting shops was still a big issue and that they needed to be categorised as a class of gambling establishment in their own right.

On **dangerous dogs**, Councillors suggested that there was a current gap in legislation which meant that no police action could be taken if a dog bites an individual in their own home.

Action

Cllr Khan to send letter on alcohol licensing to the Chair of the

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Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Cllr Khan/ Helen
Murray /
Gwyneth Rogers**

7. Meetings with Outside Bodies

Cllr Khan asked for the issue of Metal theft licensing to be raised in the next meeting with the magistrates' association and the Board's view that licensing responsibility should not reside with the courts.

8. Notes of the last meeting

The notes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record.

Date of next meeting: Monday 12 March 2012, Local Government House