

9 July 2012

Item 5

End of Year Board Report

Purpose of report

For noting and discussion.

Summary

This report offers an overview of the issues and work the Board has done over the last year. It sets out key achievements in relation to the priorities for the Safer and Stronger Communities Board in 2011/2012, and looks forward to next year's programme of meetings.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

1. note the achievements against the Board's priorities in 2011/2012; and,
2. agree the programme of meetings for 2012/13.

Action

Officers to action as necessary.

Contact officer:

Helen Murray

Position:

Head of Programmes, LGA

Phone no:

020 7664 3266

E-mail:

helen.murray@local.gov.uk

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Background

1. Although the state of the economy and unemployment have dominated the political environment in the last year, crime continues to be a key concern for communities and the councils that serve them. The Board's activities have been driven by public sector reforms across the range of the Board's responsibilities, changes in types of crimes being committed, and also in response to events such as the civil disturbances in August 2011.

Strategic Issues

2. The core of the Board's policing, community safety and licensing work in 2011/12 has been the implementation of the reforms in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The Act not only made significant changes to the licensing regime under the Licensing Act 2003, it also introduced police and crime commissioners. Since the legislation received royal assent in September, the Board has been advising councils on the implications of the changes. In the case of police and crime commissioners (PCCs) this has meant representing the interests of local government on the Home Office transition boards and projects established to ensure there is a smooth changeover from police authorities to PCCs in November 2012.
3. As local authorities in England have the responsibility of establishing police and crime panels, the Board has focused on this issue, providing advice and assistance to councils. As a result the Board has had a significant amount of contact with member authorities in England and Wales through both members and officers. The Board has also spearheaded the LGA's case for becoming the national representative body for PCCs.
4. Other Board work has included new tools and powers to tackle anti-social behaviour, a new code of conduct for CCTV, proposed changes to the services for victims and witnesses, improving community cohesion, criminal records checks for taxi and private hire vehicles, dangerous dogs, a proposed 'minimum pricing for alcohol' and tackling metal theft. The Board has worked closely with other LGA Boards such as the Environment and Housing Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board on these issues.
5. The LGA has continued to work closely with the WLGA on issues affecting both English and Welsh local authorities.

Achievements

6. The Board has achieved some significant successes during the year, including:
 - 6.1 Providing support to councils in setting up police and crime panels by publishing a growing series of well regarded guides to panels and various aspects of their work; establishing a pool of peer experts; setting up a support group on the LGA's Knowledge Hub which has grown to over 140 members; and visited over 50 councils or groups of authorities to talk about the transition to PCCs.
 - 6.2 Launching a new membership body for police and crime commissioners, the Police and Crime Commissioners' Association, with a prospectus launched in May; a fortnightly bulletin being sent to prospective candidates and successful sessions at the LGA's annual conference for prospective candidates.
 - 6.3 Successfully lobbying the Home Office to introduce cashless transactions for scrap metal dealers and to increase the penalties for offences under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964; and also supporting councils in their work to reduce metal theft by producing a toolkit for councils.
 - 6.4 Working with Richard Ottaway MP on his private member's bill to ensure that the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964 is replaced by a licensing regime for scrap metal dealers administered and enforced by local authorities.
 - 6.5 Supporting councils during and in the immediate aftermath of the civil disturbances in August including attending the civil contingencies committee meetings and the subsequent Government recovery board meetings.
 - 6.6 Influencing the Government's report on Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy which was commissioned after the civil disturbances, removing the requirement on councils to hold a gang homicide review after every gang related murder, and participating in the Home Office's boards overseeing delivery of the strategy.
 - 6.7 Submitting evidence to the Victims and Communities Panel on behalf of local authorities and their communities as part of the enquiry into the August 2011 riots and proposing measures to prevent similar instances of public disorder occurring in the future.
 - 6.8 Helping the Home Office develop a peer review scheme based on the LGA's own model for their gangs and serious youth violence work, and

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also accrediting 64 Home Office peers so they could participate in these reviews.

- 6.9 Persuading the Government to change its position on councils' ability to require enhanced CRB checks for taxi drivers following sustained lobbying by the LGA.
- 6.10 Working with the Home Office on the introduction of locally set alcohol licensing with the new fees regime coming into effect in April 2013.
- 6.11 Overturning an amendment to the Protection of Freedoms Act, which would have required environmental health and trading standards officers to seek a warrant through the courts to carry out basic inspections, unless given permission to enter by the business owner.
- 6.12 Helping secure the passage of the Live Music Bill through the Parliamentary process as an effective balance between deregulation and ensuring councils have powers to protect residents. The LGA worked closely with Don Foster MP and was instrumental in shaping this private members bill. The Board also responded with the Culture Tourism and Sport Board to proposals by DCMS to deregulate all events under 5,000 people and outlined major concerns with the proposals.
- 6.13 Publishing a Councillor Handbook on community events to draw together the different approaches taken by councils to supporting community events over the Jubilee and Olympic period.
- 6.14 Carrying out four community safety peer reviews to assist Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in improving the way they work, accredited further community safety peers for the LGA, conducted four desktop reviews of key community safety related documents produced by the four partnerships involved, and supported ten peer mentoring arrangements for community safety partnerships.
- 6.15 Published a monthly Community Safety bulletin highlighting the work the Board is doing, making good use of our professional advisers on issues such as licensing and anti-social behaviour.
- 6.16 Having online resources available for practitioners through the community safety Knowledge Hub group.
- 6.17 Holding conferences and events to support councils' work on licensing, metal theft, alcohol strategy and emergency planning. This included a successful Safer Communities conference in London entitled CSPs: Change and Renewal, which discussed the impact of cuts to the community safety fund and opportunities for CSPs to work differently.

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Board members took part in chairing and speaking at these events, as well as a number of external conferences and events.

- 6.18 Issuing 27 media releases on subjects including metal theft, licensing, minimum pricing for alcohol, a late night bars and clubs levy, and CRB checks on taxi cab drivers.

Programme of work 2012/2013

7. Building on these achievements the Board agreed a number of priorities to feed into the LGA Business Plan for 2012/2013. The Business Plan sets out the following priorities for the Safer and Stronger Communities Board:
- 7.1 developing an attractive membership offer for PCCs
 - 7.2 support to community safety partnerships in preparing for PCCs
 - 7.3 support, guidance and practice shared for local authorities setting up Police and Crime Panels
 - 7.4 reducing red tape and regulatory burdens at local level
 - 7.5 and a programme which is fire-specific, particularly around resilience.
8. And our priorities for helping councils to tackle their challenges are:
- 8.1 ensuring Richard Ottaway's private member's bill on scrap metal dealers becomes law; and
 - 8.2 lobbying as appropriate for changes to the draft anti-social behaviour bill to ensure it provides councils with the tools and powers they need.

Board Cycle

9. In January, lead members proposed the following dates for 2012/13 cycle:

Tuesday 11 September 2012 (for induction and business plan discussions)
Monday 5 November 2012
Monday 14 January 2013
Monday 11 March 2013
Monday 12 July 2013

10. Rooms in Local Government House have provisionally been booked for each of these dates, however the venue can be rearranged if Members would prefer to meet outside of London for any of the meetings.

Financial Implications

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