

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title:	Safer and Stronger Communities Board
Date and time:	Monday 4 November 2013, 11.00am
Venue:	Westminster Suite room 8.1 (8 th Floor), Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chair	Cllr Mehboob Khan	Kirklees MBC
Vice Chair	Cllr Joanna Spicer	Suffolk CC
Deputy Chair	Cllr Lisa Brett	Bath & NE Somerset Council
Deputy Chair	Cllr Philip Evans JP	Conwy Council
Members	Cllr Morris Bright	Hertsmere BC
	Cllr Kay Hammond	Surrey CC
	Cllr David Burbage	Windsor & Maidenhead RBC
	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland DC
	Cllr Ian Gillies	City of York Council
	Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling BC
	Cllr Janet Daby	Lewisham LB
	Cllr Tony Page	Reading BC
	Cllr Mike Connolly	Bury MBC
	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle City
	Cllr Colin Mann	Caerphilly Council
Substitutes	Cllr Adrian Collett	Hampshire CC
	Cllr Bhupendra Dave	Oadby & Wigston BC
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City
Apologies	Cllr Tom Fox	Scarborough BC
	Cllr Ann Lucas	Coventry City Council

Officers: Helen Murray, Mark Norris, Ellie Greenwood, Stephen Service (all LGA)

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	<p>Cllr Khan welcomed Members and introduced Lord Taylor of Holbeach for the first item.</p>	
1.	Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill	
	<p>Lord Taylor gave a speech outlining progress on the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing bill. Lord Taylor highlighted amendments made in the Commons to allow provisions to be used to address bullying, powers to deal with anti-social tenants in private rented accommodation and dog control notices.</p> <p>In their response, members welcomed the proposal to avoid duplication by not adding new powers in the Bill unless absolutely necessary and stressed the importance of not criminalising behaviours. They said that more work should be done to prevent groups and young people getting involved in anti-social behaviour. Lord Taylor agreed, adding that it was also important to remember that victims as well as perpetrators were often young.</p> <p>Councillors welcomed the lowering of the threshold for evidence of anti-social behaviour presented in court. They noted that anti-social behaviour officers were often reluctant to go to court due to a potential lack of evidence.</p> <p>Members highlighted the risks of court punishments being applied unjustly or disproportionately in cases where undiagnosed mental health problems affected behaviour or where people caught up in riots had been given harsh sentences.</p> <p>Lord Taylor said that in such cases it was up to the courts to ensure those prosecuted are dealt with fairly.</p> <p>The Board also asked what powers in the bill would allow local partners to deal with aggressive begging. Lord Taylor said the issue had been raised with him by Westminster City Council and there was the possibility of using a range of orders and powers in the bill to deal with aggressive begging.</p> <p>On dispersal powers, the Board emphasised the importance of councils being contacted by police either on or immediately following the application of an order to avoid being sidelined as key stakeholders in decisions taken and ensure joined up working between agencies. Lord Taylor responded that while a statutory</p>	

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regulation to consult authorities might prove unworkable in cases where an order needed to be applied urgently, he would consider notification as a potential way forward.

Some members felt that landlords of private as well as social housing should assume a bigger responsibility for ensuring the behaviour of tenants. They cited the use of legal powers in Scotland obliging landlords to communicate what is required of their tenants as a means of establishing behavioural commitment by occupants.

In terms of next steps, Lord Taylor said that he would send a copy of his speech and the draft guidance on the reform of anti-social behaviour powers for comment.

Cllr Khan thanked Lord Taylor for attending and said officers would send a summary of the Board's comments from the meeting for his consideration. Lord Taylor was also asked to set out the areas it would be helpful if the LGA gave their support to.

Action

Officers to circulate a copy of Lord Taylor's speech and the draft guidance on the reform of anti-social behaviour powers.

LGA Officers

Summary of the Board's comments from the meeting to be sent to Lord Taylor's office.

**Mark Norris /
Stephen Service**

2. Community Budgets and Community Safety

Cllr Khan welcomed Chief Inspector Dave Griffiths from Cheshire police and Gavin Butler from Cheshire West and Chester Council to talk about the "altogether better" Safer Communities programme - a cross-organisational initiative based around community budgets and focusing on domestic abuse.

In response to the presentation, Members praised the use of children's centres as a base for domestic violence teams. They stressed the importance of engaging with schools to ensure the model was properly integrated.

Cllr Brett challenged the suggestion in the slides that only 23 per cent of victims were "repeat" victims of domestic violence. She emphasised that many victims are subject to a significant number of instances of abuse before they report it for the first time. Mr

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Griffiths accepted that there was under reporting of the number of repeat victims, and was a wide problem.

Members asked what the Cheshire officers experience had been linking with local solicitors dealing with matrimonial legal proceedings to better assess the number of victims and with the Home Office in Domestic Homicide reviews. Some members commented that Home Office coordination was poor in cases dealt with in their authorities, and wondered how performance against outcomes would be measured. Mr Griffiths said that they were keen to monitor the cohort of victims they worked with to assess the impact they were having and the numbers they worked with. This would help assess the cost of interventions. Mr Butler added there were considerable delays before the local authority received feedback on domestic homicide reviews.

In answer to a question on penalties for those perpetrators who refused to be tagged voluntarily, Mr Griffiths said that they would be subject to the full force of the justice system. Both Mr Griffiths and Mr Butler agreed that schools were a key partner in this work in reply to a question about their involvement, and there were increasing referrals from them.

On the population that the authority are dealing with, Mr Griffiths said that domestic abuse is particularly underreported in middle class areas with the size of houses and the thickness of the walls in these areas reducing the likelihood of neighbours witnessing abuse. Different nationalities and newly emerging communities also posed a significant challenge to local services.

Regarding universal credit, Mr Griffiths highlighted the problems posed in some areas by one member of the household receiving the benefit. In families experiencing domestic abuse, there was a threat of this practice having an unintentionally negative impact on victims, including children. There were also other risks such as the new contract providers for probation services to engage with this work.

Cllr Spicer said that in the current financial climate it was important that officers were able to evidence the gains in the programme against the costs of implementation.

Mr Griffiths responded that a full cost benefit analysis for the project could be accessed online [here](#) .

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Cllr Khan commented that he would be interested to see what impact projects like this had on reducing the impact on services 12 months after implementation. He suggested inviting Cambridgeshire and Essex as authorities undertaking similar programmes but which were further ahead on the implementation process to come to the Board to provide a progress update.

Action

Officers to invite Cambridgeshire and Essex authorities back to a forthcoming Board to provide a progress update on their initiatives.

**Helen Murray /
Stephen Service**

Cheshire's powerpoint presentation to be circulated to Board.

Stephen Service

3. Implementing Open for Business: Licensing Reform

Ellie Greenwood introduced herself as the new LGA Senior Adviser for regulation and licencing. She invited members to suggest what key licensing issues they would like to pursue nationally and sought their views on currently emerging licensing issues such as shisha cafés and sunbeds.

Members advocated a local approach, and suggested that there should be greater cross-referencing between licensing activity and other areas, including local planning and public health on issues such as betting shops. Members also mentioned the impact of temporary event notices and the need to involve health considerations in licensing decisions.

At the same time, it was recognised that if local authorities depart too much from the broad framework set by national statutory guidance in setting their own licensing policies, this could cause difficulties when cases went to court. Some members also urged caution over raising unreasonable expectations. Until planning and licensing were brought together at national level, the ability for integration to take place locally was seen as limited.

Alongside the issues mentioned by Ellie, Community Impact Zones and the licensing of sex shops were also seen as issues on which local authorities would currently benefit from LGA support.

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Cllr Khan asked Officers to circulate a revised draft document outlining the LGA's offer on licensing to lead members which when finalised would be used to frame debate at the LGA Licensing Conference on 4 February 2014.

Action

Officers to circulate a document outlining the LGA's licensing offer for lead members' approval based on Board's comments.

**Ellie Greenwood /
Ian Leete**

4. Police and Crime Panels One Year On: Submission to the Home Affairs Select Committee

Eamon Lally, LGA Senior Adviser introduced the LGA draft submission to the Home Affairs Select Committee. He said that this was based on the information gathered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny from Police and Crime Panels and the key areas focused on included information-sharing and working in partnership.

Members agreed that current arrangements were not working well in several localities. The submission's use of the word "positive" to describe panels' influence was seen to be inappropriate given their "lack of teeth" in key areas, with not enough challenge on the role of PCPs. Contrary to the submission's claim in paragraph 17, members also disagreed that the powers given to PCPs were "broadly sufficient" for their purpose.

Officers responded that the more positive tone was in recognition of evidence to suggest that earlier engagement had been made between PCCs and PCPs this year in comparison to previously.

While some members said that the submission should question what the Government intended the role of PCPs to be, others felt that the purpose of PCPs to scrutinise PCCs was clear, but that the case for why they were currently ineffectual needed to be made more robustly, with illustrative examples included of good and bad practice.

Several members argued that criticism should also encompass the role of PCCs in terms of their power to dismiss Chief Constables. Some argued that dismissals in some areas had taken place simply because of a poor relationship between the PCC and the senior officer.

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Members noted that the paragraph on Community Safety Partnerships indicated the complexity of effectively resourcing panels in 2 tier authorities.

Some members wanted to see powers to allow PCPs to defer some issues upwards to the Home Office.

On funding PCPs, some members argued that local government should not pick up the bill for what was a centralist policy.

Cllr Khan said that the Board had offered a clear steer towards greater robustness in the argument on PCPs to be put to the Home Affairs Select Committee. Alongside the written submission, he announced his intention to arrange to appear before the committee to make the Board's case in person.

The Chair added that it would be interesting to see what key scrutiny powers Keith Vaz's Committee would be awarded in comparison to those which had been devolved to panels.

Action

Officers to redraft submission to take account of members' comments.

Eamon Lally

5. Update on Regulatory services issues

Members **noted** the update.

6. Notes of the last meeting

The Board **noted** the minutes of the meeting on 9 September 2013.

Date of Next Meeting:

11am, Monday, 13 January 2014, Local Government House