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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 meeting by Members of the Board, and LG Group officers, on behalf of the Board.

Recommendation

Board members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Meetings with outside bodies

Member activity

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

1. The Board's Deputy Chair, Cllr Brooks, attended a further meeting of the Home Office's Police and Crime Commissioners Transition Project dealing with complaints in July. This project group has agreed that the Independent Police Complaints Commission will only deal with allegations of criminal conduct on the part of police and crime commissioners, with police and crime panels dealing with all other complaints in an informal way. The Home Office has produced draft regulations on the how complaints of criminal behaviour by the police and crime commissioner will be handled which will be consulted on over the autumn.

CRB checks for taxi and private hire vehicle drivers

2. At the end of August the Board's Vice-Chair Cllr Lawrence represented the Board at a meeting with the Home Office about the level of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks to be used when licensing taxi and private hire vehicle drivers. Also at the meeting were representatives from Transport for London, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association, and London TravelWatch. Following advice from the CRB earlier in the year that it was not legal for licensing authorities as a matter of course to request enhanced CRB checks from drivers seeking taxi or private hire vehicle licenses, the LG Group and the other bodies present at the meeting have been pressing the Home Office to change the law to allow for enhanced CRB checks of all taxi and private hire vehicle drivers. The meeting discussed the use made of enhanced CRB checks by licensing authorities and what having enhanced CRB checks for all taxi and private hire vehicles would mean for the vetting and barring scheme established by the safeguarding legislation.

Officer activity

Civil Disturbances

3. During and following the civil disturbances in early August in London, the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and other areas, Group officers participated in the officials meetings of the Civil Contingencies Committee (also known as COBR – Cabinet Office Briefing Room). This included updating civil servants on

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the work of local authorities and the issues they were facing, as well as preparing for ministerial meetings. Subsequent to the initial meetings the Group is now involved in the Ministerial Recovery Group meetings and officers will be attending the officials' version of these going forward. The Group has also been invited to participate in the cross-government work on tackling gangs and officers attend the Home Office chaired officials' meeting in early September which is supporting this work.

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

4. Officers have been involved in a number of meetings and events related to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill since the last meeting of the Board. This has included continued participation in the police and crime transition projects established by the Home Office, such as the project looking at checks and balances. This has been considering how the Home Office would go about appointing a police and crime panel in the event that councils in a police force area in England failed to do so, and how the criteria in the balanced appointment objective in the Bill would be met.
5. Officers have also been involved in discussions with the Home Office about the structure of the four 'deep dives' they are proposing to hold in September to look at some important elements in the transition to police and crime commissioners in depth. The 'dives' are due to take place in Leicestershire, South Wales, the West Midlands, and West Yorkshire and will see the police, council leaders and chief executives and representatives from other local partners invited to look at a range of issues including the commissioning of community safety activity and the establishment of police and crime panels. The feedback from these sessions will then be used to inform Home Office work as they implement the introduction of police and crime commissioners.
6. LG Group officers have also been visiting member authorities to discuss what preparations need to be made for the introduction of police and crime commissioners. Over July and August visits were made to councils in Cambridgeshire, Devon and Cornwall, Hampshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Surrey and Sussex. During these visits officers provided updates on the Bill and details of changes in key sections of it, and set out some of the issues that councils need to be considering ahead of the election of police and crime commissioners. Authorities have said they found the process useful and visits to further councils have already been arranged for September.

Metal theft

7. Following on from the discussion at the last Board meeting around metal theft, officers met with the Energy Networks Association (ENA) to discuss the work

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they are doing around metal theft on behalf of their members. The ENA outlined the parliamentary work they are engaged in, the debate occurring in the House of Commons on the issue in early September, and the proposals being developed by British Transport Police on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers. The ENA indicated that they were keen to work with the LG Group on the development of any proposals to ensure that the interests of local authorities were taken into account.