

## **Improving the community safety response from councils**

### **Purpose**

For discussion and decision.

### **Summary**

Since 2010 community safety partnerships (CSPs) have seen reductions in their funding, alongside increasing recognition of the role councils can play in responding to a range of threats to communities and individuals including terrorism and radicalisation, serious and organised crime, modern slavery, child sexual exploitation, and violence against women and girls. At the September Safer and Stronger Communities Board it was agreed that work should be undertaken to explore how councils and CSPs can respond to the challenges of less funding and increased expectations. This paper sets out proposals for a review of these challenges, councils' community safety roles and functions, and invites comment on a number of key issues.

### **Recommendations**

The Board are asked to:

1. Comment on the review proposals as outlined, including nominations for members to sit on the stakeholder group; and
2. Consider the specific questions for discussion.

### **Action**

Officers to action as directed.

**Contact officer:** Rachel Duke  
**Position:** Adviser, Community Safety  
**Phone no:** 020 7664 3086  
**Email:** [rachel.duke@local.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.duke@local.gov.uk)

## **Improving the community safety response from councils**

### **Background**

1. The changing landscape in which community safety partnerships (CSPs), County Strategy Groups (CSGs) and councils' community safety functions operate over recent years, coupled with significant changes to and reductions in funding, both for CSPs and local government more widely, has prompted many councils to consider how best to deliver their community safety responsibilities.
2. At the same time there have been increasing expectations that councils will be at the forefront of statutory partners' responses to protecting the public including addressing issues like domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and safeguarding vulnerable people.
3. In September the Board agreed that work should be undertaken to explore how councils can improve their response to these types of issues, and how councils and CSPs could do this while meeting the challenges of reduced funding and increasing expectations. This paper sets out proposals for taking forward this review in the context of the current and future frameworks within which CSPs operate, and seeks the Board's views on key issues.

### **Context**

4. Whilst there remain only a small number of statutory responsibilities on CSPs, recent central government strategies have identified the key role councils can play in contributing to or leading responses to a range of different issues, including violence against women and girls, modern slavery, serious and organised crime, radicalisation and counter-extremism, and ending gang and youth violence.
5. The focus for many community safety teams has therefore moved increasingly away from tackling volume crime such as burglary or robbery to supporting multi-agency efforts in broader and more complex areas including child protection, managing persistent offenders and safeguarding vulnerable adults, alongside the traditional partnership approaches to anti-social behaviour. This has resulted in the development of a broad range of different models for delivering councils' community safety activity. These have included fully integrated multi-agency teams seeking to provide holistic approaches to crime prevention and disruption, through to CSPs becoming commissioners of services rather than delivering them directly and coordinating other local government services to respond to particular issues, and some areas exploring the outsourcing the community safety function as an employee owned public sector mutual.
6. Added to this, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) have become a firm part of the delivery culture around crime and community safety and have a significant influence on the direction of local government's community safety work, both politically and in its

6 June 2016

resourcing. By law PCCs have to produce a Police and Crime Plan to tackle community safety in their force area; this has taken precedence over local partnerships in many areas and in some situations has left the CSP unclear of their role and the relevance of their own local strategy. While some have aligned strategies to Police and Crime Plans, this has raised issues as to the nature of the relationship between CSP strategies and Police and Crime Plans.

7. Funding is similarly varied; some PCCs have provided funds for CSPs to continue to commission services at a local level, while others prefer to commission from the PCC's office and do not involve CSPs unless they have bid in to deliver programmes on behalf of the PCC.
8. Reforms in probation and health have also minimised the ability of these services to be flexible and adaptable to local needs, with many smaller CSPs reporting a mixed picture in engagement of the health and probation sectors in the CSP, despite their statutory obligations.
9. The government's evolving ambition for PCCs, including giving them the opportunity to take on responsibility for the fire service and elements of the criminal justice system will have a further impact on council's community safety roles, functions and activity. It provides a further impetus for local government to review current models for delivering community safety, and consider options for the future.

### **Review proposals**

10. The project will operate on a short task and finish basis to prompt strategic thinking at individual authority and sector wide levels about the future role of councils in improving community safety. This is not about trying to mandate the sector to come up with a particular answer to the challenging questions councils face in relation to community safety; it is about encouraging councils and their partners to think long and hard about what is needed from council services in the community safety context and how best to deliver this. If local government does not engage in this type of thinking there is a risk that others will lead the debate and shape the agenda for councils in the future. It is proposed therefore that the project will:
  - 10.1 consider what councils' role in tackling crime and delivering safer communities should be;
  - 10.2 analyse what local government needs from CSPs and CSGs, and vice versa, in England and Wales within both the current and future community safety landscapes, with reference to current statutory responsibilities and resourcing constraints;
  - 10.3 consider how this affects local governments' and CSPs' responses to public protection issues in particular; and
  - 10.4 explore and assess the options for the future of CSPs and CSGs, with a view to outlining a series of recommended next steps.

6 June 2016

11. An initial think-piece was drafted last year by LGA officers as a starting point for this work, which began to draw out some of the key themes for exploration – including partnership structures, CSPs’ core purpose, models for service delivery, and operating within wider political and multi-agency settings. This was discussed by members of LGA’s community safety advisers’ network (CSAN), many of whom are officers from authorities who have begun to test alternative ways of working.
12. It is proposed that this work is now developed using a similar methodology to the LGA’s trading standards review published earlier this year. This will include:
  - 12.1 building on work by the Institute of Community Safety (ICS), to map changes to CSPs’ resourcing and structures since 2010;
  - 12.2 exploring the range of both statutory and non-statutory functions in which local government community safety teams have a role, including public protection cases, and how these operate in practice;
  - 12.3 collating the findings from this survey alongside the earlier think-piece to inform two stakeholder group workshops in the autumn, to help identify and develop a local government view on the future of community safety and CSPs; and
  - 12.4 following the stakeholder workshops, assessing progress and identifying whether there is scope for further work and discussion.
- 13 A final report will be published at the end of the review.
- 14 The work of CSPs involves a broad range of stakeholders and it is suggested that this review involves as many of these parties as possible, including:
  - 14.1 Council Chief Executives and Senior Managers from a range of different authority types
  - 14.2 Elected members nominated by LGA political group offices
  - 14.3 Members of the LGA Community Safety Advisers Network
  - 14.4 Solace
  - 14.5 District Councils’ Network
  - 14.6 Police Foundation
  - 14.7 Institute of Community Safety
  - 14.8 Third sector organisations such as Catch 22
  - 14.9 PCC or APCC representative
  - 14.10 Representatives from the other responsible authorities on CSPs, including fire, health and probation services.
- 15 The Board is invited to nominate a representative or representatives to take part in the group’s discussions.

6 June 2016

**Questions for discussion**

16 We would welcome the Board's views on the following issues in particular:

- 16.1 In broad terms, how have CSPs and councils' community safety services changed over recent years? How do these differ between different councils?
- 16.2 What has been the impact of the introduction of PCCs on this? What is the most effective relationship between CSPs and PCCs?
- 16.3 How best do we separate out consideration of the future of local councils' role in community safety from the future of CSPs - when the latter is reliant on a number of other agencies over which councils have limited influence?
- 16.4 What might be the implications of devolution and new governance models on CSPs in the future?

**Financial implications**

17 The review is being supported through normal staff and resource budgets.