

## Note of decisions taken and actions required

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| <b>Title:</b>         | Safer and Stronger Communities Board                                       |
| <b>Date and time:</b> | Monday 13 January 2014, 11.00am  |
| <b>Venue:</b>         | Westminster Suite room 8.1 (8 <sup>th</sup> Floor), Local Government House |

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### 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 MBE | 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 Ann Lucas OBE     | Coventry City Council       |
| Substitutes  | Cllr Adrian Collett    | Hampshire CC                |
|              | Cllr Jeffrey Milburn   | South Tyneside MBC          |
| Apologies    | Cllr Anita Lower       | Newcastle upon Tyne Council |
|              | Cllr Colin Mann        | Caerphilly Council          |
|              | Cllr Kate Haigh        | Gloucester City Council     |

**Officers:** Helen Murray, Mark Norris, Ellie Greenwood, Lucy Ellender, Daniel Kalley (all LGA)

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| Item | Decisions and actions | Action by |
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Cllr Khan welcomed Members and congratulated Cllr Ann Lucas on receiving an OBE and Cllr David Burbage for receiving an MBE, on behalf of the board.

Cllr Khan informed the Board that he was stepping down as Chairman of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board from 24 February 2014 to take up a new role at the London Councils in the Labour Group office. The Board expressed its thanks to Cllr Khan for his work as Chair.

**1. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)**

Lord Currie gave an outline on the history and responsibilities of the CMA. The CMA came into existence in October 2013 and will take its full powers in April 2014. He explained consumer protection was part of CMA responsibility and that they were working in partnership with Trading Standards; however CMA would deal with more high profile national cases. In addition Lord Currie informed the board that the CMA continued the work of its predecessor, but that they had been given a boost to their budget to improve work already carried out.

Members welcomed the report and information provided by Lord Currie. Members asked a series of questions to which Lord Currie responded.

Lord Currie stated that the CMA welcomed helping local authorities ensure that they could procure their services from the local businesses in a lawful way and wanted the CMA to assist local authorities wherever possible.

Members were concerned that the draft Consumer Rights Bill would limit Trading Standards' ability to promote community safety. The bill would limit Trading Standards in making unannounced visits to businesses, who placed a risk to the protection of local communities. Alex Chisholm, Chief Executive Officer, CMA explained that it was important the draft Consumer Rights Bill contained an exemption which allowed Trading Standards to make unannounced visits if enough intelligence had been gathered to justify it.

Lord Currie informed members that the name chosen,

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Competition and Markets Authority, was selected by central government. He was satisfied that the name encompassed the role of the CMA, namely to ensure that consumers were not taken advantage of and tackle practices and market conditions that make it difficult for consumers to exercise choice in a competitive market.

Members sought assurances that the Consumer Protection Partnership (CPP) was to be more than just a talking shop and would work to protect the needs of the local community. Lord Currie stressed the need to ensure that the CPP worked well and that it picked up any of the work carried out by the Office of Fair Trading and Trading Standards. Alex Chisholm, expanded on this further, stating that the CPP would not only share information, but see who was best placed to deal with issues when they arose.

Cllr Khan emphasised that branding of the CMA was important, particularly at a local level, as most members of the public would be unaware of who the CMA were, or what their role was. The LGA were best placed to assist the CMA as Members knew in greater detail issues that were occurring at a local level.

Lord Currie agreed that the LGA had an important role to play and informed the Board that he was willing to attend future Board meetings to keep Members updated on the work of the CMA.

Cllr Khan thanked Lord Currie and Alex Chisholm for attending and responding to a number of questions from Members of the Board.

### **Action**

To **invite** Lord Currie back to update the board on CMA's progress at a future date.

**Dan Kalley**

### **Decision**

Members **noted** the presentation and issues set out in the papers

## **2. Independent Police Commission**

Mark Norris, LGA Senior Advisor, introduced the key recommendations that affected local authorities following the Independent Police Commission's report, which was published at

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the end of November 2013. The report highlighted that neighbourhood policing had been undermined by the reductions in police budgets; however the commission's report made clear the commitment to guarantee a minimum level of neighbourhood policing. In addition the report stressed that policing involved a number of organisations and bodies, not just the police, and suggested changes to police governance.

Cllr Brett supported strengthening the role of Community Safety Partnerships, and suggested that governance structures needed to incorporate health and wellbeing boards.

Members expressed concern regarding the commission's recommendation for reducing the number of forces, down from 43 to a possible 10 regional forces, which would have implications for the police boards which could be of up to 50 or 60 people,. Cllr Spicer questioned the role of county councils would be and their involvement in the lower tier boards. Mark Norris explained that this lower tier would involve district and borough councils, however going forward it was likely that county councils would have some involvement.

Several Members suggested that it was too early at this stage to take serious decisions about changes to police governance structures.. Members spoke in favour of strengthening the links between the police and local government, and community safety partnerships in particular, and strengthening local policing. the role of elected Councillors, who could be more involved in local policing issues.

Some Members questioned whether the LGA needed to provide a response to the report at the current time, however most Members agreed that it was important for the LGA to respond to the report, so that the LGA was seen as influencing decisions which impacted communities at a local level.

Cllr Khan stated that the LGA had a big influence over this issue and that it would be interesting to watch developments over the next 12 – 18 months.

### **Action**

Officers to **re-draft** wording of LGA statement taking on board members comments

**Mark Norris**

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The revised statement in response to the report was agreed at the Lead Members meeting and reads as follows:

“The LGA’s Safer and Stronger Communities Board agrees with the recommendations in the Independent Police Commission’s report about the need to protect neighbourhood policing and local multi-agency partnership working as the LGA believes that strong links between councils and the police are vital in successfully tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

The LGA also believes that the best way of sustaining multi-agency work to reduce crime is through organising it around place, and through the pooling of budgets and joint commissioning. Devolving greater powers and budgets to community safety partnerships is one way of achieving this. There are however other means local partnerships could be strengthened, including through combined authority arrangements where these exist.

At the moment the LGA believes it is too early to form firm views on the impact of the recent police reforms at this stage. There is a considerable amount of research being conducted into the new police governance arrangements and their effectiveness. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board believes the LGA’s political groups should be seeking to ensure that any policies and commitments developed around police governance and accountability as a result of any research or reports give a prominent role to councillors and local authorities in influencing policing priorities, and seek to strengthen local authorities’ links with the police.”

### **Decision**

Members **noted** the recommendations in the report

### **3. Tackling Extremism Taskforce Report**

Cllr Khan urged Members of the Board to agree the LGA response to the Tackling Extremism Taskforce Report, bearing in mind that no local government representative sat on the taskforce. In addition he asked officers to engage with politicians at a senior level.

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**Action**

Officers **to respond** to the recommendations in Tackling Extremism Report affecting local government.

**Mark Norris**

**Decision**

Members **noted** the issues set out in the report.

**4. Draft Modern Anti-Slavery Bill**

Mark Norris, LGA Senior Adviser introduced the report outlining the draft Modern Anti-Slavery Bill, including a proposed action plan to tackle bringing those responsible for modern slavery to justice. Under the Bill local authorities would be listed as 'first responders' and will be required to notify the National Crime Agency if they suspect a victim of being trafficked.

Members welcomed the report and referenced that those with disabilities or learning difficulties were just as likely to be trafficked. While Members agreed that local authority played an important role it was difficult to always know what was happening within their local communities, and there needed to be better sharing of information between local agencies.

There was agreement about the importance of raising awareness of this issue in all local authorities. Equally Members agreed that further training of staff, particularly within social services, would help pick up at an earlier stage any signs of modern slavery.

Cllr Khan stressed the importance of local councillors engaging in this topic, which would help authorities, such as the police, deal effectively with this issue.

**Action**

Officers **to draft** submission to Ministers and Shadow Ministers on this issue.

**Mark Norris**

**Decision**

Members **noted** the issues set out in the report.

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## **5. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Lucy Ellender, Policy Adviser introduced the report to Members, explaining that FGM was considered a form of child abuse. FGM was a key element of the Home Office's strategic vision and has been incorporated into the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) action plan. There were two ways in which local authorities could help support victims of FGM, namely engaging with local communities to help victims and raise awareness and working within those communities to prevent FGM happening.

Cllr Brett informed Members that she was passionate about this subject area. She proposed that there should be differentiation between types with adult females being able to receive the mildest form on the NHS having received counselling. This would prevent certain forms of FGM going underground and difficult to combat.

Members agreed that a group of four Members, made up of one Member from each Political group on the Board should meet with the Women's Health Organisation to gain a better understanding of the issues.

Some Members argued that there was an important role for a number of organisations, such as schools, health and the judiciary, to play in changing people's views and perceptions.

While some Members agreed that legalising certain aspects of FGM would prevent it going underground this was still a complex subject which needed further consideration, including talking to a number of organisations who had dealt with this issue. Members agreed that it would be useful for the Board to speak to the British Arab Federation, who had campaigned to MP's to sign an early day motion against the practices of FGM.

Officers responded to a query from Members stating that the proposed LGA statement was the same across the three boards who had an interest in this issue.

Members highlighted the need to better understand why women made these choices along with trying to protect children who are vulnerable to FGM, as this was often carried out by those who loved them most.

### **Action**

Officers to **contact** the British Arab Federation to arrange a meeting to discuss issues.

**Lucy  
Ellender/Dan  
Kalley**

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| Officers to <b>produce</b> robust statement on LGA's position taking on board members comments   | <b>Lucy Ellender</b>            |
| Officers to <b>setup</b> a members group of 4 volunteers, one from each political group, to engage with national charities to see how local authorities can work together. | <b>Lucy Ellender/Dan Kalley</b> |
| <b>Invite</b> national charity to present at a future board meeting.   | <b>Lucy Ellender</b>            |
| Officers to <b>lobby</b> Government and shadow Ministers for further support.  | <b>Lucy Ellender</b>            |
| To <b>share model resolution</b> and covering note with member authorities.  | <b>Lucy Ellender/Dan Kalley</b> |

## **6. Implementing Open for Business: licensing reform**

Ellie Greenwood, LGA Senior Adviser introduced the report and explained that proposals send out in the Open for Business document, circulated to Members following the agenda despatch, build on the steer given by the Board in November.

The objectives of the licensing reform were to consolidate and streamline licensing regimes and to give councils greater power to shape and control the nature of business activity in their area.

Members were informed that there were a number of key principles that would underpin a revised licensing framework, this included using a similar framework to that used by the Licensing Act 2003 which provided a useful model that worked at a local level. It was considered that expanding the number of licensing objectives from the current number of four reflecting council's economic and public health responsibilities. In addition cumulative impact would be looked at in a wider context, not just focusing on alcohol.

Several Members agreed that this was just the start of the debate and not the final template, however there needed to be further work on proposals on the right to appeal, which was currently dealt with at Magistrates court, and the difference between licensing and regulation needed to be clear.

It was recognised that it would be easier if one single Government

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department covered licensing functions; however Members agreed that some functions, such as Taxi and hackney Carriage licences had a link to the Department of Transport. It was also noted that a number of licensing functions had not been devolved to the Welsh Assembly and this was a further area to be explored.

**Decision**

Members **noted** the update on the Open for Business document and Licensing framework.

**7. Update on Regulatory services issues**

Helen Murray, Head of Programmes informed Members that there had been a number of exchanges around fixed odd betting terminals and that a report would be presented at the next Board meeting.

**Action**

Officers to add Fixed Odd Betting Terminals to next agenda

**Helen Murray/Dan  
Kalley**

Members **noted** the update report.

**8. Notes of the last meeting**

The Board **noted** the minutes of the meeting on 4 November 2013.

**Date of Next Meeting:**

11am, Monday, 3 March 2014, Local Government House