

26 June 2017

End of year Board report and 2017/18 priorities

Purpose

For information and discussion.

Summary

This report provides an overview of the issues and work the Board has overseen during last year. It sets out key achievements in relation to the priorities for the Safer & Stronger Communities Board in 2016/2017, and looks forward to next year's priorities.

Recommendation

The Board are invited to:

1. Note the achievements against the Board's priorities in 2016/2017; and
2. Note the Board's priority areas for 2017/2018.

Action

Officers to action as appropriate.

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Background

1. At its meeting in September the Board considered its priorities for 2016/17 and agreed five overarching themes:
 - 1.1. Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion;
 - 1.2. Community safety;
 - 1.3. Blue light services;
 - 1.4. Licensing and regulation;
 - 1.5. Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners.
2. These Board specific priorities sit alongside work to support Brexit, which all Boards have been asked to undertake by the Leadership Board.

Achievements

Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion

3. In February, we held our first Leadership Essentials course on counter extremism, which was well received by those who attended. We commissioned a series of guidance documents which will be published in the coming months, including a guide for councillors from the Centre for Public Scrutiny on scrutinising councils' counter extremism and Prevent work. We will also be updating the toolkit on tackling the far right which was first published in 2013 and a guide to understanding Islam in the UK.
4. We have supported Luton Council, the Home Office and the Department of Communities and Local Government and the other priority counter extremism areas to create the Special Interest Group to Counter Extremism, which is expected to be formally launched shortly. We have also worked with the Home Office to establish the Prevent Champions Network.
5. Following the vote to leave the European Union we created an on-line toolkit of guidance and case studies for councils to use in tackling hate crime. This identified a need to update our guidance on community cohesion, and this should be completed in draft by the end of July, to launch in the autumn alongside a series of events to bring councillors and officers together to learn from each other on this issue.

Community safety

6. We continued to work closely with Barnardo's to support the National FGM Centre, including running a joint conference in the autumn. The positive impact of the Centre's pioneering work in the six local authorities it has assisted has been highlighted in a government review published earlier in the year. This work has seen 173 referrals of families to the Centre's social workers and project workers. These families included 237 girls under 18, as well as 26 unborn children. The Centre has also built up expertise in

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the use of new tools to address FGM, having been involved in nearly 10 per cent of FGM Protection Orders made across the country since they came into effect in July 2015.

7. During 2016/17 we have undertaken a review of the future of community safety services, engaging a wide group of stakeholders from within and outside local government. The Home Office, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioner Chief Executives have all shown an interest in the findings of the review and what that mean for partnership work going forward.
8. There has been continuing media interest in councils' use of powers under the Anti-social behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. We have therefore developed guidance for councils on using Public Space Protection Orders. We are hosting a workshop for more than 40 police and crime panels (PCPs) members/support officers, and have developed guidance on the implications of the Police and Crime Act for PCPs around the scrutiny of police and crime commissioners (PCCs) new fire governance responsibilities.
9. Following deaths in the summer last year in rivers and beaches we have been gathering examples of good practice from councils around water safety, and supporting existing water safety campaigns to highlight the risks people can face when they are around water. There is now a water safety toolkit on the LGA website.

Blue light services

10. We lobbied to amend the Police and Crime Bill to ensure that local residents were given a voice in the development of proposals for PCCs to become the Fire and Rescue Authority in local areas, and for the independent assessment of PCC's business cases to take on responsibility for fire governance where this was not agreed locally to be a genuinely independent process. In response the government brought forward its own amendments to ensure that local residents have to be consulted by a PCC. We are also in discussion with the Home Office about the process the independent assessment will take.
11. We have also continued to shape the developing fire reform agenda, contributing to the proposals for a new inspectorate for the fire service, publishing a guide on how the diversity of the fire and rescue service can be increased, signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Fire Chiefs Council and other organisations on improving how people in the fire service are treated, and holding the annual Fire conference which was attended by over 260 delegates and speakers. We also successfully raised concerns about proposed changes to Building Bulletin 100 which covers the building of new schools and appeared to suggest that it would no longer be necessary to install sprinkler systems unless a good reason could be demonstrated why they were not needed. The Department of Education clarified that the change in wording in the new version of the Bulletin was a drafting error.

Licensing and regulation

12. In licensing and regulation, we updated our councillor handbook on taxis/PHVs, and held five free regional workshops on the subject, supporting over 150 councillors and officers. We also held our annual licensing conference, a conference on gambling regulation and a workshop on use of CCTV in taxis/PHVs, supporting a further 150 councillors and

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officers. In a move that has been universally welcomed, we have commissioned a national register of taxi/PHV licence refusals and revocations.

13. We achieved a series of lobbying successes in Parliament, with councils' right to access communications data maintained in the Investigatory Powers Act and a number of our key recommendations about changes to the Licensing Act (for example on the late night levy and cumulative impact policies) adopted through the Police and Crime Act.

Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners

14. The cost of funerals has continued to attract media attention, and there were a number of presentations on this at our Deaths, Funerals and Coroners conference in December. In order to assist councillors understand the burials, cremation, coroners and registrars services councils provide we have drafted a guide to them, which will be published shortly. Alongside the Community Wellbeing Board we have also lobbied for changes to the law around deprivation of liberty safeguards, and changes in the Policing and Crime act have gone part of the way to addressing the cost pressures council's face.
15. A new area of work for the Board has been around changes to the death certification process, with work by the Department of Health to introduce the medical examiner provisions in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. A key concern for councils has been the timetable for implementation of the reforms and the level of the fee that can be charged to fund the medical examiners service. We had persuaded officials of the need for a more realistic timetable, with further work delayed by the general election.

Brexit

16. On Brexit, our work with Cornwall council has provided a helpful analysis of EU based regulation in consumer and wider public protection, which will provide a platform for further consultation across the sector on how to move forward on these issues as we head towards leaving the EU.

2017/18 Priorities

17. The final meeting of the Board cycle is also an opportunity for members to provide comments on possible priorities for the 2017/2018 Board cycle, to help shape the priorities paper the Board will consider in its first meeting in September. By providing a more detailed outline of the proposed priorities at this meeting, we hope this will enable us to utilise the September meeting more effectively, allowing for a short review of a refined priorities paper based on the June discussion, and then a longer focus on priority areas.
18. We have proposed retaining the same overarching key themes as the Board agreed for 2016/2017 in light of the fact that much of the work in these areas is still in progress and will continue into the next year. As the Queen's Speech has been delayed and has not taken place at the time of drafting, it is not yet clear what impact the new Government's programme will have on the Board's work programme, although the Board will be able to consider this in their discussions at the meeting shortly after the Queen's Speech. However, in light of the series of recent terrorist attacks and the Grenfell Tower tragedy,

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the existing overarching themes are likely to be well placed to support priority agendas over the coming year.

19. The Board's work to support councils on counter extremism, Prevent and cohesion will remain a key priority in 2017/18. The Home Office was already intending to place a high priority on working with councils around the Prevent and counter extremism agenda prior to the election, and this will have been reinforced following the recent terrorist attacks. Alongside this, the LGA's Executive will also be considering proposals during the summer covering our response to the Casey Review on community cohesion. The Conservative manifesto included a commitment to bring forward a new government wide integration strategy, which is likely to have implications for councils as well as other parts of government.
20. On wider community safety issues, there are again a number of pieces of work to carry over from 2016/17, including the recommendations from our community safety review, our support for the water safety campaign and following up earlier work on violent crime. Alongside this, we will also be publishing guidance for councils on modern slavery, and intend to support this with a series of training. We also propose to explore issues raised by Board members about levels of neighbourhood policing and engagement with councils, as well as the issues councils are experiencing in working with the National Probation Service. We also propose to continue our work to support councils to reduce domestic abuse and FGM, including responding to any legislation and new initiatives announced by the Government.
21. A further overarching theme covers the work of Fire Services Management Committee around the fire reform agenda, with continuing work around possible transfers of fire governance, the transparency of the fire service including inspection, the role of the firefighter in the 21st century, the future of retained/on-call firefighters, increased collaboration with the other emergency services and health, and improved procurement across the sector and the funding of the fire service.
22. On licensing and regulation, we propose that our key priorities should be to ensure that the new Government progresses the review of gaming machines and social responsibility launched at the end of last year, and successfully launching the national register of taxi/PHV licence refusals and revocations. We will also continue to lobby for long term priorities including a taxi/PHV reform Bill and localisation of licensing fees, supplementing this with the develop of guidance and training for councils on different regulatory issues.
23. The Department of Health is also working on plans to introduce the reforms to the death certification process created by the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 in response to the abuse of the process by Dr Shipman. The anticipated introduction date in late 2018 or early 2019 would seem likely to continue to be supported by Ministers.
24. The table below summarises the proposed areas of work for each overarching theme:

Theme	Project
1. Community Cohesion, Counter Extremism and Prevent	Deliver the LGA's community cohesion programme in response to the Casey Review

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	<p>Support councils in countering extremism</p> <p>Work with the Home Office to support councils implement the Prevent duty and if appropriate respond to the CONTEST Strategy refresh</p>
2. Community Safety	<p>Take forward the recommendations from the future of community safety review</p> <p>Raise awareness of modern slavery among councils and support them in tackling it</p> <p>Work to support councils to reduce violence against women including domestic abuse and FGM</p> <p>Assist councils around the ASB agenda</p> <p>Deliver on the work already agreed by the Board on violent crime and consider any further work in light of new crime statistics data</p> <p>Address the issues councils are facing in working with the National Probation Service and CRCs</p> <p>Deliver the Water Safety campaign</p> <p>Review state of neighbourhood policing and local council/police engagement</p>
3. Blue light services	<p>Support FRS on governance transfers, blue light collaboration and new inspection processes</p> <p>Ongoing work to shape the role of the 21st century fire fighter and fire service</p> <p>Coordinate a sector wide response to the Grenfell fire tragedy</p>
4. Licensing and regulation	<p>Strengthen taxi/PHV licensing</p> <p>Press for the localisation of licensing fees</p> <p>Ensure the review of gambling stakes continues</p>
5. Medical Examiners and funeral poverty	<p>Assist councils implement the medical examiner reforms</p> <p>Develop the LGA's position on funeral poverty</p>

Implications for Wales

25. Where the proposed policy area relates to a non-devolved issue we will liaise as appropriate with the WLGA, and where they relate to devolved issues our focus will be on English authorities with the WLGA leading on work in Wales.

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Financial implications

26. None.

Next steps

27. The Board are asked to reflect on the work delivered this year, and consider and comment on the outline priorities identified above.