

Safer and Stronger Communities Board End of Year Report 2016/17

Background

1. At its meeting in September the Board considered its priorities for 2016/17 and agreed five overarching themes:
 - a. Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion;
 - b. Community safety;
 - c. Blue light services;
 - d. Licensing and regulation;
 - e. Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners.

Achievements

Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion

2. 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 scrutinising councils' counter extremism and Prevent work and a guide to understanding Islam in the UK. We will also be updating our tackling the far right toolkit from 2013.
3. 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.
4. 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

5. We continued to work closely with Barnardo's to support the National FGM Centre, including running a joint conference in the autumn. A government review of the Centre's pioneering work with six local authorities highlighted the centre's positive impact. This work has seen 173 referrals of families to the Centre's social workers and project workers, covering 237 girls under 18, as well as 26 unborn children. The Centre has also been involved in nearly 10 per cent of FGM Protection Orders made across the country since they came into effect in July 2015.
6. 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 means for partnership work going forward.
7. We developed guidance on using Public Space Protection Orders following continuing media interest in this issue. 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.

8. 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

9. Our lobbying on the Police and Crime Bill helped secure amendments requiring that local residents must be consulted about proposals for PCCs to become the local Fire and Rescue Authority, and that there will be independent assessments of PCC's proposals where local support for the proposal has not been achieved.
10. 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

11. 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 officers. In a move that has been universally welcomed, we have commissioned a national register of taxi/PHV licence refusals and revocations.
12. 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

13. 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.

14. 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.

Priorities for 2017-18

15. In light of the fact that many projects from the current year are ongoing, the Board's priorities for 2017-18 will continue to focus on the five key themes of Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion; community safety; blue light services; licensing and regulation and crematoria, coroners' and medical examiners. The Queen's Speech confirmed that a number of these areas remain high on the Government's agenda, with plans to review the counter terrorism strategy, Contest, and to establish a Commission on Countering Extremism, as well as to bring forward a Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill.

Financial Implications

16. All work programmes are met from existing budgets and resources.