

Priorities 2014/15

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

In line with the LGA's business plan and *Investing in our Nation's Future: The first 100 days of the next Government* which was published at Annual Conference, this report sets out proposals for the Safer and Stronger Communities Board's priorities for the coming year.

Members signalled broad themes at the July Board meeting discussion on the end of year report, and these are incorporated in the forward plan. These priorities are based on a combination of ongoing work, recent policy announcements by central Government, and a forward look with the 2015 General Election in mind. Subject to Members' views, officers will develop a work programme to deliver these priorities.

Recommendation

Board Members are invited to discuss and agree the priorities areas in **paragraph 6**.

Action

Officers will undertake the projects set out in this report.

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Background

1. The LGA Business Plan sets out the context for the Board's work:
 - 1.1. Councils work with businesses to determine the right level of risk and regulation for a local area balancing community protection with economic growth;
 - 1.2. Councils and fire and rescue authorities protect people and places from harm; and
 - 1.3. Councils work effectively with partners to deliver safe and cohesive communities.
2. With the General Election seven months away, a significant amount of the LGA's work will focus on lobbying the main political parties to ensure that future national politicians have a full appreciation of the value of local government and the need for a genuinely localist approach. This year's annual conference focused on *Investing in our Nation's Future: The First 100 Days of the Next Government* and set out the types of challenges any new Government will be faced with and provided a local government offer on how to help them deal with the most pressing issues. Sections focused on: homes, school places, skills and jobs, shared prosperity and a healthy nation and made suggestions around the first Queen's Speech, first Budget and the first 100 days of the new Government.
3. Within this context, community safety partnerships – both collectively and through participant's home organisations – have a major contribution to make under the growth/shared prosperity strand through their work to build safe and resilient communities, protecting people and places from harm and creating the conditions for economic prosperity.
4. Members are invited to discuss the main priorities which will form the majority of our work. However, we have always adopted a flexible approach in order to respond effectively to issues which arise throughout the year, such as emerging new items or emergency issues, and we will continue this.

Priorities

5. This paper sets out a number of strategic priorities to ensure we continue to focus effort on making a difference for our member authorities in terms of relevance and pace and ensuring that the LGA is well positioned and plugged into any future government thinking about councils' role in community safety.
6. This paper suggests six key overarching themes:
 - 6.1 **Regulation** – There will be three main areas of work within regulatory services:

- 6.1.1 The future of regulatory services – this work will support local government to lead thinking about the future of the diverse array of duties covered by trading standards, environmental health and licensing teams. With councils facing further funding cuts, there are serious questions about how they continue to deliver smaller services, but there is also an opportunity for radical thinking about what regulatory services need to be delivered, and how this should be achieved. Among other things, the LGA will promote a debate about what regulatory services need to deliver and the balance between state, business and consumer funding for these functions.
- 6.1.2 Licensing reform and improvement – we will continue to lobby for licensing reform, working closely with councils who are actively exploring how to take forward the proposals we made in Rewiring Licensing. Civil servants have indicated this will have more traction with a new government. We will also continue to develop tools that help councils deliver improvements in their existing approaches to licensing. In particular, we will be taking forward Betting Commission recommendations, including our local engagement / partnership framework with betting shops, the revision of the councillor Gambling Act handbook, and supporting individual local authorities in gambling research projects that could be of benefit to the wider local government community.
- 6.1.3 Promoting Open for Business – we will develop a set of guidance documents and tools to identify best practice on implementing the principles of our ‘Open for Business’ vision for regulation. This will highlight some of the excellent work that councils have done with businesses to support the local economic growth agenda.

6.2 Crimes against vulnerable people

- 6.2.1 FGM - Implementing the recommendations of the FGM Task and Finish Group to provide a high quality and up to date resource pack, and working with CYP colleagues to submit a bid to the Department of Education to establish a FGM centre of excellence which has a strong local government perspective.
- 6.2.2 Domestic abuse – Our overarching aim here is to give councillors the tools and evidence to demonstrate the financial case of providing DV services. We will continue to champion a community budgets approach but also highlight the value of scrutiny with new Centre for Public Scrutiny guidance. We know that many councils have embarked on new and different delivery models but in order to counter negative coverage we need stronger examples of this. We therefore propose gathering innovative good practice across the country across a range of elements important in this sphere such as MASH, IDVAs, provision of refuge places, working with perpetrators and joint commissioning.

We will also be examining the impact of changes in the legal aid system and what this means for victims.

6.2.3 Child Sexual Exploitation – Members will be aware of the Jay Report into CSE commissioned by Rotherham Council and which set out her findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning CSE in Rotherham during 1997-2013. There are a number of important issues around the proposed Corporate Governance Inspection by Government, the role of councillors, the council workforce, the role of communities and families, local safeguarding boards and inspection which will all need to be considered. The Children and Young People Board are keen for our input on this issue.

6.2.4 Troubled Families – As this Government programme has now been expanded, we will be keen to see what has emerged in terms of current learning, and the value of other early intervention programmes on collaboration, information sharing, joint commissioning and multi-agency work to assist councils in reducing crime.

6.3 Organised crime – we will also continue to support councils in playing a greater role in tackling organised crime by influencing the development of the local organised crime local profiles, gathering and disseminating good practice, and continuing engagement with the Home Office and the National Crime Agency around elements of the serious and organised crime strategy such as tackling cyber and cyber-facilitated crime.

6.3.1 The other strand of work here will help councils reduce their vulnerability to procurement fraud. We will work with the Home Office, CIPFA and the National Crime Agency as well as council procurement, audit and anti-fraud to better gauge the extent to which councils are affected by procurement fraud, bribery and corruption. We will share these findings at regional workshops to assist councils in getting better at detecting fraud, strengthening their procurement practices, and sharing information between councils and with other public services.

6.4 Police and crime/community safety partnerships -With the outside funding for community safety partnerships already reduced by two-thirds and continuing to reduce further, we will support councils in thinking about how they can make their communities safer in the future, including their relationship with Commissioners and future police governance arrangements.

6.4.1 We will continue to provide support to the councils that host police and crime panels, and deliver our response to the Home Affairs Select Committee report recommendations addressed to the LGA.

- 6.5 **Reform of the blue light services** – The emergency services are embarking on wider transformation programme, working better together and more closely with other services on interoperability. The Fire Services Management Committee has highlighted this area as a priority, particularly to share good practice arising from the Transformation Bid projects which will be agreed in the Autumn.
- 6.6 **Community cohesion and values** – Events in Iraq and Syria have raised the profile of the Prevent Strategy and we will continue to engage with the Home Office around the recommendations in the report from the Taskforce on tackling radicalisation and extremism. Alongside events in Birmingham and Rotherham this has meant that community cohesion and the core values that all sections of the community living in the UK support have come to the fore at a local and national level and we will support councils in building and sustaining resilient communities. This will include looking at the impact of stop and search on minority ethnic communities.
7. Many of these are cross-cutting issues and so will involve working closely with other LGA Boards, particularly around activity on CSE arising from the Jay report into Rotherham.

Legislation

8. There are a number of legislative opportunities which are of direct relevance to the SSCB. Ongoing work around the Deregulation Bill on taxi licensing, an amendment to the Serious Crime Bill on FGM and the Modern Slavery Bill are all important issues which will need close scrutiny and input to deliver the best outcomes for local government. Although our work to ensure that councils are well supported for the introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act in October is well advanced, keeping in touch with authorities on implementation will ensure that any emerging problems are resolved swiftly.
9. Whilst we await new legislation to tackle the sale of new psychoactive substances, we will produce a handbook for councillors, and gather and share good practice from councils on using consumer protection and anti-social behaviour legislation to tackle head shops.
10. Following the Jay report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, the Home Secretary has signalled new powers to recall or remove Police and Crime Commissioners. The Recall Bill, announced in the Queen's Speech, will be introduced as parliamentary time allows and the LGA will need to take a view on whether this includes MPs and councillors.

Communication and Events

11. There are a number of internal and external communications channels available to help the Safer and Stronger Communities Board promote the work it is doing and to seek views from our member authorities.
12. We have a full programme of conference and events which support these draft priorities and which are designed to support Members and technical officers with new agendas. These are:
 - 12.1 14 October 2014: Councils' role in tackling FGM
 - 12.2 3 December 2014: Annual Safer Communities Conference
 - 12.3 15 January 2015: Annual Licensing Conference
 - 12.4 10-11 March 2015: Annual Fire Conference.
13. Additionally, for the third year running we will also be supporting the joint TSI, CIEH and BRDO 'Year Ahead in regulatory services' conference in February 2015, using this as a platform to take forward our work on regulatory services.
14. We also have plans to continue to support Police and Crime Panels (particularly for Chairmen), and deliver a series of ASB tools and powers workshops to help practitioners implement the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014.
15. We also have a dedicated section on the LGA website which has been redesigned, regular e-bulletins with a personal introduction from the Chair of the Board, outside speaking engagements and interviews, advisory networks, features and news items in First magazine as well as twitter accounts which are used to keep in touch with our members.

Conclusion and next steps

16. Following today's discussion, officers will prepare a detailed work programme to manage the day to day work, and the Chair will include these in our next Bulletin. These will feed in to the wider LGA planning exercise which begins early in 2015.

Financial Implications

17. This programme of work can be delivered within existing resources. However, Members will wish to note that we no longer have resource to undertake free, bespoke improvement support for community safety practitioners but our improvement colleagues provide peer reviews and facilitation on a paid-for basis.