

23 February 2015

## **Working with Solace**

### **Purpose**

For information and discussion.

### **Summary**

Following a reorganisation in the structures of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace) in October, John Barradell OBE, Town Clerk and Chief Executive of the City of London has been appointed Solace's lead spokesperson on civil resilience and community safety issues. Mr Barradell will be attending the Board meeting to discuss Solace's priorities and work on this agenda in the year ahead.

### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to explore with Mr Barradell how Solace and the LGA can work together across civil resilience and community safety issues.

### **Action**

Officers to progress as directed.

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### **Background**

1. Following the Annual General Meeting of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace) in October 2014 new arrangements were put in place to drive forward Solace's policy work. At the AGM spokespersons were elected for 10 identified policy areas including Civil Resilience and Community Safety. The spokespeople's role is to lead work in their policy area, engage the wider Solace membership, represent Solace in national level meetings and speak publically on behalf of Solace.
2. The Civil Resilience and Community Safety policy area is led by John Barradell OBE, Town Clerk and Chief Executive of the City of London, with Stephen Baxter, the Chief Executive of Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council as the Deputy Spokesperson.

### **Issues**

3. Solace is still in the process of identifying work areas in the civil resilience and community safety portfolio as it seeks views from its members, but its initial emphasis is on:
  - 3.1. Improving the ability of councils to respond effectively to emergencies, so they can provide leadership to the communities they represent. Solace is looking to ensure that councillors and senior officers understand the frameworks in which councils operate when dealing with civil resilience and community safety issues, and that there is effective sharing of good practice in responding to emergencies, as well as the rehearsing of coordinated responses where councils have to provide a collective response. Solace is also seeking to ensure work to strengthen local resilience puts local authorities in a position where they can improve their responses after the emergency is over.
  - 3.2. Continuing to make progress in combatting emerging threats, like attempts to breach councils' data security or cyber-attacks on councils' systems, which could leave local authorities in breach of their data protection duties and expose them to financial loss.
  - 3.3. Better integration of teams and departments within councils so that all parts can play an effective role in responding to civil emergencies or community safety issue, and also ensuring there is better coordination across the sector.
  - 3.4. Helping councils work with their communities to make them more resilient by ensuring they are well prepared in the event of an emergency, so are better able to respond and recover from it.
4. Four priorities have been identified for the civil resilience and community safety portfolio in light of these issues:
  - 4.1. Sharing best practice and developing professional standards in these areas.
  - 4.2. Enhancing the skill set of chief executives and senior managers.
  - 4.3. Integrating recovery as an objective within emergency planning procedures.
  - 4.4. Integrating work on these issues into learning and development frameworks.

5. The LGA has a leading role on behalf of the sector in dealing with civil emergencies. This includes attending COBR (the Government's national emergencies committee) and any other relevant ministerial groups established to oversee and coordinate responses.
6. Most recently this involved engaging with government and local authorities about the extreme weather seen at the end of 2013 and start of 2014, which resulted in flooding in a number of areas. The LGA raised a number of strategic issues on behalf of local authorities including financial support for councils affected by the weather, reform of the Bellwin Scheme that reimburses councils for costs incurred in responding to emergencies, the funding of flood defences, changes to legislation around sustainable drainage and assessing the effectiveness of current partnership arrangements. This work continues to be led by the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board.
7. The Board however has overall responsibilities for emergency planning, and councils' role in planning to deal with civil emergencies. However as resources have become more constrained, we have scaled back this work to focus on support during a response, rather than engaging in widescale preventative work and this has allowed the Board to drive forward other agreed priorities as set out below.

### **Board Priorities**

- 7.1. Regulation. This theme includes work on the future of regulatory services and how these can be delivered in the future; taking forward the proposals for licensing reform set out in Rewiring Licensing; and promoting the Board's 'Open for Business' vision for regulation.
- 7.2. Crimes against vulnerable people. This theme includes work on Female Genital Mutilation, Domestic Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation and Troubled Families.
- 7.3. Organised crime. This theme includes work to support councils in playing a greater role in tackling organised crime and reducing their vulnerability to procurement fraud.
- 7.4. Police and crime/community safety partnerships. This theme includes supporting councils that host police and crime panels, supporting councils in keeping their communities safe, and the future of police governance structures.
- 7.5. Reform of the blue light services. This theme includes work on the wider transformation programme and interoperability with other services.
- 7.6. Community cohesion and values. This theme includes work around tackling extremism and radicalisation and the Prevent Strategy.

### **Issues for discussion**

8. Potential issues members may therefore wish to ask Mr Barradell are set out below:
  - 8.1. Will Solace be working on any of the six themes identified by the Safer and Stronger Communities Board over the coming year and where might Solace and the LGA best co-operate?
  - 8.2. Better information sharing within councils and between partners is an issue when it comes to successfully tackling organised crime groups, reducing incidents of domestic abuse, safeguarding children from sexual exploitation and preventing radicalisation and violent extremism. What could Solace and the LGA do to facilitate better information sharing across the community safety and community resilience agenda?

- 8.3. With silo based approaches within councils and between partners identified as an issue by reports like the Jay Report into CSE in Rotherham and also for example in local responses to organised criminality how can councils integrate their safeguarding, public protection and community safety work? What can Solace and the LGA do to help councils on this agenda?
- 8.4. Later on in the agenda the Board will be considering the impact of the new Prevent duties introduced by the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 on councils. Are there any concerns Solace members have the LGA should be looking to raise with the government?

### **Next steps**

9. Members are invited to explore with Mr Barradell how the LGA and Solace can work together across civil resilience and community safety issues, and how jointly they might better support councils in their work across these agendas.

### **Financial Implications**

10. There are no financial implications for the Board arising from this report.