

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

Title:	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
Date:	Monday 8 June 2015
Venue:	Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#) to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Farewells <p>The Chair announced that it would be Helen Murray's last meeting as Head of Programmes for the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, as she was to become the LGA's new Principal Advisor in the West Midlands. The Board paid tribute to Helen's advice and leadership over the last few years and thanked her for her hard work.</p> <p>The Chair also announced that she would be standing down as Chair of the Board in the Summer. She thanked members for their support over her time as Chair, and members paid tribute to her hard work on behalf of the Board.</p>	
2	HMIC - Policing in Austerity and PEEL <p>The Chair introduced Adam Pemberton from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). HMIC had been leading a debate in policing circles about how the service should address further budget reductions, and had also introduced a new assessment process for police forces entitled 'police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy programme' or 'PEEL'.</p> <p>Adam Pemberton explained that following the publication of HMIC's 'Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge', a National Debate Advisory Group had been formed to lead the debate. The Group were looking at how forces had dealt with 4/5 years of austerity and the necessity to rethink how services were delivered if austerity continued for a further period. Police and Crime Commissioners, unions, the private sector and staff associations had been involved in the debate, with two large scale events having taken place to consider the issues. There was a consensus that the police needed to build capability, have an increased focus on online and digital crime, and work more on a cross-force basis. Preventative and reactive neighbourhood policing should be preserved, as should the requirement to work closely with local partners. The Group's work would be passed on to Home Office Ministers and civil servants to continue the dialogue with government.</p>	

Regarding the programme of PEEL inspections, the aim was to draw together a rounded assessment of the breadth of policing. Work was ongoing to develop a full PEEL inspection to publish in 2016, with a focus on efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. The efficiency strand of work was almost complete. The legitimacy strand would focus on the consent of the public, and the question of whether forces worked in a fair way. Work on effectiveness was the largest piece of work, as it related to how forces dealt with victims, vulnerable people, serious organised crime, and how effective the police were in investigating crime. The full assessment should be complete by February 2016.

In the discussion on the report, the following issues were raised:

- The LGA had been represented as part of the debate on policing in austerity, and HMIC would continue to work with local government as the debate continued.
- Members raised concern that the final report on PEEL would be published only a few months before the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in 2016. Adam Pemberton explained that the report could not be published any later for that reason.
- Members wondered how the inspections would drive more integrated working between the police and local government given there was a question about the role of HMIC in looking at the relationship the police have with partners. They also expressed a wish for local authorities to be involved in the stakeholder group looking at the legitimacy strand of the PEEL framework.
- The Policing in Austerity report did not set out all the answers to how the police service could be funded going forward as it was aimed as a discussion paper. The next stage of the work would then look at what the local integration should look like.
- Local authorities would not want more inspections, so it was important for HMIC to help partners work more effectively. Local authorities were already working well with the police on tackling anti-social behaviour and the night-time economy.
- Consideration should be given to areas where, as a result of a contracting public sector, police first responders were dealing with emergency medical care as ambulances took longer to respond.
- The police could not deliver value for money until it addressed the issue of the number of forces and force mergers. Consideration should be given to how the boundaries of Police and Crime Commissioner areas would work if forces were to merge.
- Counter terrorism should be moved to a national level to achieve more savings at a local level.
- The idea of providing forces with greater financial flexibility should be explored, including the possibility of local sponsorship for particular programmes of work. Forces were in different positions in respect of funding, through precept or other local sources, but all fundraising methods should be considered and the Home Office were looking at this nationally.
- There was a need for more blue light collaboration, but the idea of having fire and rescue services under Police and Crime Commissioners was unhelpful for local government.
- When the report from the National Debate Advisory Group on policing in austerity was published there would be a requirement for the Board to consider what devolution would look like in the

context of community safety.

- Inspections were time consuming for police forces, but HMIC was continuing to work to ensure that they were as effective as possible.

The Chair thanked Adam Pemberton for attending the meeting and commented that local government would continue to pay its part in working with the police at local and national level.

Decisions

- The Board noted HMIC's work on policing in austerity and the inspection of police forces.
- The Board agreed that the new Board should consider the report from HMIC's National Debate Advisory Group when it was published.

Action

- Officers to update the Board on HMIC's work on the national debate and PEEL when the current work was complete.

3 Queen's Speech 2015

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced the report which reflected on the six bills of interest to the SSC Board which were set out in the Queen's Speech on 27 May.

The LGA had been calling for a Psychoactive Substances Bill since 2014, and the Chair had been interviewed in local and national press on the announcement of the Bill in the Queen's Speech. In general the Bill set out what the LGA were asking for, but officers would continue to monitor progress, and any amendments, as it passed through both Houses.

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill would be considered in the first instance by the LGA Leadership Board, but the Bill had implications for policing given the possibility of combining the role of Police and Crime Commissioner with elected mayors. It was currently unclear how this would work with regard to police force boundaries and where forces worked in close cooperation, and the Board may need to consider this in more detail later in the year.

The Enterprise Bill provided an opportunity for the Board to press government to reform licensing as proposed in the 'Rewiring Licensing' publication, and further detail would be considered in due course.

The remaining Bills (Extremism, Investigatory Powers, and Policing and Criminal Justice) would be of interest to the Board, but in areas outside of legislation. Officers would monitor progress and forward responses to the Board if required.

The Investigatory Powers Bill would allow police and security services to access communications data they argue they need to investigate offences and bring prosecutions as more communications took place over the

internet. This may lead to a debate about local authority access to communications data, and Channel 4 had recently reported on areas where councils had used data inappropriately.

In the discussion on the report, the following points were raised:

- There should be no complacency over the Psychoactive Substances Bill, and the Board should continue to closely monitor progress.
- The Psychoactive Substances Bill should include provision for where substances are not used in public places, and there should be provisions to ensure that the impact of the legislation once introduced was reviewed.
- It would be useful for the Chair of the Board to meet with Chairs of other Boards on areas where work overlapped, e.g. work on CSE with the Children and Young People's Board, as this approach had worked well in the past.
- Local government should take an active and leading role in providing evidence for the Enterprise Bill considerations on trading standards and regulatory authorities.
- The Board in September could take a view on the need for consideration of knife crime, and if greater penalties should be introduced to deter offenders.
- The Fire Services Management Committee and the Fire Commission had raised cross-party opposition to the possibility of Police and Crime Commissioners having control of the fire service. The Board would have to ensure that the debate was raised, although the government were only discussing the idea currently.

Decision

- That the Bills in the Queen's Speech of interest to the Board be noted.

Action

- Bills to be kept under review by officers, and Board to be updated on progress in due course.

4 Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) Proposals for the Future Structure of Trading Standards Services

Ellie Greenwood, Senior Advisor, introduced the report which informed the Board on the development of proposals by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) for the future of local trading standards services.

Members noted that the paper by CTSI included a number of high level recommendations. An initial paper outlining the proposed approach had been circulated to CTSI members following a 2014 workforce survey and a comprehensive research project into trading standards services at 13 councils. The paper proposed a strategic trading standards model taking into account population size, number of businesses, geography and infrastructure links, key partners and emerging models of government.

CTSI proposed that core funding be allocated directly from central government, but with authorities being permitted to undertake income generating activities. A mixed governance model was also proposed, including elected members, business representatives and the third sector.

Some issues raised by CTSI had previously been raised in the LGA publication 'Remodelling Public Protection', including that trading standards budgets had been reduced significantly, and that there might be a need to review existing structures. The proposals were at an early stage, and CTSI were inviting the government to commission more detailed work on the structure, funding and governance of strategic authorities.

In the discussion on the report, the following points were raised:

- The position on core funding from central government should be clarified. It would be better for the sector for funding to go directly to local authorities. The LGA should not engage with a holding response, but should clarify that core funding would be better if given directly to local government.
- Ring fencing proposals should be challenged, so that positive outcomes could be achieved in a more flexible way. Ring fencing was counter to the national direction of travel and was not without risks – the public health budget had been unexpectedly cut by £200 million. The issue of professional boundaries needed to be addressed and members asserted that councils knew about the importance of trading standards even though it was not raised on the doorstep.
- It would be useful to have a model of what good looked like in different types of authorities, e.g. small unitaries, rural authorities, large metropolitan authorities.
- The idea that there should just be greater collaborative working with the police also needed to be challenged given the importance of licencing and other regulatory issues.
- A draft response to the CTSI proposals should be circulated to the Board before submission.

Decisions

- The board noted the activities outlined in the report.
- A response to the CTSI proposals should be drafted and circulated to the Board prior to submission.

Action

- Officers to circulate a draft response to the Board.

5 End of Year Board Report

Helen Murray introduced the report, which provided an overview of the issues and work which the Board had overseen over the previous year. Suggested priorities and programmes of work for 2015/16 were also highlighted.

Members noted that particular achievements for the Board were the Betting Commission, work on taxi licensing, and the joint bid with Barnardo's to establish the National FGM centre. The Board would be running three events at the LGA Annual Conference in relation to night-time economies, terrorism, and the role of the fire and rescue service in public health.

Members asked that the first meeting of the new Board cycle in September should include an 'unfinished business' section on work which was still ongoing and should be a priority for the Board in 2015/16.

Decisions

- Members noted the achievements against the Board's priorities in 2014/15, the sessions which the Board was running at the LGA's Annual Conference, and the Board's priorities areas for 2015/16.
- Members agreed the programme of meetings for 2015/16.

Action

- Add an update on 'unfinished business' to the agenda for the first Board meeting of the 2015/16 cycle.

6 Regulatory Services Update

Ian Leete, Advisor, updated the Board on LGA policy work and developments affecting regulatory services since the previous meeting.

Members noted that a final decision had been made in the case of *Hemming v Westminster* at the Supreme Court on licensing fees. Westminster's appeal was upheld which was a very positive outcome for local government. One issue around charging fees had been directed to the European Court of Justice and a further update on the outcome of that decision would be provided in due course.

Following a consultation on licensing fees in 2014, the government announced in February that it had decided against the introduction of locally set licensing fees. The decision had been taken due to a low response rate to the consultation's request for detailed information on current costs of running the licensing framework. The statement announced that the government would ask the LGA to build the evidence base to inform a future decision. Cllr Page reported that he had met with the outgoing Minister to discuss the issue and agreed the level of evidence that was needed. However, a follow-up letter should be sent to the new Ministerial team to confirm that there was still an interest in taking this policy forward. LGA officers would continue to liaise with Home Office civil servants on the issue and a further update would be provided in due course.

The Board welcomed the news that two very successful conferences on taxi licensing had been held in March 2015, with over 200 delegates attending events in Manchester and London. The revised and expanded taxi licensing handbook for councillors had been launched at the events and had been well received. The handbook had been circulated to all

councils.

Members noted that the gambling handbook had been refreshed following recent and forthcoming changes announced by the Gambling Commission. The new handbook would be re-launched within the next few weeks. The LGA had also co-funded research into the social impact of gambling with Westminster and Manchester councils, which should be completed by September 2015.

Decision

- Members noted the report.

Actions

- Further updates on outstanding Hemming v Westminster charging issues and the outcome of gambling research to be provided at a future meeting.
- Officers to speak to the Home Office about the offer made before the election to survey councils on licensing fees.

7 Notes of Previous Meeting

Members agreed the notes of the meeting held on 23 February 2015 as correct.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Ann Lucas OBE	Coventry City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Joanna Spicer MBE	Suffolk County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Lisa Brett	Bath & North East Somerset Council
	Cllr Philip Evans JP	Conwy County Borough Council
Members	Cllr Janet Daby	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Tony Page	Reading Borough Council
	Cllr Sophie Linden	Hackney London Borough Council
	Cllr Joanna Gardner	Kensington and Chelsea Royal Borough Council
	Cllr Morris Bright	Hertsmere Borough Council
	Cllr Thomas Fox	Scarborough Borough Council
	Cllr Ian Gillies	City of York Council
	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
	Cllr Colin Mann	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Observer	Cllr Kay Hammond	Surrey County Council
Apologies	Cllr Mike Connolly	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling Borough Council
	Cllr Nick Daubney	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
	Cllr Nick Worth	South Holland District Council
In Attendance		
LGA Officers		
Helen Murray		
Mark Norris		
Ellie Greenwood		
Ian Leete		
Charlotte Breen		
Lucy Ellender		
Paul Goodchild		