

## **Safer & Stronger Communities Board – report from Councillor Mehboob Khan (Chair)**

### **Sexual Violence and Exploitation**

1. The Board's Chair, Cllr Mehboob Khan, chaired the second of the awareness raising events on child sexual exploitation which was held in Rochdale in early December. Delegates heard from Oxfordshire County Council on their response to Operation Bullfinch, from Stockport on their work with schools to help in identifying possible victims and from Rochdale on the impact of the national reporting of cases there, the response from the council and the wider response in Greater Manchester to the issue.
2. Cllr Lisa Brett, the Board's Deputy Chair, attended the meeting of the Home Office's National Group on Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People held in January. The meeting discussed how to change attitudes amongst professionals dealing with victims as well as in the wider public to the issue, changes that need to be made to the police approach to dealing with cases of child sexual exploitation, and how victims could be better supported. Oxfordshire County Council also shared their work on Operation Bullfinch.

### **Metal Theft**

3. Cllr Mehboob Khan spoke alongside Norman Baker MP, Minister of State for Crime Prevention at the Home Office, at the annual general meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on metal theft, held in early January. Cllr Khan was also joined by Cllr Nick Worth, the Board's Regulatory Services Champion and Cllr Richard Stay. Cllr Khan used his speech to highlight the work councils had done to implement the Scrap Metal Dealers Act and technical issues that had arisen as part of that process. Cllr Khan was also able to set out the work the LGA has been doing to support councils in introducing the legislation.

### **Annual Safer Communities Conference**

4. The Board's Vice-Chair, Cllr Joanna Spicer, chaired the annual Safer Communities Conference at the start of December. As well as hearing from Paddy Tipping, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire, about how he will be looking to work with local authorities in 2014, delegates also heard from speakers on the restructuring of community safety functions in councils by merging or outsourcing them, the work being done to link health services, community safety partnerships and the police, and from the Leader of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Cllr Chris Roberts on the local authority's response to the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby. There were workshops on tackling organised crime groups, early intervention work by councils and the Early Intervention Foundation, the impact of the government's reforms of probation and using risk based approaches to dealing with anti-social behaviour.

### **Criminal Justice Council**

5. Cllr David Burbage attended the January meeting of the Criminal Justice Council. There were discussions around the commissioning of witness services, including the

Ministry of Justice's proposals to retain some national commissioning with police and crime commissioners having responsibility at a local level. Other issues discussed included changes in the rules of disclosure in criminal prosecutions, compliance with criminal procedure rules and the use of police bail.

### **Licensing Reform**

6. The LGA began a campaign for licensing reform, with the launch of *Open for Business: Rewiring Licensing* at our annual licensing conference on 4 February. The objectives of our reform proposals are twofold: to strengthen the powers of councils to shape the nature and extent of business activity in their areas, in line with local needs and priorities, and to reduce the bureaucracy created by current licensing frameworks, to free up business and council resources.
7. In a series of press statements coinciding with the launch, Cllrs Tony Page, the Board's Licensing Champion and Clyde Loakes, Vice Chair of the LGA's Environment and Housing Board particularly highlighted the benefits that tougher licensing powers offered as a means of tackling the [clustering of betting shops](#), announcing the LGA's intention to write to BetFred chief executive Fred Done to take up his invitation to set up a gambling industry and LGA taskforce to address concerns. Cllr Page also stressed the [unnecessary costs and burdens](#) placed on both businesses and councils by the current system.
8. Existing licensing legislation is complex, split across numerous government departments, and much of it is outdated, with councils and businesses left to try to fit it all together. There is huge scope for an overhaul of licensing laws to create a streamlined system that enables businesses to make a single application for a licence tailored to their specific business needs and imposes minimal burdens on compliant businesses that wish to maintain their licences. At the same time, there is a need to strengthen councils' powers to enable them to consider factors such as cumulative impact and public health when taking licensing decisions, in order that they can address issues including the clustering of betting shops.
9. In line with our broader Rewiring Public Services campaign, the proposals are bold and ambitious, and pose challenges for councils as well as government and businesses. We see publication of the proposals as the start of a debate, and encourage member councils to join us in this.

### **LGA/ APCC Joint Strategic Board**

10. On 14 January Cllr Mehboob Khan chaired the second meeting of the LGA/APCC joint strategic Board, which met in Newcastle. The LGA was also represented by Councillor Ian Gillies, Councillor Anita Lower and Councillor Marianne Overton MBE. The Board discussed the *Strategy on Violence against Women and Girls & Vulnerability Training for Security Industry Association*, which has been championed by Commissioner Vera Baird, and developments in anti-social behaviour legislation, including the Community Trigger, where the Board discussed the experience of the Leeds pilot.

**Home Affairs Select Committee on Police and Crime Commissioners: One Year On**

11. On 4 February Cllr Joanna Spicer gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on Police and Crime Commissioners: One year On. Cllr Spicer set out the experience of Police and Crime Panels, drawing on the extensive work that the LGA has done with Panels and indicated that it was still too early to make judgements on the policing reforms.

**Leadership Academy**

12. The most recent in a series of Fire Leadership Academies took place on 12-13 February. The event was led by Cllr Kay Hammond who set out the leadership challenges and opportunities facing the sector. Cllr Hammond also presented on the importance of member/officer relations and how to create a more open and transparent culture of leadership. The Leadership Academy was attended by a range of councillors with responsibility for fire and rescue services, drawn from county, metropolitan and combined authorities.

**Sprinklers week**

13. Sprinklers week took place between 3 and 9 February. It was launched at a Parliamentary event at the House of Commons on 29th January. Cllr John Edwards represented the Fire Services Management Committee at the Launch. The aim of sprinklers week, which is intended to be an annual event, is to: widen awareness of the commercial and safety benefits of sprinklers in preventing loss and improving fire safety in businesses and homes across the UK; debunk some of the myths and misconceptions about sprinklers; and increase the level of knowledge of those who can influence the installation of sprinklers.

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