



Warwickshire
POLICE AUTHORITY

The authority behind the force

Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy

November 2008

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1. Introduction

This document replaces the Authority's Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy 2005 –2008. It updates our consultation and community engagement arrangements in the context of the Police Authority's and Force's own structural changes, the development of Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Locality meetings and the embedding of LAA and other local agreements with our partners. It also has given us the opportunity to review our arrangements to address areas which can be developed and enhanced.

2. Aims of the Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to document how Warwickshire Police Authority intends to engage with individuals, communities and partners in the county so that the service provided reflects local needs, enhances accountability and improves public confidence.

3. General Principles

Warwickshire Police Authority and Warwickshire Police are separate organisations, but with a common goal. Warwickshire Police delivers the tactical day to day business of frontline policing to our communities, while one of the core functions of the Police Authority is to scrutinise, at a strategic level, that the effective delivery of policing is maintained. This means that the Authority's role is primarily that of scrutinising the Force's areas of business and challenging their performance where appropriate, to ensure that policing is delivered effectively and efficiently across the county. The two organisations have distinct objectives in the area of community engagement and each has its own strategy, although it is essential that these two strategies are closely interlinked. This document sets out the Authority's objectives for communication and consultation and how we will make use of the feedback gained. The detail of these objectives and priority areas will be established through the development of delivery plans. The plans will be developed, monitored and scrutinised by the Authority on an ongoing basis.

4. Legal Framework

For the purpose of this strategy, the Police Authority's statutory duties in the area of community engagement are defined below. It is not necessary for the Police Authority to conduct its own direct consultation and it may instead be more appropriate to ensure that the correct level and type of consultation is being undertaken already across the Force or by other partner agencies, to assure effective scrutiny by the Police Authority.

(1) Council Tax Precepts

Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1996 states that: "A relevant authority shall consult persons or bodies appearing to it to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates....consultations must be made as to each financial year and must be about the Authority's proposals for expenditure (including capital expenditure) in that financial year"

(2) Obtaining the Views of the Community

Section 96 of the Police Act 1996 states that: "Arrangements shall be made for obtaining:

- The views of people in that area about matters concerning the policing of the area:
and
- Their co-operation with the police in preventing crime in that area.

Arrangements shall be made by the Police Authority after consulting the Chief Constable as to the arrangements that would be appropriate.”

Paragraph 30 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 amends Section 96 of the 1996 Act to extend the duty on police authorities to cover the making of arrangements for seeking the co-operation of the community in preventing anti-social behaviour in addition to the prevention of crime.

(3) Local Policing Objectives

Section 7 of The Police Act 1996 states that “every police authority shall, before the beginning of the financial year, determine objectives for the policing of the Authority’s area during that year. Before determining objectives, a police authority shall:

- Consult the Chief Constable for the area and;
- Consider any views obtained by the authority in accordance with arrangements made under Section 96.

(4) Local Policing Summaries

Section 8A of the Police Act 1996 requires police authorities to produce local policing summaries and distribute them to every household on at least an annual basis.

(5) Equalities Schemes

Under current legislation, public bodies, including police authorities and forces, are required to consult on the production of each of its schemes.

5. Our Approach to Consultation and Community Engagement

In order to deliver a service which truly puts local people at the heart of all our decisions and policies, it is essential that we consult our communities, businesses and visitors to the county on what they want from their police service, respond to their needs wherever we can and measure the level of public confidence amongst communities regarding the performance of the police service.

There is increasing expectation from the Government for all authorities to work together to deliver greater local accountability, creating governance mechanisms that bring the public closer to decisions on local services. Robust consultation and engagement processes are rightly seen as essential elements of good governance.

The Authority believes that there are three levels of public involvement – informing, consulting and engaging – which could help drive our policies and decisions. In some cases it is appropriate to communicate information to the general public. In the development of certain policies, the Authority will want to engage further with specific communities by means of surveys or meetings, to gather opinion. In some circumstances, it may be considered crucial that the Authority involves the communities to deliver action on their concerns, which in many cases will be alongside other agencies.

The principles of consultation are set out below. A key element remains the need to engage with the County Council and our other partners wherever possible.

(1) A Structure for Consultation

The Authority and Force employ a range of methods for consulting and engaging with the community and stakeholders in order to ensure that rounded views are gathered and that a wide cross section of society, including those who are harder to reach, is included. We use the following framework to achieve this. The framework is designed to ensure that there are opportunities for strategic issues to be discussed as well as those which are more obviously of local concern.

The examples below are only an illustration of means of consultation and are by no means exhaustive.

Formal (1)

Purpose – To consult and invite feedback from large sample groups on specific topics or questions.

Examples – Active use of the County Council and District/Borough Council citizen panels by contributing questions to particular consultation waves and by purchasing specific waves from time to time. In addition feedback could also be sought from the County Council and District/Borough Councils Cabinets and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Formal (2)

Purpose – To gather and collate views from local groups meeting on a regular basis to discuss community safety issues affecting their communities including the business communities and to make use of meetings organised with or by stakeholders and partners.

Examples – Use of the locality panels or forums to present information, ask questions and log responses as well as recording general feedback from each meeting. Active use of consultation processes undertaken by the County Council, District/Borough Councils, CDRPs, LAA steering groups and our major partners.

Informal

Purpose – To use a variety of methods to make direct contact with communities, individuals and groups. Frequency and type of activity would depend on the level of resources available but it should be the aim of the Authority to stage some activity in each area of the county at least once a year.

Examples – Mobile exhibitions and display: presence in town centres or supermarkets to talk to shoppers; engaging with Neighbourhood Watch, leaflets in doctors' surgeries, youth clubs, libraries, old peoples' clubs; use of the County Council's magazine 'Views'. Use of freepost and email addresses to gather responses.

Targeted

Purpose – To make special efforts to contact minority and hard to reach groups, wherever possible in co-operation with our partners. Topics may include local, strategic and specific minority issues.

Examples – Independent Advisory Group meetings, local minority groups; schools; youth organisations; residents associations; religious groups; disability and carer groups. Every opportunity should be taken to make use of existing opportunities to consult.

Electronic

Purpose – Making use of new technology to provide additional opportunities for individuals, stakeholders and interest groups to let the Authority know their views and to receive feedback.

Examples – On-going questionnaires running on the Force and Authority websites where individuals can leave comments on particular or general issues.

(2) Delivery

It is important that the Authority and the Force have clear views on what they wish to achieve from the strategy and how they wish to go about it. The outcomes from the delivery of the strategy will enable the Authority to be in a position to make more informed decisions on its future plans. The Authority needs to determine the following:-

- What, specifically it wants to know or provide information about
- Why we want to know/provide information about it, ie what is the end purpose
- Who we want to target
- Whether we want to inform, consult, or engage with our audience. What level of participation is required
- Whether existing methods of consultation either satisfy our requirement for knowledge in a specific area (eg Force or partner agencies) or provide a channel of opportunity for the Police Authority to request its own feedback

We achieve this by:-

Scanning the environment for opportunities that the Authority can make use of to collaborate with stakeholders and partners on their consultation and community engagement plans and to encourage them to participate in ours.

Sharing all data with our stakeholders and partners which is likely to improve our collective understanding of the specific needs of our communities, ensuring that, wherever we can, we are providing victims, witnesses, residents and businesses with what they need. It is also important that we ensure that our stakeholders and partners share their information and data with us.

Ensuring that the collective data from existing consultative meetings and groups is collected centrally and properly analysed to inform the three year strategic plan on a rolling annual basis.

Ensuring that the Authority and the Force are fully represented on relevant stakeholder and partner groups and organisations.

Providing regular strategic reports, updates and feedback to the Police Authority on current and ongoing consultation activity to facilitate effective scrutiny.

Producing a consultation and community engagement action plan, to be reviewed annually in conjunction with the three year strategic plan and which dovetails with and is tracked against the Force's action plan.

Proactively using existing and new communication channels to support the organisation in delivering key messages to communities and actively encouraging two-way communication and public involvement.

Providing a clear distinction between the roles of the Force and the Police Authority, but with a more cohesive and integrated approach to working, through regular and effective planning and comprehensive briefings and liaison.

From the above, preparing an annual plan/programme to be approved by the Police Authority and monitored by the Community Engagement and Consultation Panel.

(3) Feedback

For consultation and community engagement to be effective, it is important that feedback is given to those who have contributed to the processes.

Feedback should include analysis of the outcomes of consultation and details of how the information gathered will be used or has already been used to influence actions and policies.

Feedback will be delivered in a number of ways, including:-

- Media releases and advertising
- Presentations to stakeholder groups, locality meetings and other organisations
- Responses to direct requests for information
- The Authority and Force websites
- Published reports to the Police Authority
- Leaflets and other publicity material
- Annual reports on police performance

(4) Monitoring and Reviewing

The Community Engagement and Consultation Panel will be responsible for monitoring the delivery of the strategy. Quarterly reports on consultation and community engagement will be submitted to the Panel. From the data acquired, the Panel will be able to scrutinise the outcomes from the processes and ensure that sufficient action and feedback has been undertaken in response to the issues raised by local communities and our partners. The Panel will also need to be satisfied that all partners and stakeholders are fully engaged in the process.

The Panel will be required to submit an annual report to the Police Authority at the start of the planning cycle on the progress of all consultation and community engagement and to put forward a revised action plan for the following year which will require the approval of the Police Authority.

In addition to the above, the Authority will need to be notified of the outcomes from the consultation relating to the Authority's budget each year in order that they can be taken into consideration as part of the budget process.

(5) Resources

A commitment to engaging with and consulting the community that is underpinned by a budgetary commitment from the Authority and the Force.

A commitment to delivering the annual plan and ensuring that information received from consultation and engagement events is properly analysed and reported on. The Authority and the Force are also fully committed to partnership collaboration and information sharing.