

**Warwickshire Police Authority – 21 May 2008**

**Report of the Community Engagement  
and Consultation Panel**

**Summary**

This report provides an update for Members on the progress of the Community Engagement and Consultation Panel following their meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

**Recommendation**

That the report be noted.

**1. Safer Neighbourhoods/Neighbourhood Policing**

We considered a detailed report from ACC Bill Holland on the first 15 months of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

The staffing for SNTs includes an establishment of 109 PCs and 66 PCSOs although in practice, the Force was able to exceed this initially with 119 PCs actually working within the SNTs. The establishment has now returned to 109 officers.

In the meantime, every opportunity has been taken to capitalise on Home Office additional funding for PCSOs and their establishment has been expanded to 140. There is a dedicated PCSO trainer based within the Learning and Development Centre, and a PCSO Manager deployed within the Community Safety Dept at Police Headquarters.

The Force has in place a robust Abstraction Policy and Annual Leave Policy to ensure that teams remain as visible as possible to local communities. Teams are increasingly using Volunteers to reduce administrative burdens (e.g. Website maintenance) and Special Constables have now been aligned to SNTs.

The number of SNTs was initially 31, with 4 in North Warwickshire, 8 in Nuneaton and Bedworth, 7 in Rugby, 8 in Warwick, and 4 in Stratford. It became clear quite quickly that the size of the Team's areas in Stratford was too big – they were not delivering 'local policing'. As a result, 2 additional Teams were introduced there to bring the total number to 33. The whole Force area is covered by SNTs.

Each Safer Neighbourhood area now has a dedicated SNT capable of working with communities to establish local priorities, using a range of engagement techniques. These priorities are addressed using problem solving methods with partners and communities themselves. Members of the public can access information through SNT and Force web-sites, as well as through non-electronic means of communication. A

dedicated SNT Communications Officer was appointed last year, helping to address some of the problems that were being experienced in keeping websites and other forms of communication up to date.

Particular benefits have come from co-locating teams with partners. For example, the Camp Hill SNT office in Nuneaton is established in Camp Hill Primary School and the Whitnash SNT is based with other partners in the local library. These locations are already focal points for communities and the SNTs have capitalised on the ready-made access they offer. The Mobile Police Stations and PCSO vans now deployed across the County are also worthy of comment, having also been well received by the public.

To mark a year of SNTs, a report was prepared for the Force website describing some of the successes that have been achieved. If any Member would like a copy of that report please contact Neil Gulliver. The Force achieved a 'Good' grading from HMIC for this area of activity in 2007, and has in place an Improvement Plan aimed at closing any gaps identified during that Inspection and through other sources. Performance Indicators are now in place for each SNT and work is in progress to illustrate performance at team level in areas such as User Satisfaction.

The SNTs are now firmly embedded in Local Policing and are managed on a day to day basis by the Borough/District Commanders, and whilst a degree of corporacy will be maintained, the Borough and Districts will be the main drivers in taking them forward.

## **2. Warwickshire County Council – Locality Forum**

Members will recall that this item was first reported to the Police Authority in January this year and referred to the Panel for further consideration.

The County Council are planning to establish 'Locality Forums' in the early part of 2008 and this clearly has implications for the Police Authority and the Safer Neighbourhood Policing arrangements. Since our meeting in March, the Cabinet of the County Council have considered final proposals for the introduction of locality working across the county through the introduction of 23 localities for service planning and administration purposes and 30 community forums for community engagement purposes. This report will be considered by the Panel at their meeting which follows the Authority meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> May. A further report will be then be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Authority.

## **3. Community Engagement and Consultation Arrangements**

The Authority and Force have well-established arrangements for community engagement and consultation underpinned by a strategy agreed by the Authority in 2006.

This is a very important aspect of the Authority's work and it is right to keep it under regular review to ensure that arrangements are appropriate and effective. This is particularly important in the context of the new Annual Governance Statement and forthcoming HMIC inspection of police authorities which have led to a clearer definition of governance responsibilities of the Authority. CIPFA/SOLACE and the APA have provided advice and guidance in this area.

The Authority's principal obligation to consult appears under S96 of the Police Act 1996 which states that a Police Authority has a duty (after consulting the Chief Constable as to the arrangements that would be appropriate) to make arrangements for its area for

obtaining the views of local people in that area about matters concerning the policing of the area and their co-operation in preventing crime in that area.

More specific references to the legal obligation to consult appear in regulations about the preparation of the three year strategy plan, determining annual objectives for policing of the authority's area and the production of Equality Schemes.

Beyond the specific statutory obligations, guidance from CIPFA/SOLACE and APA has identified a number of additional areas which a good police authority may be expected to consult upon.

In planning consultation, the Authority needs to consider:

- What are seen to be the key outcomes from consultation?
- What information is needed from communities to inform policy development and priority setting?
- What information is already available through existing mechanisms?
- Are there any gaps in the existing information provided?
- What mechanisms are best suited to provide information not already available?
- To what extent are existing mechanisms cost effective?
- How will results of consultation be handled

The CIPFA/SOLACE rough guide to the production of the Annual Governance Statement and the APA draft criteria for self-assessment provide helpful advice on an authority's governance responsibilities. In the area of consultation and community engagement, these can be summarised as:-

- The Authority promotes awareness of its role and function to the public, stakeholders and partners and that it publishes information about its outcomes and achievements
- Evidence that the results of internal/external consultation are analysed and the results fed back to the community
- Evidence that strategic planning takes account of consultation outcomes
- Assurance that the organisation's vision, plans, priorities and targets are developed in consultation with the local community, stakeholders and partners and are clearly disseminated
- Arrangements are in place to encourage the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the Authority through, e.g. stakeholder forums, area forums and residents panels
- A community strategy is in place to include arrangements to enable the Authority to engage with the community, to specify types of issues they will consult upon and describe feedback arrangements
- A clear process for dealing with competing demands from the community
- The use of a variety of methods to engage with the public ensuring that there is targeted action to engage with hard to reach groups and groups that are under-represented in general responses to consultation

A great deal of consultation takes place already. The following examples are simply intended to demonstrate the range of that consultation and are not intended as a comprehensive list.

- Warwickshire Police consults with victims of crime, specific groups such as young people and BME communities, local neighbourhoods through the

PACT process, and has established an Independent Advisory Group to test possible improvements to its services.

- The Warwickshire Public Services Board consults on the LAA
- CDRPs consult on community safety priorities for their area
- Individual organisations carry out their own consultation such as the County Council's annual community safety survey
- The Police Authority consults representatives of the business community.

Consultation is not simply about finding out what people. There is undoubtedly enough consultation already taking place and the Authority must ensure that it does not duplicate the work that is already taking place. The Authority needs to be able to demonstrate that it influences the consultation that others are leading and can show that the results of consultation are taken into account in decision making. Consultation is also about establishing a relationship with local people that encourages a two-way dialogue on the important issues. This is not something that can be done on the Authority's behalf by the Police or any other agency. It requires the Authority to have a strong and credible identity with local people in its own right. The Panel have recognised that this is currently a gap in the Authority's approach to consultation and requires further consideration of how this second aspect of consultation might be fulfilled.

A review of the Authority's community engagement and consultation processes has been commissioned and will focus on:

- Revisions to the Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy agreed in 2006 in the light of changing local and national expectations.
- Ensuring that the Authority's consultation mechanisms are as comprehensive and inclusive as possible and set within a framework embracing neighbourhood, district and county levels.
- The processes for ensuring that the results of consultation are used to inform decisions on strategy and policy and are disseminated to the public.
- Ensuring that our community engagement and consultation arrangements are cost effective, timely and make appropriate use of existing channels for consultation in the Force area.

A detailed report will be made to the Panel during the coming months when it is hoped a new strategy can be considered.

**Richard Hobbs**  
**Chair of Panel**