

22nd January public consultation day:
'Valuing Our Police'

Report of main findings for
Hampshire Police Authority

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Andrew Smith

www.andrewsmithresearch.co.uk

01372 817979



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1. Introduction, objectives and method

Hampshire Police Authority (HPA) has a legal obligation to consult with the public. A consultation day titled 'Valuing Our Police' was convened on Saturday 22nd January 2011 at the Hampshire Constabulary training centre in Netley near Southampton as part of this remit.

The day was facilitated by Andrew Smith Research. See Appendix A for the agenda. We invited a wide cross section of the general public to attend the day, and 103 people were present.

The objective of the day was to hear the views of the public concerning two broad issues, which formed the two sessions as follows (see Appendix B for topic guides). The overriding theme was getting more for less, in the context of the severe public sector cuts impacting the police budget. The severity of cuts was made clear. Our two sessions were:

- How the public and police interface; where people expect to meet with the police, and how they expect to be able to contact them. How people expect the police to communicate information and advice to them, and how far should it go.

- Policing priorities; does crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) seem to be improving or worsening? Are the police doing a good job? What are the core policing priorities? To what extent should the police be involved in tackling ASB, and investing in crime prevention activities? How can the public help the police more?

Each session was introduced by a number of presentations from HPA members and the police, followed by 8 parallel focus groups with 12-14 people in each one.

This document reports on the main findings and conclusions from the 8 discussion groups as a whole. We also conducted a 'straw poll' by self completion, to quickly gauge opinion on various issues at an individual level. See Appendix C for results, some of which are highlighted in the text.

Those attending the day were from all walks of life, and aged 18 to 80. We recruited equally from 10 parts of the county, including the Isle of Wight. Quotas were set, so that we had a balanced representation in terms of gender, age group, background, ethnicity and those with some form of disability.

A range of the group discussions were filmed, and an edited highlights DVD is available separately. A wide range of anonymised quotations are reproduced in the report below to illustrate the main attitudes, experiences and issues raised.

2. Summary of main issues raised during the day

Local police presence. Most people feel that the police tackle major crime well. They are rarely involved in such events, and so local crime/ASB impact is what matters more to them. Their concerns are for a visible presence in their communities, to increase confidence and feelings of security. Some have seen more police on foot and bike, and at meeting points, and applaud this. Those in rural communities fear being ignored, and ask for at least an occasional/mobile presence.

Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB). Local problems such as alcohol and drug related abuse and vandalism, are the most widely experienced. Hence tackling these areas is seen as a high priority.

Support for PCSOs. When their work was explained, people were enthusiastic about what PCSOs could achieve, in the right settings. Confusion remains about what they do, and 'Community Officer' would be a more helpful title. They cannot be expected to gain respect or succeed in really tough areas or situations.

Ways of making contact. Much more contact with the police now happens by telephone and email/online, and more could go via these channels as people become aware of them and trust the response.

Police stations and alternative meeting venues. Many local police stations are rarely used, by most people. Carefully explained, the policy of locating the police in more modern settings, such as a contact point within a shopping centre, is well received. There are gains in terms of accessibility, visibility and resource allocation.

Availability. Contact points should be open during the same hours as the shopping centre, or venue in which the unit is located. Surgeries and appointment sessions are also welcomed.

Telephone help-lines. These are widely accepted, but the number to use needs to be a simple, national number. A 24-hour response time is acceptable for non-urgent enquiries, but many callers could be encouraged to use the web.

Police website. Much more use should be made of the website, to report minor crime, give information and ask for a response via email. The key is raising awareness as to what the site can deliver, and where it is. Posters, texts, links from other sites and social media should all be used.

Communication. Most of the topics talked about gained a positive response, once people had properly considered the issues. A well structured communication strategy is therefore essential to successful implementation.

Shared responsibility. With particular reference to ASB, people respond positively to ideas of communities doing more together. Improving ASB is in particular seen as something that parents and schools need to work on and share responsibility with the police. But most people are reluctant to be proactive. They seek a lead from the police or others about what to do to improve their areas.

Appreciation for the police. There was general praise for the work of the police and gains made in recent years. It was acknowledged that the police face an ever wider set of challenges, because of social, legal and justice system changes outside their control, and budget limitations.

3: Public Interface and communications

3.1 How and where we contact the police

3.1.1 Contact with the police and using police stations

Most people feel that the major requirement of the police is that they have a strong and visible local community presence. Ideally, there will be a consistent team or person patrolling, getting to know local people and their issues. Views about the role and use made of PCSOs at local level were often raised in this regard, including whether they were 'real police'.

Relatively few members of the public go into police stations: 15% said they would go to a police station to report a theft, vs. 75% who would use the phone and 27% email. However, almost a quarter said their last contact of any sort with the police had been at a police station.

About a third had been into a police station in the last two years; some had done so to report relatively minor incidents, or for information and advice.

'I lost a watch – it was useless. I was obliged by my insurance company to report it – a waste of police time.'

'Went to the police station front desk to report an attempted bicycle theft.'

The experience of going to a police station can be daunting when a visit is really required.

'It was about 10 o'clock at night. I went to Southsea and it was closed, so then I went to Portsmouth – there was a massive queue, people that were quite rough, guys that should be locked up the other side of the counter rather than the same side as me – it was intimidating. I find police stations really daunting – if you've just had something happen to you – the last thing I want to do is to traipse up to a police station, wait in a queue to get seen, along with all the dodgy people – all I want to do is to get back to my safety zone and then have someone come as quickly as possible to see me.'

3.1.2 Where the police should be

There was debate about what police stations or meeting points were for, and the balance between the police patrolling and being at desks/in units for the public to come to them. Some were concerned that the desire to engage with the public might lead to people just 'having a chat' and using police officers too much like social workers; a line needs to be drawn. Some thought that the police are not seen often enough in person, out of cars. Some think that new contact points mean fewer staff will be out and about patrolling the streets – and a good balance will be needed.

'There are (crime) hotspots in every town and village. Police should know where the hotspots are. What good are the police doing being stuck behind a desk?'

However, others think that officers patrolling on foot or by bike in their areas are more numerous today, although they comment that ever-changing personnel is not helpful.

'I don't know who it is for in our area – that bit has been lost – it would be nice to get that back again. It's not as regular as it used to be.'

'Policemen go around on mountain bikes – it's brilliant.'

'I think visibility is important; it makes them more accessible. If you have one riding round on his bike you can stop and ask him.'

'There is often trouble at the recreation ground. It would be nice to see someone walking around.'

'I've got a PCSO, a lovely guy, who comes round once a fortnight to the shops. Little village. Lots of shops in the area. We have a bit of a chat. He's a nice guy. With him is an officer. We are a decent area – we don't have much of a social problem.'

'I'd say in Gosport they aren't visible enough. Where I live there are always disturbances. You see police late at night and early in the morning but there are always problems. There are a huge amount of young people hanging around in groups and intimidating the general public.'

3.1.3 Alternatives to police stations for face-to-face contact

Properly introduced and explained, there is a general acceptance that contact points other than police stations could and should be used for the police to have a physical presence. Some stations should close if this means that resources are better used, especially if the change allows more officers to be out in the community. Communication of the policy and its advantages is widely seen as the key to gaining public acceptance.

The need to streamline operations and resources, and to share overheads as in the commercial world, seemed very natural to many. They talk about other companies and services that are now found in new locations – like Post Offices and coffee shops – and see this development applied to policing as perfectly reasonable, and indeed already often happening.

'We have to ask, what's it there for, other than people walking in – have they got cells there? They should think about having two tiers of stations – shut the local one down at night. Just have a local unit where there's a squad of policemen there, rather than have a whole building and staff – if that means we can have more people walking round.'

'The police station is only open 2 hours a day and if they closed it I'm sure there would be uproar. But it seems daft to have it for only a couple of hours a day.'

More than simply for commercial reasons, new contact locations were also seen as a step forward: put them where most people are and/or crime happens. The main location considerations are that they are central, easily accessible (to include being on a ground floor), and well advertised when opened.

There was a feeling that the public would accept new locations in time, once they had seen them in operation and to have been successful. Further advantages are thought to be that such locations are less time consuming for all to use, less intimidating, and serve the dual purpose of contact point plus deterrent more effectively than a (sometimes more remote) building.

'When you go to the police station you are in a small space – as a member of the public you are in there with defendants signing on bail – you don't want to be standing there – it's intimidating – 3 or 4 lads together swearing and shouting – you don't want to be there especially if you have to wait.'

The most obvious locations for permanent contact points were shopping centres (78%), community centres (51%), council buildings (39%) and public libraries (37%). The right location would depend on a local community, what is found where and availability. Shopping centres have the highest footfall and hence seem the most natural choice; libraries can be very central – and joint use may stop some closing; fire stations would be logical as a base for several emergency services – if the

building was central. Other options talked about included locating venues within a Post Office, CAB office, a local pub or even a large secondary school.

'It's where there might be a potential problem. If you walk into a supermarket or a shopping precinct and you see a couple of them, or a stand, then you'd go up to them and you're able to say – I've seen a bunch of lads there.'

'Australia – when I was there and I went to the shopping precinct, there was often a tiny unit with information about missing people, local crimes, they could report crimes etc. I thought it was an amazing idea.'

The main concern raised about such new contact points or venues were that they would offer sufficient privacy to discuss difficult issues, possibly within sight of others implicated. It was also pointed out that the police were sometimes required for urgent help. Hence the number and exact location of contact points needed to be proportionate and judged on local merits.

New locations need to be staffed at suitable times. Some people are unclear when their local police station is open now – and so a location within another facility may make opening times easier to understand, if opening times were common to both.

Such physical contact points will usually be in urban areas. We heard some concerns from the rural community that policing in villages had died or had been severely curtailed, and that low level crime especially had increased as a result. One solution for rural areas was for mobile offices/units (like mobile libraries) to visit, to offer set appointments or a presence at least occasionally.

Another idea was for a return to police staff (PCSOs?) living in a village, perhaps with some form of subsidised housing, as police houses used to operate. This was seen as particularly possible for expanding villages, where some new housing for key public sector workers could perhaps be built in to planning applications.

'Where I grew up in Bromsgrove there was an office inside the police officer's house - it was brilliant - no need to go into town. Bit like a vicar! It was an inexpensive option.'

3.1.4 Hours of availability

Many have become used to the restricted hours of opening of most local police stations, and the general transfer of a considerable volume of communication online in other service sectors. Expectations for police opening hours depended on the sort of service being discussed, and location. The distinction was made between local police meetings or surgeries, which would be scheduled at a set time, and regular police contact points or police stations – especially in larger towns.

Permanent police contact points, for example those located in a shopping centre, were expected to be open for as many hours as the centre itself. There was a wide expectation for comprehensive opening hours when a town centre / shopping centre was busy, and police availability especially during the evenings when more trouble was experienced. A round-the-clock presence was only expected today in major urban centres like Southampton, Fareham and Portsmouth.

'You don't need 24 hour access for non emergency. If you are going to report something you are not going to get in the car at 3am. You are going to get on the phone or on your laptop.'

'If you go to a police station it isn't normally an emergency. They should shut the smaller ones and the bigger ones like Fareham should be manned 24/7.'

People also support the idea of an appointment system to discuss non-urgent issues in private, in a space that is not intimidating. However, it was also felt that most issues that people might bring to a surgery could be discussed by telephone. One advantage of an appointment system is that, if none are made, the surgery need not take place at all and police resources are saved.

3.2 Using technology better

The morning presentation about how the police would use technology more widely was well received. Some people showed surprise that the police had not made more progress on using modern technology already. For example, when drivers are apprehended and checks required, having laptops or hand-held devices in patrol cars are needed for speed and efficiency, as all motoring related details are now stored on national databases.

'Inevitably, technology allows you to do things better.'

3.2.1 'Non urgent' contact options

Most people understand and expect there to be non-urgent contact channels, although some worry about and want clarification of what to regard as urgent / non-urgent. Others complain about a centralised system if this means that their enquiry is handled slowly, or they are passed around.

'I wanted the local police station – you have to explain the whole situation of what the problem is and then they get in touch with a local station. It should be a direct service – but with the internet it should be easier. I think there should be a number where you can speak to someone at a local station.'

Although immediate telephone access to an individual was ideal, it was generally accepted that a 24 hour response time to a message left was realistic, to save funds.

Our morning presentation illustrated the low awareness of the numbers available to report non-urgent policing or crime issues (101, or 08450 454545). There was some surprise that the 0845 number had been used at all. Instead, it was suggested that a simple to remember, quicker to dial second national number was needed for non-urgent issues and for information. The number should be highly memorable, and widely promoted when launched. Several thought the service should be like NHS Direct.

'Everyone is confused about telephone numbers – everyone needs a little laminated card to put on the fridge.'

However, email or web-based enquiries, answered within a defined period of up to 24 hours, were seen as at least as good as the telephone for non-urgent enquiries, when it was relatively straightforward to explain matters. Some worried about what a non-urgent or simple matter was – and so wanted a person available if in doubt, or if web-based options were not available. The telephone helpline option is also important for those with less technical ability or not on the web.

Email templates for reporting should be factual and well formatted, allowing a limited message length. For time-delayed responses, more had confidence that they would get an email response, compared to leaving a message on an answer phone service. Email also gives you a record of the communication / the answer. It was also felt that a telephone answering service should re-direct as many non-urgent enquiries to a website as possible, as the police website would provide the answer to many questions.

As with all areas of change, a key requirement was that new services were explained clearly and widely, to build up strong awareness and acceptance.

3.2.2 Using the internet and the police website

With such widespread use of the internet today (85% in our poll), it seemed very natural to most that a police website should have more use made of it, once it was understood what information and services were available. People have not really thought about what a local police website could do for them, and so familiarity is very low. Few knew you could report or check details of crime at a local level. This is mainly due to lack of need and lack of interest, but could also be due to a lack of promotion and of links to it from other sites like Direct.Gov and local daily newspapers. (NB the launch of www.police.uk reported in the news on 31st January will help in this regard).

'It's about communication isn't it...we just know about 999 and police stations...they have to educate us.'

For important messages it is felt that the police cannot just rely on posting information on a website: wider communications would be needed to draw people to it. However, those who have used the website system seem impressed:

'It's easy to report crime on their website. You've got a whole list of frequently asked questions and you can report your crime ...It's brilliant.'

Hence most people would be happy to report a non-emergency crime on a police website. It was suggested that there should be a text confirmation that the message has been received and will be responded to quickly. However, whether people actually bother to report minor crime at all was raised. Some don't have confidence in the police wanting to take action or having the resources to do so, if the crime is low level. The example of reporting a truck driver on a mobile was given.

Similarly, few knew that advice was available on a police website – but many guessed this to be the case if they really needed advice and searched for it. It seemed natural that the police would have comprehensive information on a good, central website and direct as many enquiries as possible to it. In our poll, email (55%) and website postings (53%) were by far the most popular channels preferred for crime prevention updates.

'I'd like to see who's looking after certain areas - knowing who is supposed to be in your area, and where to go. Community Support Officers used to get abused, but they have more responsibility now.'

'You need one portal for information.'

Naturally, those not on the web are concerned about being left out, even if they support moving as many services as possible online to save resources. They want adequate telephone services available for them to use instead. Others will always have this preference:

'If you have a problem, you would rather speak to a person than sending an email, not knowing if it has been interpreted properly. If you are talking to someone you know your point has got across.'

3.2.3 Using social media and SMS messages

The general feeling is that the use of new media, such as Facebook or Tweeting, helps to give the police a more modern, approachable image, mostly amongst the younger age group who use such applications widely. Sending texts is regarded in a similar way.

Interaction via some social media channels and applications might risk the police being seen as 'too chummy' or frivolous (You Tube?), because these are primarily leisure/personal applications. However, most people agree that the advantages of social media communication outweigh such concerns. The police should not expect people to 'have a relationship' with them as they do with their friends on Facebook, for example. Instead, these are additional channels to get information out to people quickly, or to send them to other websites for more detailed help. If applications like Facebook are used, frequent updates will be necessary to show that it is a serious venture.

Information conveying good advice is valued, and some clearly don't mind what platform is used if important messages reach the intended audience. In this respect, more links to the police information website should be promoted on a wide range of applications and other websites.

'I had an email from friend – it was absolutely brilliant. It was so interesting to read, and it was going through all sorts of scams and problems. For instance, I think it was in Manchester, some local area, girls getting into their car, there's someone behind them.'

'Another problem was where girls were taking a particular cut through and there was a guy who comes out the bushes – absolutely amazing – one of the superintendents from the Met police was giving advice on what to do. It was so interesting and it felt so personal – really informative – and I forwarded it to all my friends.'

In the same way, increased use of text services was thought valuable for young people especially, because the medium is used widely and because it's non-obtrusive when out with friends, etc.

3.3 Interaction and information wanted from the police

3.3.1 Presence in the local community / PCSOs

We had a wide variety of reports about current experiences, and how much the public sees of the police. Some reported good new initiatives to engage with the community already:

'Don't they have a contact point at the local supermarket? They have mobile units at Morrison's.'

It was felt that crime prevention efforts, ranging from school visits to PCSO interaction with local youth to public information campaigns, were all extremely valuable. People find it very hard to judge which services should be curtailed, but also back the idea that resources must be allocated where they are most needed.

'I'm not sure how often it is but I think the police go to our community centre and have like an open evening if you have any problems. I think it works quite well.'

We heard strong support for school and youth group visits by police, and widespread concern that such services have been cut. It was felt that early awareness of the police and their work made a valuable impression on young minds, especially when they were a captive audience.

In many communities people had a positive impression of the achievements of PCSOs, despite confusion still about what they are for. Those with experience of them had often seen positive results from their work with local youngsters and youth groups, sometimes with a huge impact on the volume of low-level crime. Others were more cynical, and had the impression that they were ineffective, scared or lacked the power to act. But in a tight budget environment, many agreed that if used well, they allowed the police to have a far better local presence.

'The key thing is that the police get to know people in an area.'

'At Christmas we had a newsletter from the police in the local area with an email – if there were any problems with them they promised to come back to us. You had the 3 offices and the PCSOs on there too. You can communicate with them by email or telephone. I was amazed.'

3.3.2 Other ideas and suggestions

Further suggestions for ways to improve communications included:

- Concentrate on online and e-messaging, as most who need to hear crime messages use these channels. Printed information is far less likely to be read. Some posters etc can raise awareness and drive people to websites for more detailed information.
- Don't rely upon just putting information on a website. People will only use it if prompted. The need is for links and email databases of local communities, businesses, Neighbourhood Watch schemes etc, with 'item of the week' type eye-catchers.
- A telephone line service to update local residents about issues in an area – a kind of audio Neighbourhood Watch – used in part of London and popular with older residents especially.
- Schemes to give communities email updates of problems / encourage neighbourhood updates via email, for speed and efficiency.
- Some applauded local leafleting by PCSOs:

'In our shop the PCSO produces leaflets – they are for handing out in shops with updates on what they have done.'

3.3.3 Annual updates on performance

The police performance leaflets sent out annually, typically with council tax information, are widely seen as wasteful. Awareness of them was modest. In our poll, 13% said they did read them and 35% glanced at them. Because the information came with a Council Tax mailing, some regarded it as bad news!

Many cannot understand why a message is not sent via other media instead to say that the annual report is now available if required, either via the website or by telephone request. Copies might also be made available on notice boards/hard copy at public libraries, health centres etc.

In terms of content, most would be happy to see a short report of headline figures published in local newspapers and other key media, with links to more detailed information if required. Text should be short and punchy, with a few graphs and diagrams. The core items of interest were:

- Crimes solved in different areas
- Budget spent / trends
- Complaints and praise from the public
- Comparisons with last year
- If achieved objectives

Some facts could be sent to community organisations, local churches or schools for example, to publish in their own newsletters.

'The workings of the machine don't bother me – I don't think about that, it doesn't affect me. As long as someone turns up on my doorstep if something goes wrong, and as long as I can access information I need, then fine – it's the end product for the user.'

4: Policing Priorities

4.1 Current experience of crime and perceived trends

4.1.1 Recent trends and experiences of crime and ASB

Based on our poll, two-thirds of residents consider that they live in safe, low-risk areas, and a further quarter say they are 'OK if you look out'. Only 1 in 8 people consider that they live in tougher areas. Only 1 in 20 give a high score for concern about crime in their area. This partly reflects the fact that by and large Hampshire is seen as safe, and partly the good work done by the police even in tough areas.

We naturally heard a very wide range of crime-related stories, and considerable variation in experiences by area:

'You see youngsters around, drinking, being intimidating. Regularly, the council plants young trees – and you find that in the next few days the trees are broken in half by the kids – it's so sad, sheer vandalism.'

'Loads of Nepalese around my part of Aldershot and they smoke a lot of heroin. And there are lots of little crack houses too. Crisp packets of cocaine. They do a lot of burglaries to fund their habit.'

'I hate the police in Portsmouth – I was pulled over. Apparently I was trying to run someone over, which is crazy. I gave him my licence. The policeman looked at my driving license and said: 'Oh it is a British license!' I thought how dare you. I was so shocked. After that I lost all respect for them. But the police in Horndean are really nice people.'

'On the estate there's more kids smoking pot; you can smell it everywhere at night – also near the leisure centre. They do wheelies and donuts in their cars in the car park – we can hear it. We get ram raids in New Milton- shops and cash points. There is vandalism on play areas. The council is down a couple of times a week fixing where it has been vandalised. There is always glass all over the place where the kids play – broken bottles and God knows what.'

'I see kids in the local park sitting there smoking dope – you take the dog for a walk – I have a big dog – they won't come near me but you don't know what they will do when they are high.'

'In Portsmouth – last couple of years – there've been a couple of deaths in nightclubs. That's just because of lack of bouncers' response.'

A major drain on policing is increasingly understood to be alcohol and drug related crime / ASB at weekends, especially in town centres. Some feel that those responsible need to pay far more for the policing and NHS services they tie up, especially when police resources are required to protect others from their violent behaviour or threats.

'We have underage drinking and a bad drug problem, but we are well policed. There are also lots of young fights between the two senior schools. The police are always there to stop it; it's getting better, definitely.'

'..it puts an awful lot of extra pressure on the police...I was told by a policeman that the best time for a burglar was on a Friday or Saturday night, because the police were all tied up in town centres.'

The main influence on a higher or lower incidence of crime and ASB is thought to be a local police presence on the streets. Various stories illustrated this:

- In rural communities, increased ASB linked to no police coverage; many stories of a better time when a local village bobby was a mainstay of village life and was respected
- Tough areas where the police are not especially liked or respected and people *'tend to sort out their own problems'*.
- The need for much increased police presence on the Isle of Wight during summer months, when the population surges considerably / higher crime potential.

'Its no coincidence that we seem to have come full circle, and are going back towards bobbies on the beat again, to gain respect...we lost that, and are trying to get it back'

There is considerable sympathy for the police because they often face increased pressure because of other aspects of social policy and law change. More liberal licensing laws were highlighted in particular. Many talked about wider social decline / lack of discipline, but also the widespread belief that we will experience more petty crime from those severely impacted by the economic downturn.

Some of the more memorable police initiatives reported were:

- The minimum age at which you can buy alcohol in a local area near Fareham raised to 21 between Friday-Sunday; this has had a clear impact on reducing underage drinking and ASB in recreation grounds, etc
- A positive image created by local police in response to a series of burglaries: fast community leafleting through doors and town centres about home security; door-to-door visits
- Better links between the police and local press, and improved coverage of crime related issues / advice in the media
- Positive reports of the way police and PCSOs are working with local youth and communities around Chandlers Ford, although their efforts are thought to 'move the problems around' or 'contain a problem' rather than fundamentally solving drugs and ASB issues.

There was also sympathy for the police in the face of what is considered too weak a criminal justice system, and a society where far too many people pushed their behaviour to the boundaries of the law. Some want the police to be able to hand out far firmer punishment 'to win back respect'.

'Youngsters get a small fine and that's it...there's just no deterrent.'

'No incentive to stop people doing it. Youth of today have lost respect for higher authority and they don't care.'

'Its like a revolving door – they are not dealt with harshly enough.'

4.1.2 Experience of PCSOs

We heard very positive feedback generated by the presentation from a young PCSO from Hedge End after lunch. His talk had clarified what PCSOs were for, and many were impressed by the impact that he was having locally. The implication was that far more could be done to communicate what PCSOs did and how they operated, and that more PCSOs like him should be deployed.

'it's such a win-win situation...good for his career...that chap needs to be in schools, so youths can aspire to that.'

'I think it's good what they do in the local community; you often see them in the local parks, walking in twos...making sure the local kids and teenagers are behaving themselves...and they seem to listen to what the PCSOs have to say.'

'Aldershot – quite a big army presence there – it seems to me that the streets are quite well policed – lots of community projects – they are tidying everything up. There are always 2 or 3 PCSOs they've cracked it quite well where I am.'

'I didn't know what to expect coming today, but I think there is a generally good view towards PCSOs'

But it was also reported that in tougher areas and amongst hardened youths there was a lack of respect for PCSOs, and perhaps they were being misused. The need is to use them in realistic areas / situations, and use more experienced/mature officers in tough environments.

'As far as PCSOs are concerned, they don't want to get involved – there was a carload of 4 of them saw a group – they stopped and had a better look, then decided they didn't want to get involved; they were intimidated and couldn't cope. There's so much more respect for the police than PCSOs.'

'In rough areas they wouldn't listen to someone like him, nice as he was. He's not scary, is he?'

'They cheer the kids up – they look at them and they think, 10 minutes of fun.'

4.1.3 Looking ahead

Our poll showed no net perceived increase or decrease in local crime over the last year or so. About 6 in 10 say things had not changed, whilst the remainder were split between those feeling things had got worse or better.

There is some evidence of communities working better together, but this varies considerably by area. A few people have Neighbourhood Watch schemes; many other areas just 'look out for each other' on a less formal basis.

'Also my area will get better. We have a mayor in Basingstoke who does a lot to bring people together - a lot for the residents.'

'Where I live there's community spirit - people who have lived there for years! People go to the local village schools - you really couldn't improve it.'

'I live in Stockbridge; it's affluent and lots of elderly people and I expect crime will be worse because of the rising cost of living - it will lead to petty crime. I think worse as youngsters feel disaffected and not part of the community. People target villages.'

4.2 Required policing priorities

4.2.1 Main priorities

The crimes that most see as a top priority are major incidences of assault against others such as murder, rape, terrorism, crime against children, serious organised crime and drugs. Targeting drugs was widely discussed because of its link to so much other crime to raise funds.

As previously implied, the main way to achieve crime reduction is thought to be having more officers and PCSOs in the community, on the streets and in schools. This is especially relevant for problem areas, where more vulnerable people fear to go out. People recognise that there has to be realistic allocation of resources to deal with crime and ASB in such areas.

There is a general perception that beat officers used to be more in evidence. PCSOs can help to fill the gap. Some feel that the scope of PSCOs could be extended and that renaming them as Community Officers would make their role clearer and boost their morale. Others think they should have more power, and at least carry handcuffs / be able to make arrests more readily.

'It's really a case of them getting their recruiting right...of getting people that the children are going to respect.'

'Do we need more PCSOs in relation to police? Or more Specials if that is a cheaper option.'

People broadly agree that the crime prevention agenda is central to policing, and not an area that can be sensibly cut if we are concerned about longer term security and improvement. It was felt to be very important to talk to the young and give them a sense of right and wrong, but that this area is far too big an issue for the police to shoulder alone. Most wanted to see more school visits from the police.

4.2.2 Dealing with anti-social behaviour

ASB is the most prevalent law and order topic talked about at local level in many otherwise relatively crime-free communities, and hence people want it addressed. In tough areas it is all the more central.

'I'm very keen that they are hot on anti-social behaviour.'

'The police should be confronting people – educating the community. There are 20 – 30 youths in our road; they need to go and solve it. When I was 17 there used to be an anti-social behaviour order on our area and under 17s had to be in by 9 and it worked.'

'Police need to talk to parents. Huge task for police – it's what the whole community can do; parenting groups; the general public needs to take responsibility.'

'Some of the police are as much social worker as I am – or a signpost to services. Through my son's school there are action groups for parents who are not coping well.'

Although some might debate what counts as ASB, there is broad agreement about what behaviour certainly qualifies, and should not be tolerated by anyone. Also people are concerned to 'nip a problem in the bud' before behaviour escalates to more serious crime.

The volume of ASB is regarded partly as a seasonal issue. *'Once the school summer holidays start, and the kids have not got enough to focus on...'*

4.2.3 Can the police drop or change any activities?

There is a general reluctance to see the police cut any tasks or 'downgrade' crimes, and many really struggle to see what the police can do less of. The activities discussed most for possible reduction were:

- Speed cameras / minor driving infringements; targeting motorists because it's easy. Some traffic offences to be tackled by traffic wardens. General sense that there is too much police attention on drivers. But NB widespread support for tough drink-drive enforcement.
- A general concern about the amount of hours given to some activities and to solve complex crimes (NB such as the case studies presented after lunch, which no doubt heightened such concerns), because of the cost of overtime payments. General surprise at the huge cost of some investigations.
- A general perception that the police can 'cut red tape', expressed in terms of quicker arrests/cautions; a simpler way to get a crime number for insurance purposes; the use of technology to avoid complex reporting procedures (prompted by our presentation), etc
- Certain areas of crime prevention, such as property marking or tackling some vandalism, to be left to Councils
- Targeting small time drug users, rather than suppliers
- Some work may be better handled by charities (unspecified)
- Education about crime prevention and behaviour starts with parents and schools, so this area could be a police saving.

Some would like to see a tighter policy on police equipment purchasing generally – and especially the car fleet. People question the cost/standard of some expensive cars used by the police, and also why nationwide fleet purchasing cannot be used.

'There must be some economies of scale I'm sure, and they certainly don't need to have top of the range BMWs.'

4.2.4 Local area and wider policing needs

Most people found it very difficult to comment about the question of policing resource balance between local and wider needs, or what the police are achieving in their area relative to others. The media certainly highlights bigger national crime stories more, so they have higher profile. However, in tough areas especially, problems are felt very locally. People just have a view on whether policing locally is adequate. The main concern was to cut waste and inappropriate activities, no matter at what level it occurred.

Some saw the increased use of PCSOs as a good way to bolster local area confidence, and respect by the next generation of youngsters.

Many said that although they lived in generally safe communities, they were not at all supportive of a police presence being withdrawn altogether from any area:

'It's about getting the ratios right, and putting the resources where they need to be; have a PCSO available to tour occasionally.'

'Safe areas will only remain safe if you have some presence...the criminals are transient as well.'

4.3 Tackling crime and ASB together

4.3.1 Communities working together more

It is widely recognised that the closer communities are and the more people know and talk to one another, the better. A lot of emphasis is placed on word-of-mouth contact between neighbours. At the same time, wider social change is seen to be causing a lessening of community ties and cohesion. Some are upbeat about communities pulling together, and would like to see more volunteering.

'Also the community helps - local people highlight vandalism and they say - look, you have to pay for the upkeep through your taxes! And that message gets through, as well as the police presence.'

'I know my neighbours watch houses when we are away...when you have been burgled you want others to watch out.'

'They should do a big recruitment drive for Specials. It should be made easier to volunteer.'

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are still used and valued by some people, but many others don't know the term, or think they are not as widely promoted. There seems to be a concern that nothing has replaced the network/sharing of responsibility feeling they promoted. People also asked for more opportunities to meet with or talk to the police – as suggested in the contact points and surgeries ideas above.

'Neighbourhood Watch is not promoted as much as it used to be...how do you find out about it?'

'Maybe we could set up meetings according to what road you're on – not big meetings, put something together – everyone's thoughts on what they think is important.'

'Just being safer about what you do – a lot of criminals are opportunists – it's all about getting together, share information and agree what we should be doing.'

'Let's close all our doors, take precautions – and hopefully opportunists won't come in this area?'

4.3.2 Education about crime prevention and ASB

It was accepted that many different ASB interpretations existed, but that kids in general needed a wider appreciation of the impact of their actions on others, and especially on older and more vulnerable people. Parents, schools, youth groups and others all needed to help with the education process.

There is a widespread acceptance that ASB and vandalism is often the result of boredom, unemployment and lack of amenities. Hence fixing the problem is highly complex. It sometimes just needs a special person bringing renewed energy to a community, to get kids off the street and into more beneficial activities. That might be a teacher, a youth worker, a PCSO:

'Everyone has a job to do something...if everyone did a little more...we have got to work together to get better communities. Schools have a big role...they have to invite the community in.'

'There are best practices that you hear about in the media all the time...there is always a youth worker or equivalent who has got off their backside to create a new place where kids can go, to get off the streets.'

4.3.3 Ideas and suggestions for working better together - summary

Perhaps not surprisingly, many people put the emphasis on the police to be more proactive, and to supply them with leadership and direction. The main themes arising during the day in this regard were:

- The need for visibility, whether police officers or PCSOs, and communication. We should have known local community police officers/PCSOs, who publish their photos and contact details
- Make communities aware of the channels for communication, such as websites and non-urgent report lines. Encourage more responsible reporting of ASB
- Encourage community connections, via Neighbourhood Watch or similar local level schemes
- Go out more to meet local youth groups, especially schools and clubs; connect with younger adults

Some of the more interesting other ideas heard were:

- Give the police the ability to raise funds by selling stolen goods or proceeds not returned to owners
- Parents forced to pay for children's ASB/vandalism damage. This theme of getting tougher was related by a wide range of people
- Give people more chances to be involved in local groups *'...like 'the Angels' in the USA'*. Various local self-help patrol groups are also known about in the UK.
- *'The Big Society; Yes it's true – we do need it.'*
- More consistent information by area about crimes / what to look out for
- Improved links with and visits to schools
- Include visits to penal institutions with school visits, so kids understand what it's like / are more fearful of getting in to trouble
- Enlist well-known local figures/sports people, to act as ambassadors / role models

4.3.4 How are local police doing overall?

Those with little experience can find it difficult to rate police performance, and form their views primarily from the media. More realistically they can say if they think local crime is increasing or decreasing.

Our poll showed that 40% gave good or excellent scores for local police performance, whilst just over half gave average scores. Only 1 in 20 gave poorer ratings. The average performance score was 6.8 out of 10. This does underline the generally high regard in which the police are held – as mirrored in many other Hampshire and UK-wide surveys.

There was plenty of support voiced for the police, as indicated throughout this report. On balance most feel the police do a good job with current resourcing.

'For the resources they've got, the actual guys that are out and about, they don't do a bad job – the higher up guys, I don't know.'

'I work in the health service and I thought what great value the police force is compared to the health service! The police have a difficult time working within the law and the dictates from the Government.'

'I'm happier than year ago in Portsmouth; if things slack off again it could all come back. The police focused on burglaries in the road behind; they had huge umph on police presence and it did work. Then we had another spate of work vans being broken into. It was a long time before anything happened.'

Looking at the priorities listed and talked about, most people seem to feel that the police handle serious crime as well as they can, with appropriate resources used. It is the great volume of lower level crime and ASB experienced locally that therefore tops most policing priority lists. The main concerns listed were:

- Being tougher on alcohol and drug abuse
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour in general
- Being more visible and increasing engagement with troubled areas / certain target groups
- Encouraging more community interaction/help
- Harnessing technology to do a better job, more quickly and better
- Reducing break-ins and burglary
- Reducing car crime and theft

Appendix A – Consultation Day agenda

“Valuing Our Police”

Date: 22nd January 2011

Location: Hampshire Constabulary, Southern Support & Training HQ, Hamble Lane, Southampton, SO31 4TS

Timing: 09:30 – 15:30 (Approximate running times)

Morning session – The Future Shape of Hampshire Constabulary

09:30 – 10:00 Arrival and Coffee

10:00 – 10:15 Welcome
Cllr Jacqui Rayment: Chair of Hampshire Police Authority
Mr Alex Marshall: Chief Constable Hampshire Constabulary

10:15 – 10:25 Policing Budget
Carolyn Williamson Police Authority Treasurer

10:25 – 10:40 Hampshire Constabulary Transformational Change Programme: Supt Hardcastle

10:40 – 10:55 Hampshire Constabulary Public Interface Change: Supt Earle

10:55 – 12:10 Focus Group Session 1: Communicating with your Constabulary
(Refreshments will be available)

12:10 – 12:55 Lunch

Afternoon Session – Public Priorities:

12:55 – 13:00 Welcome Back: Cllr Peter Mason

13:00 – 13:20 Safer Neighbourhoods: PCSO Danielle Joyce

13:20 - 13:40 Serious Organised Crime: T/D/Supt Richard Pearson

13:40 – 14:50 Focus Group Session 2 The Publics Policing Priorities?
(Refreshments will be available)

14:50 – 15:30 Round up of the day

15:30 Close

Appendix B – The discussion guides

MORNING: HOW AND WHERE WE CONTACT THE POLICE, EXPECT TO DO SO, AND WHAT COMMUNICATIONS WE EXPECT.

A. Introduction and warm up

1. Mobiles on silent please
2. We need to move quite quickly: we only have about an hour per discussion group and I want to cover quite a few topics. If you need to pop out to the loo, of course do so but we don't have time to stop
3. Group process: all views should be heard please – I'll ensure that; one at a time please – I'm going to type summaries and comments as we go, and we want to record and sometimes film.
4. Incentives at the END of this afternoon. We will ask you to sign for them and that you are happy to be recorded. Some edited highlights may go on the Hants Police Authority website, but no names are shown or needed.
5. Introductions: first name and BADGE number please; your home town or area? Your main career or pastime, in one phrase.

Let's get started; remember, the background to today is the serious cut in police funding, and the need to deliver a more cost effective service.

B. How and where you contact the police.

1. Who has spoken to the police in the last year? Who's been in a police station at all?
2. Are the police visible and accessible enough?
3. Where do you expect to find police contact points – whether called police stations or some other name? PROBE: busy places? Places where crime is committed? Other locations?
4. Would you be prepared to see some police counters located in alternative places to police stations, if it meant having more police officers on the beat?
5. When should Police station counters or offices be open to the public? PROBE: set hours per day? e.g. 10am-noon, plus 6pm-10pm – more like a doctors surgery? Or appointment system?
6. Is it realistic to pay for counter staffing 24/7, and building running costs – remember, it's your taxes that pay for these
7. So which of these locations make most sense, in terms of new police contact points? Why are each liked or rejected? Is it down to where most people are – like shopping centres – or

C. Technology / how you contact the police and they contact you

1. Show of hands: who regularly uses: the web? Email? Texts? Facebook? (get a sense; the s/c sheet will capture)
2. For safety and crime prevention information, or to report a minor crime, is it reasonable to ask most people to use a telephone messaging system when you would be guaranteed a response within, say, 24 hours?
3. And for the same types of information and minor crime reporting, how about using the Hampshire Constabulary website, rather than telephone? Like using an email helpline for various other services?

D. Information from the police to you, about local crime and crime prevention

1. Where do you or would you go now, to get crime updates or crime prevention advice?
2. Where would you turn if you wanted information? What do you expect?
3. What do you think of the 'annual update' with your council tax mailing? SHOW EXAMPLE LEAFLET Read or looked at?
4. As communication costs money, what other ways would be good to spread information? What about social media websites like Facebook?
5. What information and services do you expect your local police website to have on it? Ever used?
6. Does website information about crime, searchable to a very local area, sound like a useful facility? Ever used? (NB Hants Constabulary already has such a database; does anybody know about it or used it? Its called CADDIE)
7. What information should the police have to report about their performance? How should they report it, if as many people as possible are to have access to it? How would such information be made meaningful and relevant?

AFTERNOON – POLICING PRIORITIES

A. Introduction and warm up

1. Check mobiles on silent please
2. Any final morning self completion sheets? Check all in.
3. Afternoon topic in more detail: what crime challenges face your local communities and what policing priorities should be. NB Remember, the police face cuts to funding, so you and they need to be realistic about what can be done!
4. Re-introduce ourselves: first name plus: what's the MAIN crime or public order threat facing your area, in no more than one sentence?

B. Crime in your area and trends

1. What sort of areas do you live in? (any tough / higher crime)
2. Are things getting worse with regard to crime and public order, in any of your areas?
3. What's causing a decline (where apparent)? Is it more crime, or worse policing?
4. For those of you who have concerns about crime in your local area, what are the problems? What's impact on local life? How different is this neighbourhood to others nearby, do you think?
5. How are these problems being tackled? Are the police doing enough?
6. Do you expect your neighbourhood to be a better place to live in 5 years time? Why? Can the police help?

C. Desired policing priorities

1. What crimes do you think the police should prioritise? Where should the emphasis be in terms of policing priorities?
2. And what needs to be dropped, or left to other agencies?
3. Should the police in fact stop patrolling 'safer' areas altogether?
4. Is anti-social behaviour a priority issue in your area? What behaviour mostly defines it?
5. Is the priority balance right between local policing and wider, county wide issues like major crime events?
6. Are the police doing a good or poor job for you, all things considered? What are their main recent successes and failures?

D. Working with the police to tackle crime and anti social behaviour

1. Can residents do more to ensure a safer community? What?
2. Any ideas for residents and the police to work together better. Issues?

3. To what extent can PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers) and Special (voluntary) Constables have a bigger role?
4. What other groups need to play a bigger part, in promoting a safer community? (PROBE: ethnic or religious groups in the community; youth groups; schools and colleges?)
5. Do the police have the balance right between crime prevention & education on the one hand, and solving crime once committed on the other?
6. What one thing would you change to policing in Hampshire, if you were Chief Constable?

Thanks for your input today. Close

Appendix C – Self completion quick polls - results

A. SELF COMPLETION SHEET: POLICE CONTACT

Overall scores from the quick poll. Base answering = 101

1. How would you contact the police to report something small being stolen, like an item of shopping in a nearby town?
 - a) Visit station 15% b) telephone 75% c) send email 27% d) send text 9% e) write letter 1%
2. How did you last make contact with the police, for any reason at all?
 - a) Visited police station 23% b) telephone 60% c) sent email 2% d) sent text 0% e) wrote letter 0% f) spoke in street or home/work 14% g) can't remember/too long ago 4% h) never had police contact 4%
3. How would you prefer the police to contact you with crime prevention updates?
 - a) By telephone 12% b) send email 55% c) send text 6% d) write letter 10% e) website posting 53% f) Facebook page posting 10%
4. When did you last visit a police station?
 - a) within the last 6 months 9% b) 6-12 months ago 11% c) 1 to 2 years ago 14% d) 2 to 3 years ago 14% e) 4 to 5 years ago 6% f) over 5 years ago 18% g) never 6% h) can't remember-too long ago 24%
5. Which of these would make good manned police locations with confidential areas (circle as many or few as you wish):

Leisure centres 30%; shopping centres 78%; libraries 37%; council buildings 39%; community centre 51%; fire station 19%
6. Which of these describes you best, thinking of your local community police officers or PCSOs:
 - a) I know them by name or by sight 25% b) I don't know them but would be able to locate them 21% c) I don't know how to locate them 42% d) I didn't know we had police responsible for our community 13%
7. Which of these do you use on a regular basis?
 - a) The internet 85% b) email 78% c) text messaging 55% d) Facebook 35%
8. Do you read the police update leaflet that comes with your annual Council Tax update?
 - a) Yes in detail 13% b) yes but only glance through 35% c) No 53%

B. SELF COMPLETION SHEET: POLICING PRIORITIES

1. Which phrase best describes what you knew about police budget cuts, before today?

I know what the scale of the budget reduction required is 24% b) I know the police need to make savings, but that's all 61% c) I didn't know the police had to make savings 16%

2. How would you describe the area you live in, with regard to the threat of crime?

Safe & low risk 66% b) OK if you look out 24% c) tough in parts or at night 10% d) high crime 2%

3. How concerned are you about the level of crime in your area, on this 1 to 10 scale? Please circle one number:

NO CONCERN AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 CONSTANT CONCERN & WORRY

Scored 1-3 = 52%; scored 4-7 = 42%; scored 8-10 = 6%. Average score was 3.8

4. Over the last 12 months has crime in the area where you live...?

Increased a lot 4% b) increased a little 15% c) not changed 61% d) decreased a little 11% e) decreased a lot 7%

5. How often have you contacted or spoken to the police for any reason at all, in the last 12 months: None 45%; once 29%; twice 12%; 3 times 10%; 4 times 1%; 5+ times 4%

6. Which of these words describe how you feel about the police in your area:

Only in cars 23%; friendly 28%; invisible 26%; hostile 1%; really positive 20%; not interested 4%; unsure / don't know 18%

7. How could the local police and residents work better together to tackle crime in your area, in your own words: see database

8. What are the top 3 policing priorities facing the area you live in? – see database

9. What rating would you give your local police, in terms of how well they do their job?

VERY POOR INDEED 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 EXCELLENT

Scored 1-3 = 5%; scored 4-7 = 54%; scored 8-10 = 40%. Average score was 6.8