

### Consultation Strategy 2013

1. This report addresses issues discussed at the last meeting of the Partnership, on 25 September, and proposes a revised way forward.
2. The fundamental issue at stake in considering our approach is about how our priorities derive their legitimacy. One view, sometimes favoured by the Home Office, or at least some part of it, is that it is for the partner agencies to determine priorities, based on a technical analysis of trends in crime and socio-economic issues more generally.
3. However, the approach this Partnership has followed, with considerable success, is to base our priorities directly on the results of consultation with local people. This was the approach commended in the original Home Office guidance on the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, and has served us well. We have outperformed the national, regional and force-wide crime reductions in recent years and we have steadily increased the numbers of local people who have participated in decision-making, with the result that it is absolutely clear where our priorities come from, and that we have been able to withstand challenges based on short-term priorities from Whitehall. The question about what should not be priorities also helps to communicate the resource pressures with which all of the partner agencies are contending.
4. A well-managed consultation programme will also bring significant benefits above and beyond the legitimacy of the resulting Plan, including at least the following:-
  - (a) it will **educate** and **inform** our citizens about the realities of crime and disorder in our Borough, and serve as an antidote to sensationalist media coverage, much of which is based on problems which are prevalent in London and other large cities but not in Stockton (e.g. gun and knife crime)
  - (b) it will **reassure** - our last major consultation programme, in 2010, resulted in 38% of respondents replying that they felt more safe as a result of the Consultation material, compared to only 4% saying that they felt less safe.
  - (c) it will enhance the **reputation** of the partner agencies and build **confidence**: most research shows that people like to be consulted, provided that their views are really taken into account, and we have a good story to tell here, in terms of how we have responded to five previous cycles of consultation, maintained reduced levels of crime and, not least, contributed to the national reduction in misuse of class A drugs.
  - (d) It will contribute to the continuing process of strengthening **local democracy**, with the participative form complementing the representative form, and to counteracting the general national trend of cynicism and discouragement from democratic mechanisms.
5. Conversely, if we were to depart from our tradition of consultation, we would need to be able to explain why we were doing this. The most obvious potential explanation would be in terms of our ability to afford it.
6. The election of the PCC will change the picture, but it is unlikely to change it in time for summer 2013. The PCC will have major short-term priorities in relation to a Police and Crime Plan, (which should take account, at least in Stockton's case, of our 2010 consultation as representing the most powerful consultation programme available), preparing a Budget and

setting the precept, appointment of a Chief Constable, possible appointment of a Deputy Commissioner etc.

7. The current Cleveland Police Authority system of sampling the views of 600 people per year in Stockton by means of a telephone survey, is valuable but is of a different level of magnitude from our 5,000 plus responses. Our responses are sufficiently numerous to be valid at Ward level, as well as to yield valuable information about the views of specific groups within the population (e.g. by age range, gender, ethnicity and disability, and various permutations of these characteristics).
8. It is acknowledged that by the time of the next following consultation cycle, in 2016, the PCC may have been able to prepare for and resource a comprehensive consultation programme across Cleveland, so it may be the case that our sixth cycle of consultation will also be the last one in its current form.
9. There was some suggestion in the previous discussion that our consultation techniques have not changed to take account of new technologies. This is not the case – in 2010, 3% of responses were received via digital means, but it remains the case that many people, especially in older age groups (where fear of crime is most pronounced) and in the most deprived Wards (where crime is highest) would be effectively disenfranchised by any Programme based solely on digital methods. In 2010 the Police Bluetooth messaging service was also used to encourage responses.
10. Reference was also made to the cost of the pre-paid postal reply option. Using this option, we pay only for the responses which are sent via the post. In 2010, 17% of the total responses were postal, at a cost of about £409. The cost of second class post has increased from 36p to 50p in the intervening period (a cost increase of about £159 for the same volume), but it seems likely that this cost increase will be at least partly offset by an increased number of responses via digital channels.
11. In order to alleviate some of the concerns expressed at the last meeting, it is also proposed to carry out a secondary consultation exercise in 2013, i.e. consultation about the consultation, using the Council's Viewpoint Panel (which will also be one of the channels for the primary consultation programme), and asking a series of questions including:
  - (a) did you receive the consultation information?
  - (b) if so, did you respond?
  - (c) if not, why not? (probably supported by a range of options including
    - not interested in crime and disorder issues
    - didn't have the time
    - didn't think my views would be taken in account)
12. A further question raised at the last meeting was about what we have learned from previous consultation programmes which we didn't already know. The consultation programmes don't tell us any new facts about levels of crime and our established monitoring systems show us the short term and longer term trends e.g. the collapse in levels of burglary and vehicle crime and the apparent growth in criminal damage (now reducing again) and shoplifting, which may well be associated with increased reporting. However, the consultation programmes do tell us whether or not the public is keeping up with the trends, and comparison between the rankings and the real levels over the years reveals a highly rational relationship, which should in turn give us increased confidence in the validity of our Plans.
13. At the last meeting there was significant concern about the levels of cost to partners. This view was discussed at the Scanning & Challenge Group on 3 October, when it was confirmed that

DTV Probation Trust would be able to make a contribution of £1,500 and Cleveland Police a contribution of £1,000. Tristar Homes has also agreed a contribution of £3,000.

14. Furthermore, it is proposed that the reserve of £8,600 previously earmarked to support the cost of any Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) in Stockton should be re-invested in the consultation programme. There is a degree of risk associated with this proposal, but the risk is very slight. In the last seven years there has only been one domestic homicide in Stockton. Mike Batty and Steven Hume are currently undertaking a DHR on behalf of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership (SHP), in accordance with a reciprocal assistance agreement, under which SHP personnel will undertake, with no charge, a DHR for our Partnership if and when it is required. The risk, therefore, would rise if we were to require two simultaneous DHRs and SHP colleagues were to balk, at the prospect of resourcing more than one.
15. Taking account of these considerations, a revised approach to funding the estimated cost of the consultation programme of £30k would be as follows:-

	£
Use of SSP reserves (inc DHR reserve)	13,000
Specific contributions to consultation programme:	
DTV Trust	£1,500
Police	£1,000
SBC	£4,500
Fire Brigade	£1,250
PCC	£1,250
Health (PCT (and/or CCG))	£1,500
DAAT	£3,000
Tristar Homes	<u>£3,000</u>
	<u>£17,000</u>
	<u>30,000</u>

NB some partners may prefer to source all or part of their contributions from the 2012/13 year, in preference to 2013/14.

16. It is RECOMMENDED that the Partnership
- i) agrees to the proposed approach to Consultation;
  - ii) agrees the funding arrangements detailed at paragraph 15 above; and
  - iii) agrees the following targets
    - a) ensure we receive responses of at least 1% per ward, in particular from wards with higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour and above average levels of fear of crime. In 2010 all wards achieved at least a 1% response rate.
    - b) to increase responses from the BME population to above 5% of the population. In 2010 we achieved 4.7%.
    - c) to maintain responses from the 16 – 34 age group (sometimes defined as 'hard to reach') at 19%, the response rate in 2010 was 18.7%.