



SURREY
POLICE
AUTHORITY

Community Engagement Strategy 2008-2011

1. Introduction

Police Authorities have responsibilities to be accountable to local people. These responsibilities include consulting with local people about their policing priorities, explaining to local people how decisions are made and how the budget is set, and ensuring that they have a good understanding of local communities and neighbourhoods so that they are aware of levels of satisfaction and levels of confidence in the local police service.

In the past, Surrey Police Authority has been successful in engaging with and consulting the public in a number of different ways. Last year's programme of activities, which included the You Pay – You Say roadshows, a postal survey, a newspaper survey and a Youth conference succeeded in consulting with over 1,500 members of the Surrey public and engaging with many more.

Demographics

Surrey is constituted of 9 boroughs and 2 districts. In the areas in the North of the county and closest to London, communities are predominantly urban. Moving further out from the capital, the county becomes more rural in nature. Surrey is the most wooded county in England, and 70% of Surrey's land lies in the greenbelt

Surrey's Population was 1,085,200 when last measured in mid 2006. This is projected to reach 1,103,800 by 2011. The population is an ageing one, with the numbers of people aged 60-74 increasing by over 33%, the 74-85 age group increasing by 39% and the 85+ group increasing by more than 96%.

Gender – Male – 48.7%, Female 51.3%

Major ethnic groups – 95% White, 2.2% South Asian

Religious beliefs – Christian – 789,609, No Religious Beliefs – 161,074, Muslim – 14,190, Hindu 7,458, Buddhist – 3,362, Jewish - 3,229, other – 3,281

Disability – People with limiting long-term illness – 143,171, People claiming permanent disability benefits - 18661

(Source – Surrey County Council, ONS)

Following the restructuring of Surrey Police Authority's consultation & engagement team, the kinds of engagement seen in the last few years have been reviewed. Officers have considered several factors – value for money, duplication of work, the statistical significance of consultation data and the long-term benefits to the Authority.

During this review, some areas for improvement were identified:

- 1) **The policing priorities consultation data delivered through the programme of engagement was not statistically significant. In addition, it asked questions already being asked on a regular basis to a far bigger audience and in a statistically significant way through Surrey Police's ongoing public confidence surveys. We considered that this was grounds for a rethink of our approach.**
- 2) **Our previous engagement and consultation activities have been conducted on a 'hit and run' basis – each year, a number of different activities have been undertaken. These have achieved the desired outcomes for the Authority, but for that year only and with no linkage between each year's activities. As a result, each year, consultation activity has had to start from scratch, and half of each year has been lost to planning and preparation activities.**
- 3) **In terms of the cash investment, whilst our communication & engagement budget served its purpose each year and achieved the required outcomes of consultation and engagement, little of that money was invested with a view to developing our capacity to consult and engage effectively over the long-term.**

Following this review, the new team recommends a new approach to the planning and delivery of this important element of the Authority's work, which is detailed in this document.

We aim to consult with as wide an audience as possible in a cost-effective and efficient way. By removing barriers to engagement, we hope to make our work accessible to everyone who lives and works in Surrey

2. Aims & Themes

Aims

It is important to keep in mind that this is a three year strategy. We intend to make full use of the three years on one, consistent thread of activity.

We will:

- **Consult & Engage with the public** – This is our core aim.
- **Be seen to consult & engage by media & public** – It is important that we build up the public profile of the Authority as a means by which the public can engage with and influence how they are policed. A general feeling of not having the chance to consult could be corrosive to public confidence and satisfaction.
- **Avoid duplicating force satisfaction & confidence surveys** – The force puts a lot of resources into researching these areas. We could not hope to match a similar scale of research, nor is there any reason to. By working in partnership with the Force, we can achieve a great deal more.
- **Provide opportunities for all to take part** – There is significant work to be done in engaging usually excluded communities. Our consultation strategy will work to promote inclusion and diversity.
- **Fit into people's lives** – We must understand and adapt to the key prohibitive factors preventing engagement and consultation. We cannot expect people to go out of their way for us. Instead, we must go out of our way to make it easier for people to have their say.
- **Show how consultation makes a difference** – why consult if the results are not used? We must show clearly how peoples' views are heard and acted upon by the Authority through feeding back our results to those who participate.
- **Develop a long-term consultation & engagement capacity** – the investment in consultation should bring lasting benefits for the Authority

Consultation Themes

We have been careful to choose themes that are within our sphere of influence, and to avoid complicated messages.

There are four key themes that should be at the heart of our work:

- **Policing priorities** – what do people expect from the force, county-wide and in their areas? The Force covers many of the biggest topics in this regard, which gives us an opportunity to consult on new areas of policing priorities.
- **Council tax** – understanding the attitudes to council tax and the tradeoffs that Surrey people are willing to make for excellent policing is very important when making our

policing plans. We want to know more about how people view the policing precept and the factors they feel should decide the appropriate level.

- **Awareness of Surrey Police Authority and what it does** – Do the people of Surrey know about the Authority and what it does for them? Do they know how they can interact with the Authority? This is an important question and will feed into our communications strategy and future consultation work.
- **Police Authorities – the right way to oversee and consult?** - There is growing interest in the future governance of policing in the UK, and it is expected that the Government may well put forward suggestions for alternative methods of oversight.
- **Other Key Issues** – the Citizens’ Panel model is responsive, and can be consulted quickly on important contemporary issues.

3. Methodology

With our methods, we aim to achieve useful consultation results, better engagement with the public and the development of a sustainable long-term consultation capacity for the authority.

Force Surveys – Working in Partnership

The Force’s Consultation & Survey Unit is a dedicated team of survey professionals, and their work has been graded as Excellent by auditors. Their Neighbourhood Policing and PPAF Customer Satisfaction surveys are running year-round, very effectively determining basic policing priorities for people across the county.

We suggest that we use this data to fulfil our requirement to consult on policing priorities, rather than spend money duplicating this work to lesser degrees of reach and quality. This will mean that we can dedicate the financial and personnel resources of the Authority to look into new areas.

In addition, it is proposed that we add one or two benchmarking questions about the work of the Authority to allow us to benchmark levels of awareness about our work across the county.

Looking more broadly, we will work with the Force to ensure that we are not overlapping unnecessarily in any area of consultative work.

Citizens’ Panels

Citizens’ panels involve a representative sample of the local population, who have agreed to take part in consultation activity.

Panel members are asked to complete surveys on a regular basis. The whole panel can be asked to fill in the survey, or target particular groups – such as older people or minority ethnic groups.

Generally, citizens’ panels can achieve high response rates and are cost effective. They can also measure whether people’s views are changing over time.

Developing a substantial Citizens’ Panel for Surrey Police Authority is the centrepiece of our three year plan. The arguments for doing so are persuasive:

It is cost effective.

To give context to the cost of Citizens’ Panels, previous consultation & engagement activities have cost the following:

2007 Newspaper Survey – 990 responses - £12,171
2007 Youth Conference – 99 attendees - £11,265
2007 You Pay – You Say (inc. advertising spend) – 223 consultations completed - £23,602
2006 Annual Conference – 108 attendees - £21,000 approx

We believe that our Citizens' Panel can be established and run within similar budgetary boundaries without need for additional funding.

In preparing this strategy, we invited three major polling companies to submit quotes to us for the construction and running of a Citizens' Panel. Quotes varied significantly, depending on the scale of work and the profile of the company. One was particularly competitive in quoting for a year's worth of work recruiting and surveying a panel of up to 20,000 citizens. This company has recently undertaken a major set of surveys in Oxfordshire, a county largely comparable to Surrey. Of 2,834 surveys sent out, 1,748 were returned, a success rate of 62%. In similar surveys conducted in Croydon, the response rates were in the range of 65-75%. Their view is that this rate would be achievable in Surrey.

Despite the favourable comparisons of cost/numbers of people consulted, what makes the Citizens Panel idea most appealing is the long-term aspect. Once recruited and with proper maintenance, the panel will form our core consultation audience indefinitely. We will not have to incur the costs which come with engaging with the public from scratch. Moreover, we can grow our base of citizens to consult each year with targeted recruitment efforts, along with making recruitment opportunities available all year round via the website and our other communications offerings.

The Citizens' Panel process

Year 1 – Outlay focused on panel recruitment, back-office systems for data collection & analysis.
Years 2 & 3 – After maintenance costs, the budget can focus on consulting the panel via regular surveys. Additional small-scale work will take place on an ongoing basis to bring more panellists.

By adopting the Citizens Panel, our consultation and engagement budget will be adding value year-on-year to the Authority and its capacity to meet this important requirement. We have consulted with Surrey County Council and established that no other county-wide Citizens' Panel is in operation. Therefore we are not unnecessarily duplicating existing work at a cost to the Authority.

It is flexible

A major barrier to engagement and consultation is the level of inconvenience that it imposes on people. We cannot assume that people are willing to make sacrifices of time and money to attend a public meeting or an SPA event. Instead, we must ensure that our work can fit into peoples' lives, demanding as little from the individual as possible. There should be no reason for people to find they are unable to participate in our consultations.

As a virtual panel, our citizens' panel would allow participants to have their say at a convenient time and without having to step out of their comfort zone and spend time and money to attend meetings. Participants would be surveyed up to 4 times per year, via email or post. These surveys can be completed whenever time permits.

It encourages a perception of proactive engagement

By adopting a citizens' panel, we can demonstrate, first to our panellists, that we are an open channel of communication, and that we actively encourage public participation. The SPA Citizens Panel gives us a permanent consultative activity to publicise in all of our communications work (see the SPA Communications Strategy) and gives people an opportunity to join in and feel involved.

Consulting with young people

We are committed to giving younger people the opportunity to have their say on how they are policed. Running parallel to the Citizens' Panel, we aim to help engage and consult with Surrey's young people on an ongoing basis.

In the first instance, we propose a programme of small-scale qualitative research with young people. This could take the form of discussion meetings or focus groups to give two examples. Following on from this, there is scope for extending the scope of our activities if demand and resources permit. A separate Young People's Panel might be a long-term target to achieve, although we must recognise that this would be demanding in recruitment terms, given the high churn of panellists as young people get older and pass out of the appropriate age range.

We will liaise closely with the Force on this workstream, as they have well-developed outreach programmes for young people, and an obviously high level of recognition, beyond that of SPA at the current time.

Recruiting for a Citizens' Panel

Critical to the success of a panel is bringing in a substantial number of participants, developing a consultation group that reflects the demographics of Surrey. In this three year strategy, we believe it is realistic (given our resource constraints) to develop and maintain a panel constituting between 3,000 – 4,000 Surrey residents. Members can play an important role in building awareness and recruiting for the panel as they go about their work and attend meetings widely across Surrey.

There are a range of options for achieving this:

- Events – We considered hosting Police Authority events for the task, but the cost is a prohibitive factor. Instead, if we choose to recruit via events, it is proposed that we participate in pre-arranged events like village fetes, something which substantially reduces our costs and consequently enables participation in more events.
- Mailshots – Identify a core audience of people and send out a postal invitation. Research suggests mail as the most cost-effective recruitment option.
- Website – Inviting visitors to our website to complete an electronic panel membership form.
- Press work – sending out a press release to announce the creation of the panel and inviting readers/listeners/viewers to take part.
- Advertising – both free and paid-for adverts
- Partnership work with other public bodies

We will maintain a flexible approach to recruitment to ensure that we have resources available to capitalise on opportunity and readjust processes to ensure we have a good demographic mix.

Surveying with a Citizens' Panel

We would aim to send 3 or 4 major surveys by email or post to our panel each year, to canvass opinion on a range of subjects.

Considerations that might inform our choices of question:

- Results of previous consultations
- Upcoming SPA priorities
- Major national media interest in a particular policing issue

Panellists would fill in the questionnaires and return them to us for analysis. The results will then be reported to SPA for consideration in determining policing priorities.

Each survey would cost around £5k, to include the costs of producing the questionnaire, mailing them out and return postage.

Focus Groups

Focus groups can offer us an important way in to communities and groups on a more issue or community specific way. They have been a popular method of consultation for many police authorities, and have been discussed previously by SPA as a potentially useful method of engagement and consultation. We now intend to move this planning a step forward and begin a series of focus groups, aimed particularly at harder to reach groups, as a means of facilitating open and frank debate through small-scale discussions.

Communities identified for consultation and engagement through focus groups:

- **LGBT** – Gay Surrey is the leading organisation in the county for the LGBT community. They will be the ideal first contact for arranging a focus group.
- **BME** – IAG will be contacted for assistance in developing this group
- **Faith based communities** – possible first contacts would be faith leaders, such as Priests, Imams & Rabbis.
- **Disability groups** – through community groups or panel members

We would anticipate hosting focus groups of around 8-12 individuals, with a moderator from SPA. It may well be advantageous for SPA staff to receive training in focus group moderation to ensure best results. SPA's new meeting room would be suitable for hosting such groups.

It is important to note that Focus groups would play an important part in helping us meet our legal requirements to consult with all groups, and will help give us wider perspectives on the attitudes of the people of Surrey.

CLG Community Leadership Funding

We have the opportunity to bid for funding for a programme of engagement work designed to create leaders in the fight against violent extremism. The summary is as follows:

This grant fund is intended to support work that will build the capacity of individuals, organisations and communities to take the lead on tackling violent extremist influences.

The funding will be focused on the following areas:

- *Capacity of organisations and communities*
- *Supporting Muslim young people*
- *Supporting Muslim women*
- *Capacity of Muslim faith leaders*
- *Local forums against extremism and Islamophobia*

Funding for the first four strands of work will be limited to projects which have national reach/significance. Funding for the fifth strand of work will go to projects which are delivered

locally.

This fund will complement the much larger scale work being taken forward by many local authorities.

This funding, should we succeed in our application for it, could feed into our Focus Groups, or be steered by the findings of them. The deadline for second stream applications is 30th September, and the Authority intends to put in a strong bid. In the period leading up to this, officers will be establishing a programme of work and will fully consider the possibility of working with partners in delivering a project. Potential partners include the Government Office for the South East (GO-SE), Surrey County Council and the Boroughs & Districts.

Full documents can be found on the CLG website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communityleadershipfund>

Consulting with Stakeholders

In recent years we have consulted with our stakeholders via a postal survey. Response rates have been very good for this, and it is a very cost effective method. It is proposed that this activity continues for the next three years.

4.Targets & Assessment

Year 1 targets

- Recruit people for a Citizens' Panel that reflects Surrey demographics
- Undertake qualitative consultation with young people
- Set up required office systems & procedures in support of Citizens' Panels
- One or two surveys with panel
- Establish and host 2 initial Focus Groups
- Liaise with Force Consultation & Survey Unit to add in Surrey Police Authority questions into ongoing surveys, and also to use survey data to fulfil policing priority consultation criteria.
- Stakeholder postal survey

Year 2 & 3 targets

- Maintain Citizens Panel database
- Limited expansion of Panel, in areas to be determined late 2008/early 2009
- Full programme of surveys to panel
- 2 Focus Groups annually
- Stakeholder postal surveys

Feedback

We will continue with the Feedback leaflet as a means of relaying consultation results and actions to the Surrey public.

Print version – to be distributed to those who participate via post

PDF version – to be distributed to those taking part via email, and also made available on the SPA website.

Review

We will review our strategy and action plans annually, to ensure that our activity is working to best effect, that we continue to achieve value for money and that our work is fully compliant with the SPA Equality Scheme.