

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY
Police Authority Special Meeting

28th November 2005
Agenda item 4(a)

Report by the Clerk of the Police Authority and the Chief Constable.

POLICE STRUCTURE REVIEW – COMBINED CONSULTATION REPORT

1. SUMMARY

This report sets out the main findings of the combined consultation carried out regarding force structures.

- The majority of the public consulted do not support merger.
- The majority of stakeholders consulted support merger.
- There is least opposition for a merger with Lancashire.
- The greater the number of forces merging, the less support from the public.
- Reduced local policing, local say and local control are the biggest concerns.
- The majority of the public believe local policing will get worse following merger.
- Stakeholders envisage some benefits with merger.
- The public's belief that control and funding of the police will move out of the county is stronger than the belief that a new force will be better placed to tackle organised crime and to counter terrorism.
- Stakeholders believe a larger force would be better placed to tackle organised crime and counter terrorism.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That members note this report in light of the police restructure debate.

3. DETAIL

This report gives an overview of the consultation work carried out as part of the ongoing restructure work; it identifies the groups of consultees, the subjects on which their views have been sought and a summary of the findings. Attached for reference:

- Appendix 1: MORI poll report entitled “Public Attitudes towards Proposals on Police Force Restructuring” October 2005 (Members are asked to bring the copy previously circulated).
- Appendix 2: Tables of Police Authority consultation and MORI results
- Appendix 3: Main drawbacks and benefits of merger as expressed by parish councils, town councils, BME groups, stakeholders, independent custody visitors and other individuals surveyed by the Police Authority
- Appendix 4: Table of stakeholders’ views on benefits and drawbacks of merger

The report is set out:

- A. The consultees
- B. The purpose of the consultation
- C. Consultation findings

A. THE CONSULTEES

The MORI poll took place in October and surveyed **1000** members of the public in Cumbria.

The Police Authority sent out a total of 456 questionnaires in mid-October. As at 17th November **194** questionnaires had been returned giving a completion rate of 43%.

The consultation can be split into the public and stakeholders.

PUBLIC CONSULTEES

Representative Bodies (111 responses via written consultation)

Parish Councils (91) and Town Councils (17)¹, Persons representing or closely connected to BME groups (3)²

MORI (1000)

MORI poll - telephone consultation with members of the general public using a questionnaire

¹ Parish and town councils were not able to call special meetings to consider this matter because of the tight timescale

² There was no uniformity of responses between the representatives from the three BME groups

Other Individuals and Bodies (54 responses via written consultation)

- Assorted connections to the Police Authority including members of the misconduct panel, community liaison meeting secretaries, former staff, former Police Authority Members and standards committee members (10)
- Independent Custody Visitors (19)
- People who had previously contacted the police authority with views about policing; others who completed a questionnaire but could not be linked to the above groupings; The Blind Society, Age Concern, County Landowners' Association (25)

Public meetings

The Police Authority consulted the public via a number of Community Liaison forum meetings. A total of approximately 80 members of the public attended meetings held at the following locations:

- Appleby – 12th October (Eden)
- Barrow – 3rd November (Barrow)
- Brampton – 13th October (Carlisle)
- Cleator Moor – 15th November (Copeland)
- Kendal – 26th October (South Lakes)
- Keswick – 4th October (Allerdale)

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTEES

(29 responses via written consultation)

- Cumbria Ambulance Service
- Cumbria Fire and Rescue
- 2 NHS Hospitals Trusts
- North Cumbria PCT
- 4 Housing Associations
- 2 borough council leaders
- Leader of Cumbria County Council
- 6 Community Safety Officers
- County Council Education Directorate
- County Council Director of Children's Services
- 4 Local Authority Chief Executives
- One MEP
- Her Majesty's Court Service (visited by the Constabulary)
- Crown Prosecution Service (visited by the Constabulary)
- Lake District National Park Authority
- Civil Nuclear Constabulary

Face to face meetings (11 took place prior to 21st November, one appointment outstanding)

- Cumbria County Council and the 6 borough/city/district council chief executives
- MPs – face-to-face meetings between the Police Authority, Constabulary and five of Cumbria’s MPs had taken place as at 21st November.
- Meetings with stakeholders to discuss the potential for merger have raised a number of important issues relating to the structures debate which need to be borne in mind they include;
 - i. The possible economic effects on the county of any alteration to policing, particularly with regard to the potential loss of quality employment
 - ii. Local governance
 - iii. Level of resources for Cumbria

B. THE PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

To identify views on:

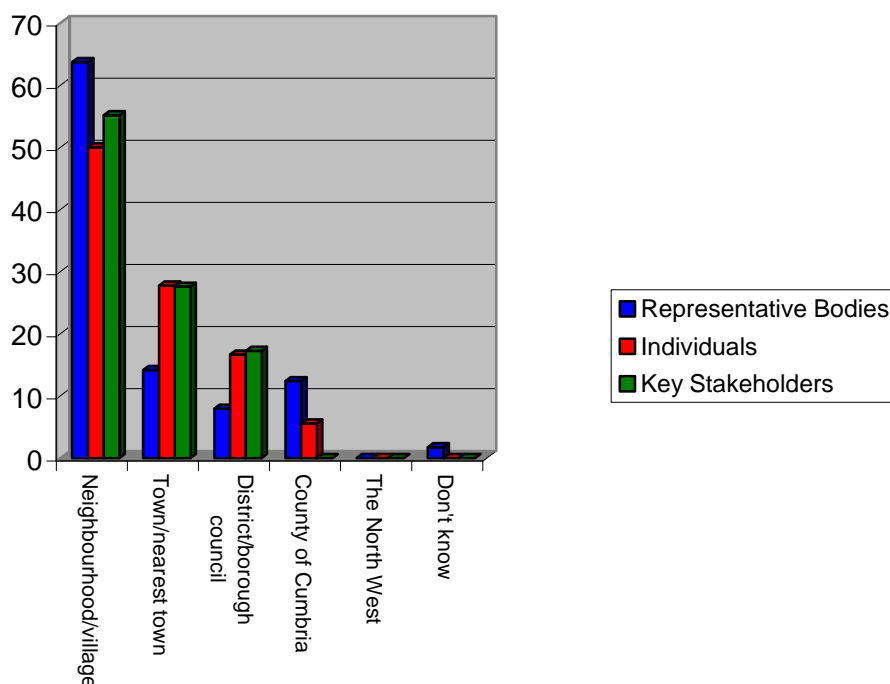
1. Identity with local area
2. Merger Proposals
 - 2.1. Awareness of merger proposals
 - 2.2. Support for merger proposals
 - 2.3. Level of Support for specific options
3. Perceived effects of proposals – particularly
 - 3.1. Perceived effect merger would have on local policing and perceived drawbacks and benefits of merger in general
 - 3.2. Perceived ability to tackle organised crime and terrorism
 - 3.3. Local control of policing

C. CONSULTATION FINDINGS

1. Identity with local area

Q. In your experience, to which of the following do the members of the public you work with feel most strongly that they belong?

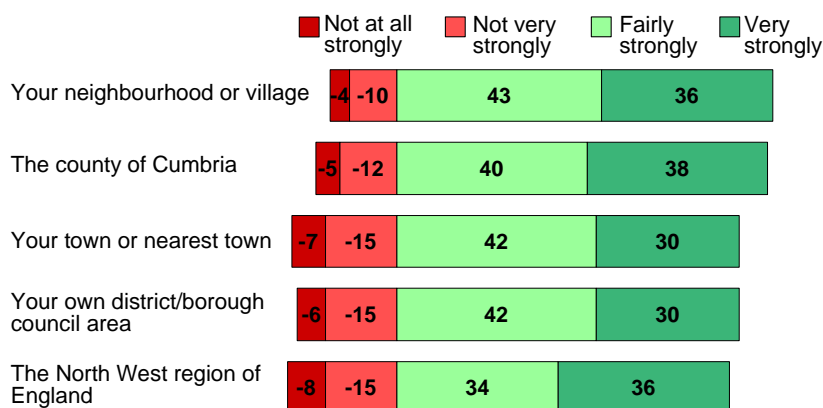
Feelings of Identity



Source: Police Authority Consultation

Feelings of identity

Q How strongly do you feel that you belong to each of the following areas?



Base: 1,000 respondents. Fieldwork dates: 14-23 October 2005

Source: MORI

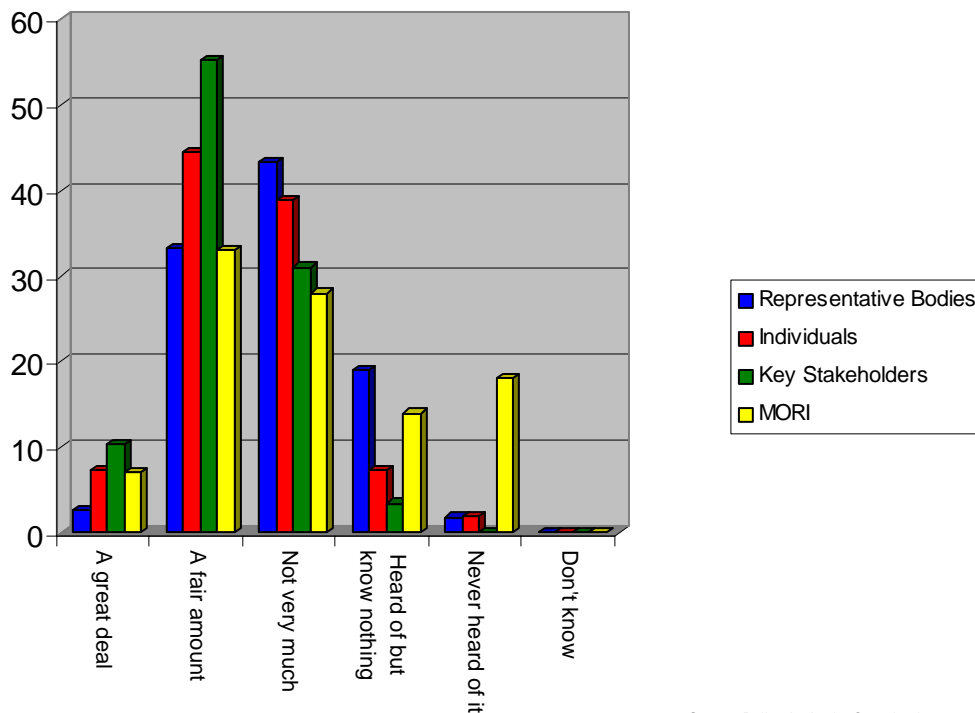
- 1.1 There are difficulties comparing the outcomes from the two consultation exercises as the MORI survey asked residents their feelings of identity for each of the different categories of areas. The Police Authority survey asked respondents “to which of the following do members of the public you work with feel most strongly they belong”. The results were that they identified most strongly with their neighbourhood / village or the nearest town.
- 1.2 The outcome from the MORI survey mirrored this response with people identifying most strongly with their neighbourhood or village.

2. Merger Proposals

2.1 Awareness of Merger Proposals

Q Before today, how much, if anything, would you say you knew about the proposals to merge Cumbria with one or more other forces?

Awareness of Proposals



Source: Police Authority Consultation

- 2.1.1 Representative Bodies were the least knowledgeable about the structures debate with two thirds (65%) admitting to limited knowledge or not having heard of it. Only a little more than one in three (36%) knew a great deal or fair amount about the proposals.
- 2.1.2 Almost half of the Individual and Other Bodies (48%) respondents have not heard very much, know nothing or have never heard of the

restructure proposals. A similar amount of respondents (51%) knew a fair amount or a great deal about the proposals.

2.1.3 All Key Stakeholders had heard of the proposals with 65% knowing a great deal or a fair amount about the merger proposals. 31% admitting to limited knowledge and only 3% had heard of the proposals but knew nothing about the restructure.

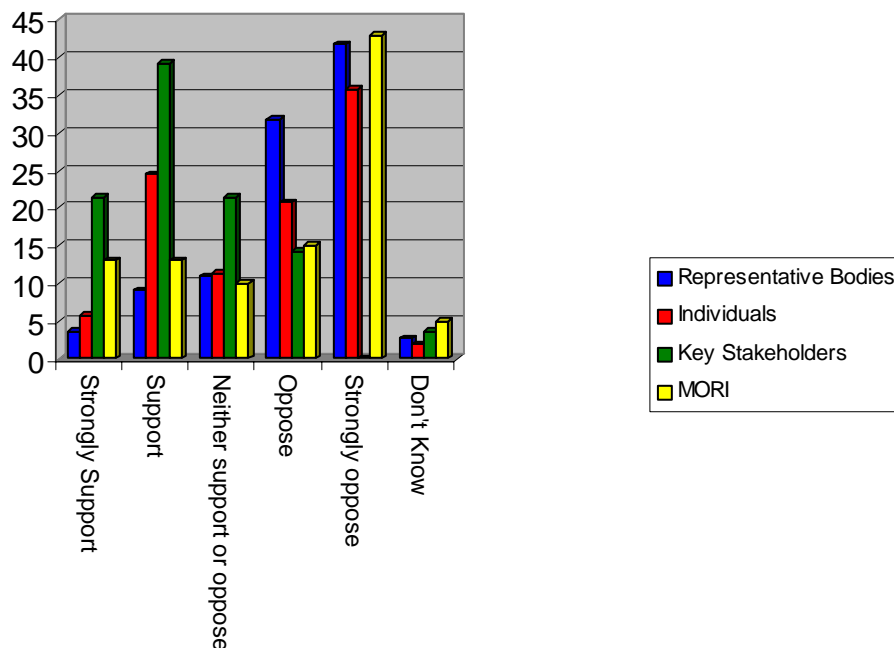
2.1.4 Likewise, the MORI survey found that the majority of residents had heard of the proposals to change the present structure of the police service, although they admitted that they have limited amount of knowledge about it. Two in five (40%) say they know a great deal or fair amount, and a similar proportion (42%) know not very much or nothing at all. Only about one in five (18%) say they've heard of it.

2.1.5 MORI concluded, "Awareness of the proposed restructure is relatively high".

2.2 Support for Merger Proposals

Q Based on what you currently know, do you support or oppose the proposal that Cumbria should merge with at least one other police force in this region?

Level of Support for proposals



Source: Police Authority Consultation

2.2.1 The greatest opposition to the proposals is from Representative Bodies. Almost three quarters (74%) oppose the proposal and only 13% support the possibility of merger. This group admitted to being the least knowledgeable about the restructure of the Police Service.

- 2.2.2 One in three (31%) Individuals and Other Bodies support the proposal of merger although more than half (57%) is opposed.
- 2.2.3 The MORI survey found residents' support for the idea of Cumbria merging with at least one other police force in the region is fairly low, with about a quarter (26%) supporting the proposal. Nearly three in five (58%) oppose it, including 43% who strongly oppose.
- 2.2.4 The group most strongly in support of the proposals is Key Stakeholders with three out of five (60%) supporting the restructure and only 14% in opposition. This group had the greatest knowledge of the proposal beforehand.
- 2.2.5 MORI summarised:

“There is fairly strong opposition towards the idea that Cumbria Constabulary should merge with at least one other force within the region. Only about a quarter (26%) support the suggestion, whereas about three in five (58%) oppose it, including 43% who strongly oppose. Opposition is strong within all sub-groups of the population, the only exception being younger people aged between 18 and 24; over half of younger residents (53%) say they support the idea.”

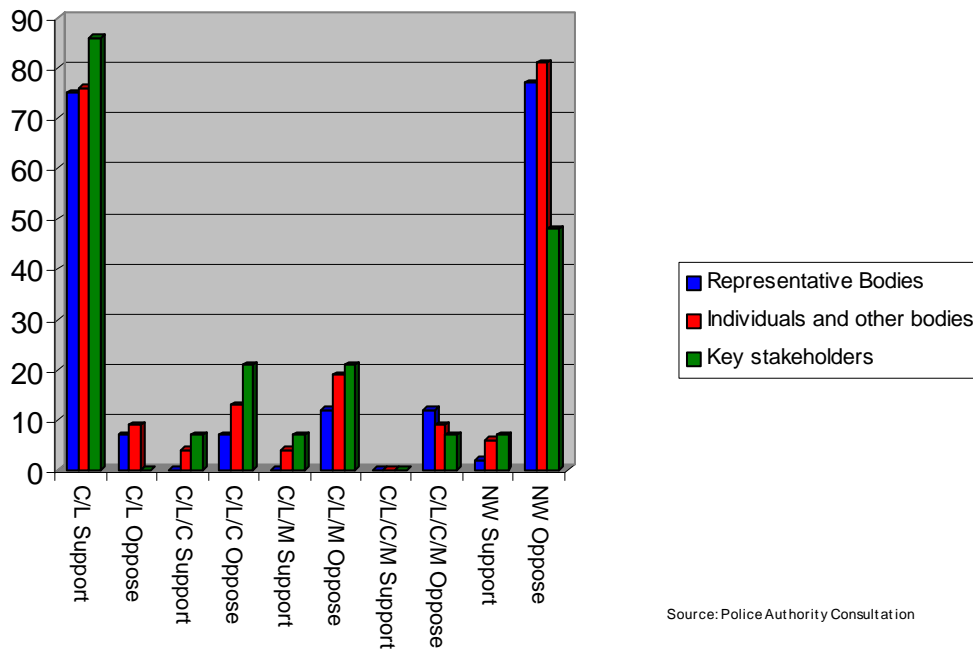
- 2.2.6 Where MORI questioned in depth about identity to home area and affinity to other counties, MORI concluded:

“The opposition towards Cumbria merging with other forces must be placed in the context of strong identity with the County of Cumbria and high satisfaction with the area as a place to live (as found in this research as well as in previous MORI research). We also know from previous research that people generally tend to favour services to be delivered at a local level.”

2.3 Level of Support for Specific Options

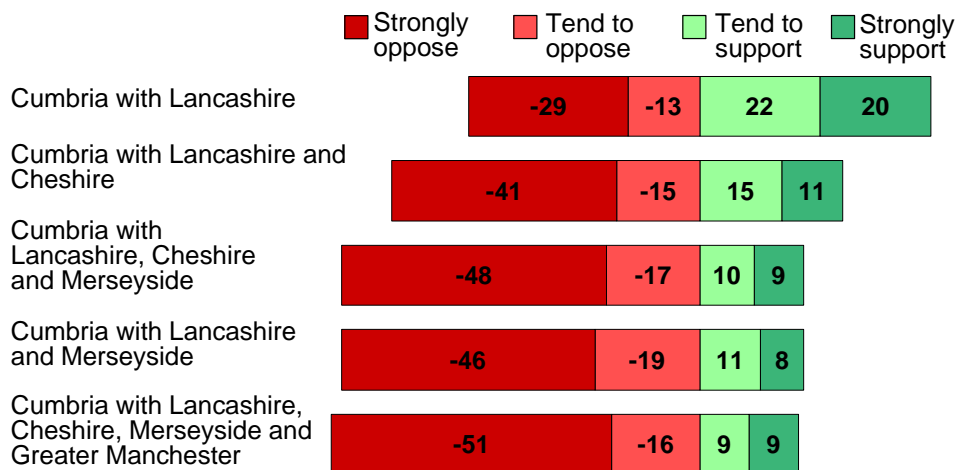
Q. The possible mergers are shown below. Do you support or oppose any of them more than the others?

Level of Support for specific options



Level of support for individual options

Q How strongly do you support or oppose each option?



Base: 1,000 respondents. Fieldwork dates: 14-23 October 2005

Source: MORI

2.3.1 Three out of four (75%) Representative Bodies support a merger with Cumbria and Lancashire. No respondents from this group support a merger with any other combination of forces except 2% for a North West force. Opposition is most strongly expressed for a North West merger (77%).

2.3.2 Likewise, three out of four (76%) Individuals and Other Bodies support a merger with Cumbria and Lancashire police forces with little support

for the Cumbria / Lancashire / Cheshire merger, the Cumbria / Lancashire / Merseyside merger and the North West merger. There is no support for a Cumbria / Lancashire / Cheshire and Merseyside merger and most opposition for a North West merger (81%).

- 2.3.3 Key Stakeholders are most supportive of a Cumbria and Lancashire merger. There is no support for a Cumbria / Lancashire / Cheshire / Merseyside merger and an equal support of 7% for each of the other merger options. Key Stakeholders are least supportive of a North West merger (48%) although this opposition is significantly lower than other respondents in the Public Authority consultation.
- 2.3.4 It is not possible to make a direct comparison between the MORI survey and the Police Authority consultation. Respondents completing the Police Authority written questionnaire were asked to give an opinion of whether they supported or opposed one option more than the other; whereas MORI residents were asked to what extent they would support or oppose each proposed merger.
- 2.3.5 The MORI results show that opposition exceeds support for nearly all the proposed options, except for Cumbria merging with Lancashire where opinions are equally divided. The second least opposed option is merging Cumbria with Lancashire and Cheshire. The level of opposition towards the other three options is high, with about two in three residents opposing.
- 2.3.6 The results of both the MORI survey and the police authority consultation show there is least opposition to Cumbria Constabulary merging with Lancashire and most opposition to a North West region police force.
- 2.3.7 MORI summarised:

“Lancashire is the county within the region which people in Cumbria are most familiar with and are most favourable towards, which is reflected in the fact that the option of Cumbria Constabulary merging with Lancashire is the least unpopular alternative. People are also fairly favourable towards Cheshire, but less so towards Merseyside and Greater Manchester – again clearly reflected in the level of opposition towards the different options.”

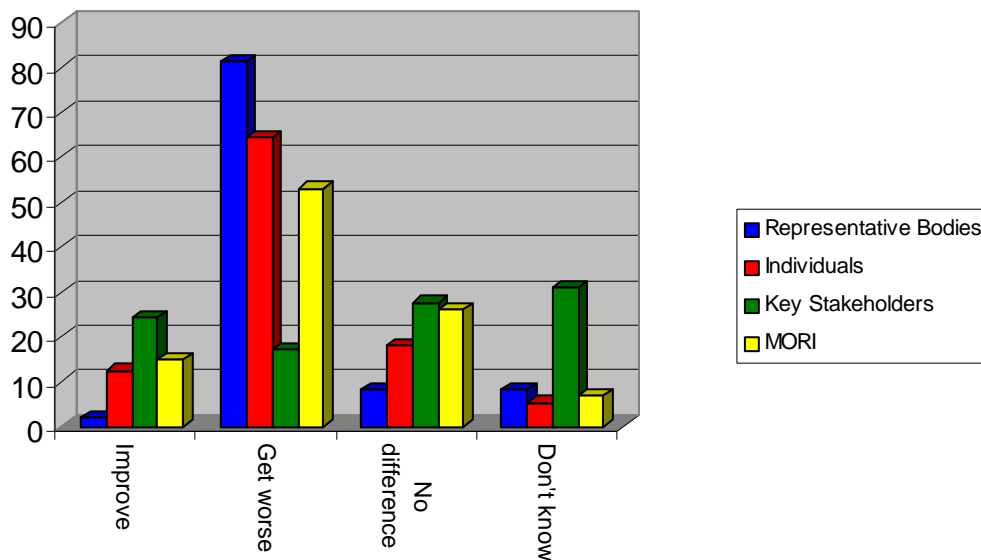
3.

Perceived effects of proposals

3.1 Perceived effect merger would have on local policing and perceived drawbacks and benefits of merger in general

Q. Do you think that Cumbria Constabulary merging with other forces would mean that policing of your area would improve, get worse, or would it make no difference to local policing?

Perceived effect on local policing

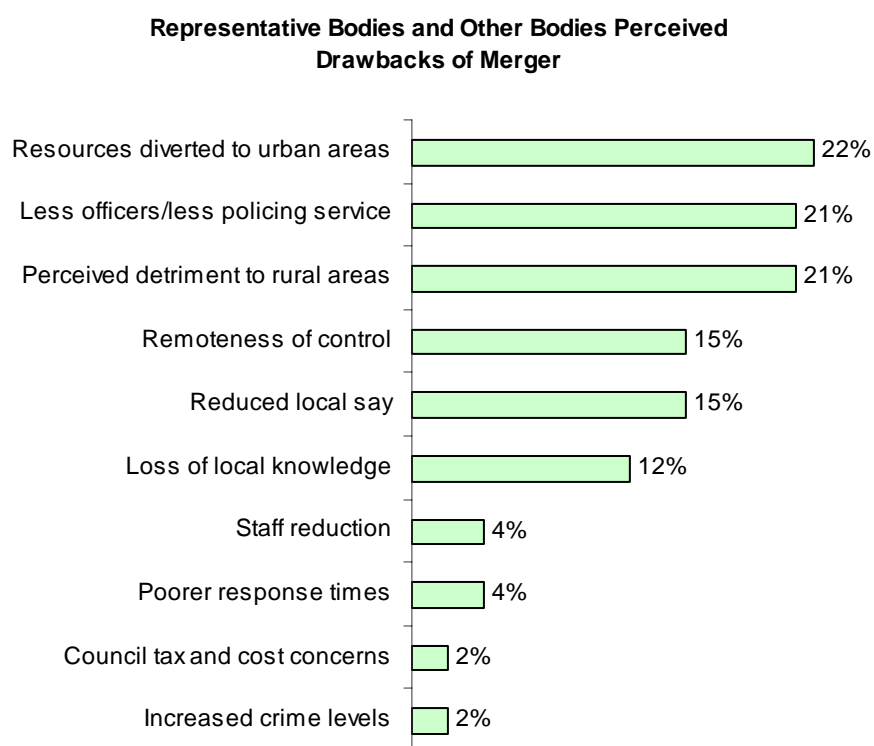


Source: Police Authority

- 3.1.1 Respondents of Representative Bodies expressed the greatest concern for policing of the area with four out of five (81%) believing a worse service would be delivered if merger took place with only 2% believing it would improve.
- 3.1.2 Two out of three (65%) Individuals and Other Bodies believe that policing would worsen if merger took place, 18% believe it would make no difference and one in eight (12%) think it would improve.
- 3.1.3 Key Stakeholders are the most optimistic of all the groups with a quarter (24%) believing a merger would improve the policing of the area. Of this group, one in three (31%) did not know if merger would have an impact on service, 28% believed there would be no difference and only 17% believe it would deteriorate.
- 3.1.4 More than half of residents (53%) of the MORI survey think that policing of their area would get worse if Cumbria merged with another police force, a quarter (26%) think it would make no difference and only 15% think it would improve.

3.1.5 Detailed Public Comments

- Comments from the free text of the Police Authority written questionnaire were analysed. Perceived benefits were very much outweighed by the perceived drawbacks by Representative Bodies and Individuals and Other Bodies groups, with less than 1% of respondents expressing positive benefits from merger, and thus these benefits are not listed.
- The areas of concern most frequently expressed by Representative Bodies and Individuals and Other Bodies about the prospect of merger were:



Source: Police Authority Consultation

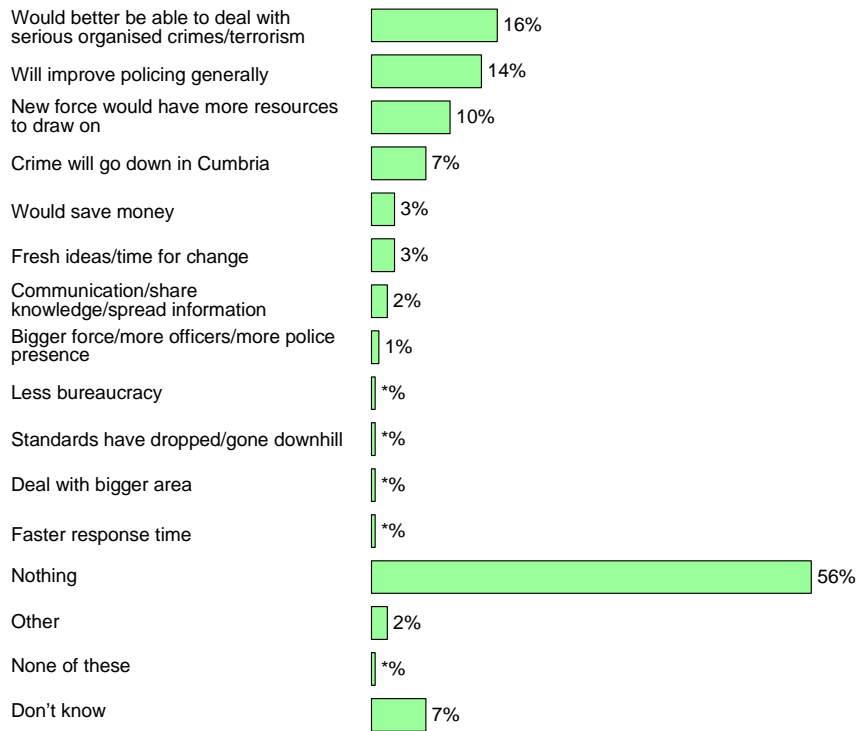
- Attendees at the Community Liaison forum meetings also highlighted the above concerns

3.1.6 Detailed MORI Comments

- MORI's survey echoed many of the concerns of the Representative Bodies and Individuals and Other Bodies.
- The results of the MORI survey are more supportive of perceived benefits of merger, however over 50% of respondents could not think of a single benefit as shown below.

Perceived benefits of merger

Q *What do you see as the benefits, if any, of Cumbria Constabulary merging with other forces? What else?*

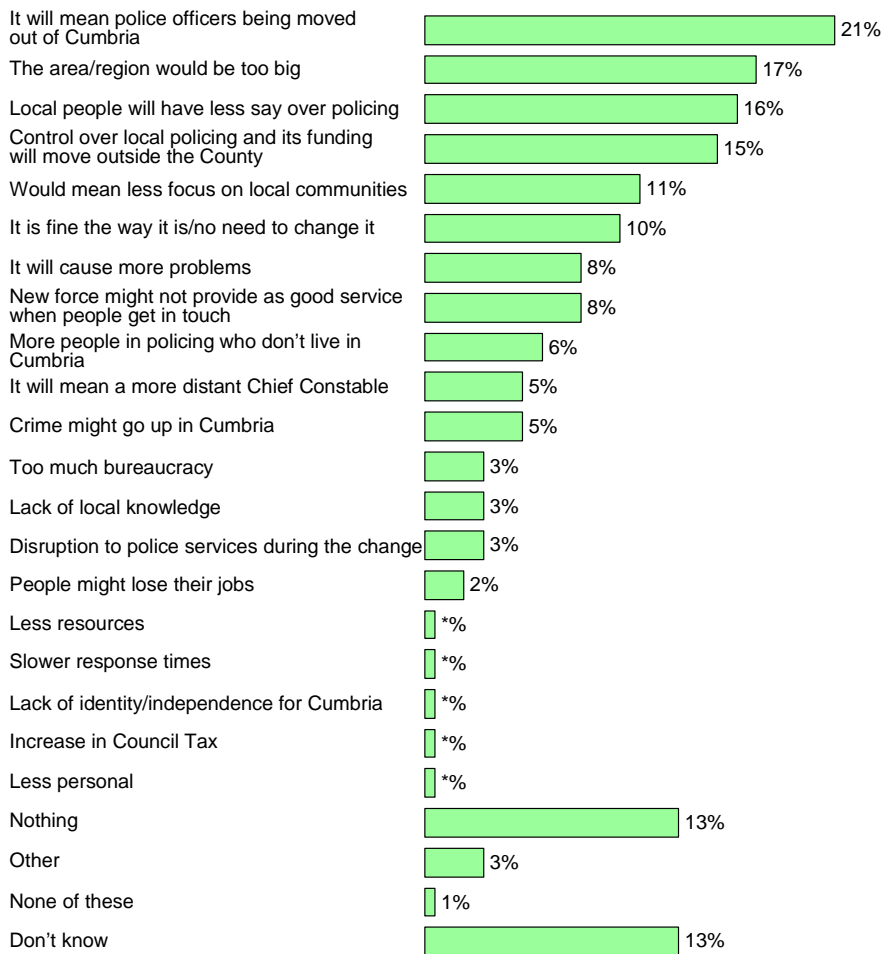


Base: 1,000 respondents. Fieldwork dates: 14 – 23 October 2005

Source: MORI

Perceived drawbacks of merger

Q What do you see as the drawbacks, if any, of Cumbria Constabulary merging with other forces? What else?



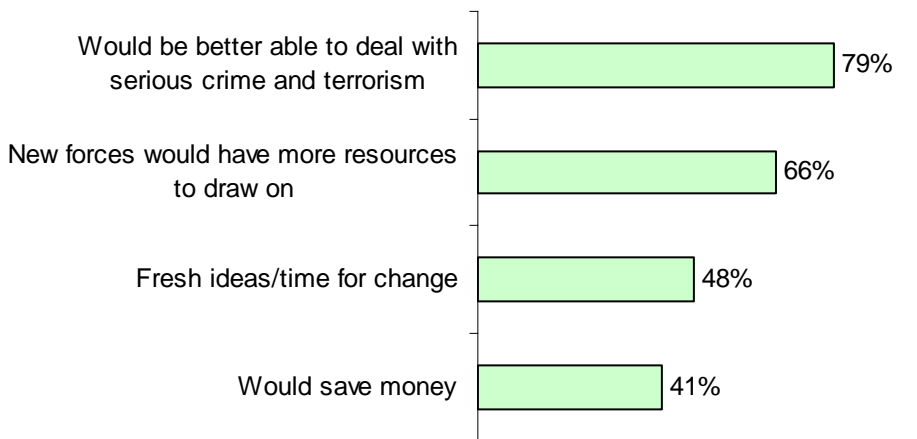
Base: 1,000 respondents. Fieldwork dates: 14 – 23 October 2005

Source: MORI

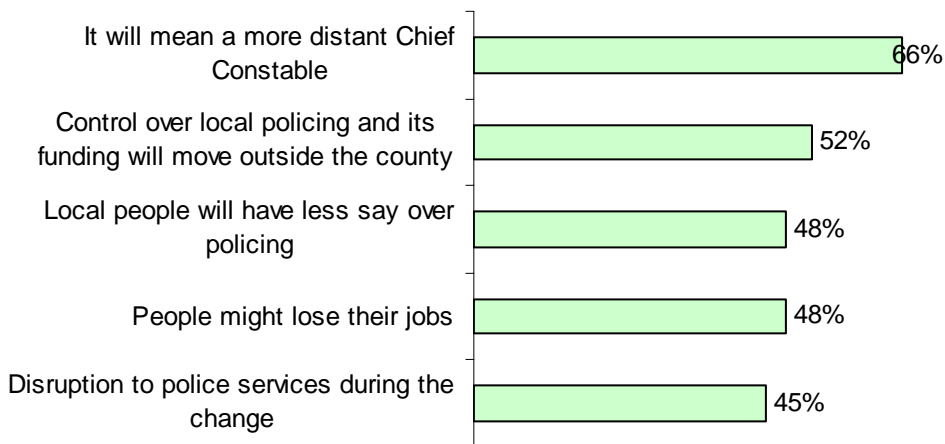
3.1.7 Detailed Key Stakeholders comments

- Key Stakeholders are generally more supportive of the proposal to merger and believe the main benefits would be in the ability to deal with serious crime and terrorism and to draw on more resources, whilst identifying that control and local say over policing will move outside the county.

Perceived Benefits - Key Stakeholders



Perceived Drawbacks - Key Stakeholders



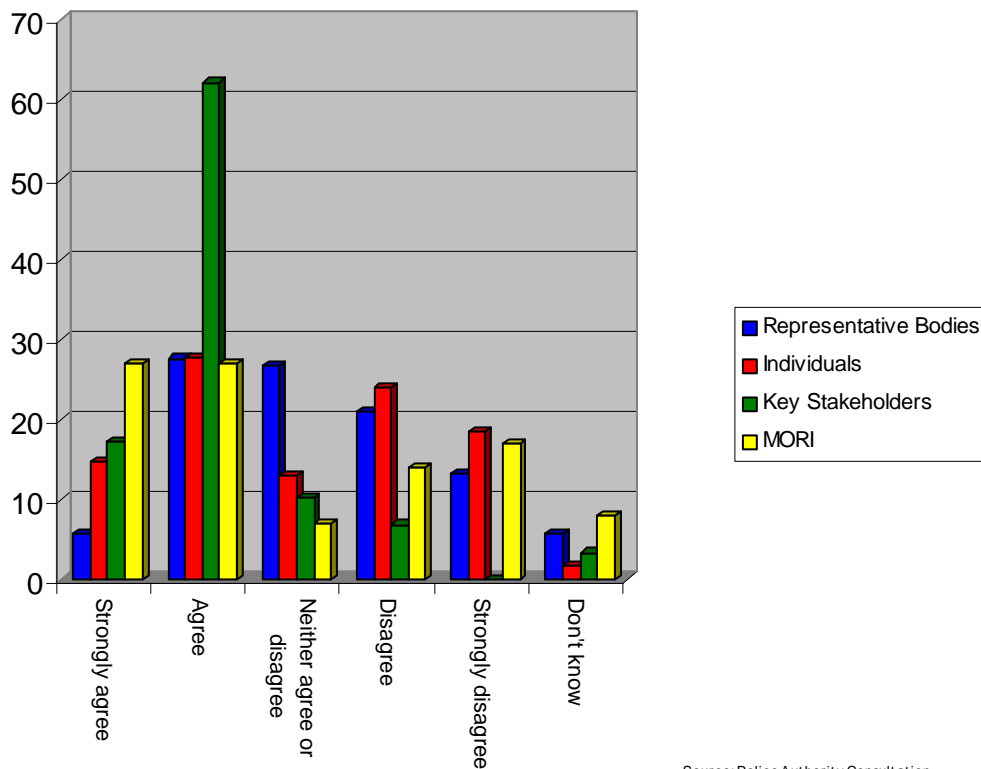
3.1.8 MORI's report summary stated:

“Although a majority of residents accept the argument for the proposed merger, i.e. that larger police forces would be better placed to tackle terrorism and organised crime, this is not enough to convince most residents that a restructure would benefit local policing... The most expressed unprompted concerns, however, are that a merger would mean police officers being moved out of their current force area, that the new area covered would be too big, that local people would have less say over local policing and that control over local policing and its funding would move outside of Cumbria.”

3.2 Perceived ability to tackle organised crime and terrorism

Q. Do you agree that larger police forces would be better placed to tackle organised crime and terrorism than forces in the current structure?

Agree it would better tackle organised crime/terrorism



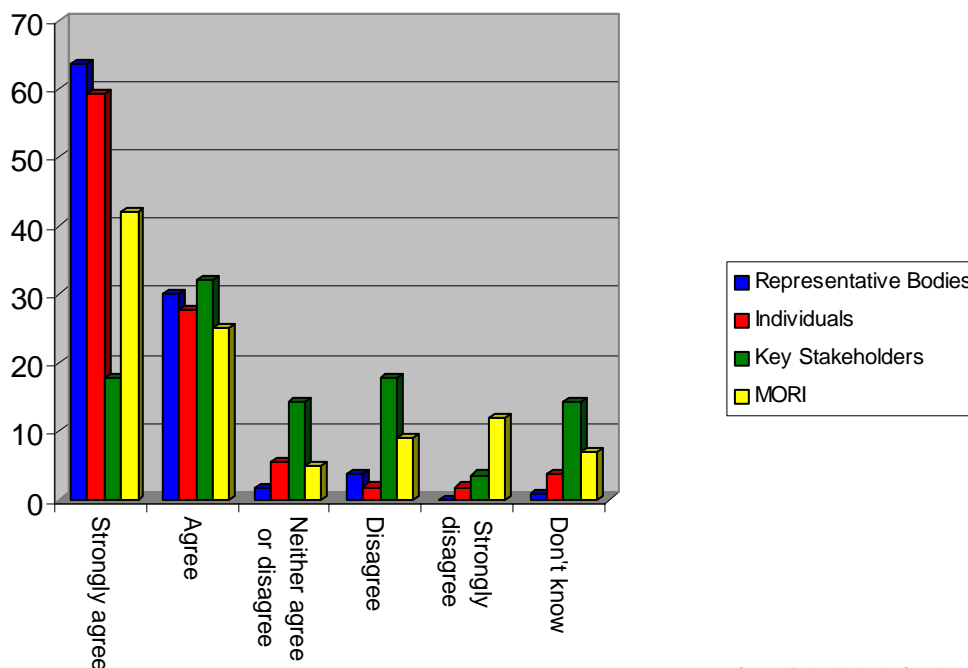
Source: Police Authority Consultation

- 3.2.1 One out of three (34%) Representative Bodies respondents agree or strongly agree that merged police forces would be better placed to tackle organised crime and terrorism, with an equal amount (34%) in disagreement. 27% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 3.2.2 Individuals and Other Bodies were the most unconvinced that a larger force would be better placed to tackle organised crime and terrorism with 43% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. One in three (33%) agreed or strongly agreed that merged police forces would be better placed to tackle crime, with 13% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 2% of respondents expressing that they did not know.
- 3.2.3 Key Stakeholders believe most strongly that larger forces would be better placed to tackle organised crime and terrorism with only 7% in disagreement and no Key Stakeholders strongly disagreeing.
- 3.2.4 The majority of residents (54%) surveyed by MORI agree that larger police forces would be better placed to tackle terrorist activity and serious and organised crime than forces in the current structure, with a third disagreeing. MORI's respondents cited this as the strongest benefit of Cumbria merging with another force (16%).

3.3 Local control of policing

Q. Do you agree that Cumbria Constabulary merging with other outside forces will move control of local policing and its funding outside the county?

Local control of policing



Source: Police Authority Consultation

- 3.3.1 Almost all Representative Bodies (94%) agree or strongly agree that Cumbria Constabulary merging with other forces will result in control of local policing moving outside the county.
- 3.3.2 Respondents from Individuals and Other Bodies are in agreement with Representative Bodies with 88% believing control of local policing and its funding will move outside the county.
- 3.3.3 Half of the Key Stakeholders (50%) believe control of local policing will move outside the county although more than one in five (22%) Stakeholders disagree.
- 3.3.4 There is a strong sentiment among residents surveyed through MORI that a potential merger of Cumbria Constabulary with other forces would give local people less say over decisions on local policing, with two in three thinking that this would be the case.
- 3.3.5 MORI described an overall scepticism and concern about merging with heavily urbanised area(s).

“It is clear that whichever option is finally decided upon, a merger with other police forces would be met with considerable scepticism among local residents. Some options would be particularly unpopular and it might be worth exploring further the reasons why merging with some forces such as Merseyside and Greater Manchester is seen as less desirable than merging with Lancashire and Cheshire. Is this simply a reflection of the more negative attitudes towards these areas or do people have specific concerns regarding merging with these more urban areas? The challenge for Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Police Authority will be to communicate to residents the reasons why a particular option is chosen and alleviate their concerns about the effect of a merger.”

Clive Alcock, Clerk & Chief Executive

Michael Baxter, Chief Constable

22nd November 2005