

Cumbria Police Authority

Policing Plan and Performance Committee

22 February 2010

Agenda Item No 7

Report by the Chief Executive

LOCAL POLICING SUMMARY

Background

The Committee received a report at its 30th October 2009 meeting advising of the need to provide greater value for money from the Local Policing Summary. This report presents a proposal for how the Summary could be produced within a reduced budget and asks Members to approve this for further development.

Recommended:

That members:

- (i) Agree the outline for content, timescale and format of the Local Policing Summary for 2010.

DETAIL

The Local Policing Summary is a booklet providing information for the public about police performance and what service they can expect from the police in Cumbria. It is the only document produced by the Authority or Constabulary delivered to every household in the county. The Authority has a statutory obligation to produce and distribute the Summary. It has delegated the responsibility for preparing the Summary and the budget related to this to the Constabulary. The recent Home Office White Paper 'Protecting the Public: Supporting the Police to Succeed' set out the intention for the requirement to produce Policing Summaries to be repealed. However, this is not expected to be in place within this parliament and there will still be a requirement for police authorities to provide information to the public in the form of a 'public-friendly' report in the future.

At its meeting on 30th October 2009, the Committee discussed possible options for decreasing the cost of producing the Summary. Members felt that, aside from the statutory requirement to produce the document, there was benefit in developing it, since consultation has shown that receiving newsletters are one of the public's preferred ways of receiving information on policing. The Summary is also a way for the Authority to explain its role to every household. In considering how to increase value for money, Members felt that the possibility of collaborating with a partner agency such as the County Council should be explored to reduce distribution costs but that this should be on the basis of a stand-alone leaflet within it, rather than articles within the Council magazine. The inclusion of advertising was ruled out.

The Constabulary's Marketing and Communications Team has now looked into the feasibility of working with partners to distribute the summary. The

distribution of a leaflet with the County Council magazine would not produce any significant cost saving compared with distribution via Royal Mail. It is therefore proposed that a shorter summary than in 2009 be produced (likely to be a four-page A5 booklet) to reduce the printing costs. This would be distributed separately via Royal Mail. The proposed content is as follows:

- Priorities for the police for 2009-10 (including what the public said was important);
- Performance in those priority areas;
- Priorities for the next year;
- Successes in each command area;
- Details of the Police Authority's role and a request for feedback;
- Brief contact details;
- Brief details of where to find a translation.

The pages entitled 'Your Opinion Counts', 'Local News', 'Your Police Authority' and parts of 'Getting in Touch' in the 2009 Summary provide a guide to the kind of information this would include. Copies of the 2009 summary are available from the Police Authority offices and will be distributed at the meeting.

This format would have the benefit of providing clear and focussed information to the public on key messages about Constabulary performance and priorities, which may be more likely to be read due to its brevity. There will also be scope for the Authority to include a short section on its role. The reduced content would still fulfil the Authority's statutory requirements. Members' comments are sought on the proposed content and approach to distribution.

The Local Policing Summary provides an opportunity to advise the public of the police service's priorities for the coming year. It is proposed that the timing of the distribution of the document be moved forward from July/ August in previous years to April/ May, to ensure the public received information as soon as possible in the new financial year. Following this meeting and in the light of Members' comments, the summary will be developed and designed in time for approval by the full Police Authority on 23rd March 2010. This will use predicted data and will be updated once year-end figures are available, which are unlikely to be significantly different. Members are asked to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to develop the document, in consultation with the Police Authority Chair.

Relevant Public Feedback

The autumn consultation survey to Cumbria's citizens' panel, Community Voice, sought feedback on whether respondents had received and read the Local Policing Summary in 2009. 20.5% of respondents had read all of the booklet and 33.9% had read some. Only 2.9% stated that they had read none, whilst 30.4% could not remember receiving the booklet and 8.3% believe they did not receive it. This perhaps reflects the time gap between the summary being distributed (early August) and the survey being conducted (November). If these responses were reflected across the whole population, at least one

person in over half of households in the county will have read at least some of the summary.

Of the specific comments made on the summary by respondents to the survey, many felt it was 'informative' and 'useful' and commented that it made them feel reassured about the service the police is providing in Cumbria. Some suggested that they would have preferred information that related more to their local area. A small number of respondents felt that it did not provide value for money, since they would prefer the money to be invested in frontline policing in their area and others were cautious about whether the information contained in the summary, particularly the statistics chosen, were an accurate reflection of the level of crime in the county. Members will be aware that this information was a fair reflection of the overall improvement in community safety in the county from their own scrutiny of Constabulary performance and crime levels. A number of respondents were most interested in getting information on which offenders had been convicted over the past year.

The Authority received a number of comments directly following the distribution of the summary. This encouraged members of the public (23) who would not otherwise have contacted the Authority to do so. The detail of this was reported to the Police Authority on 28th September 2009. In relation to the document itself, queries were received about the information included in the summary, the cost of producing it and where it had been distributed to, as well as requests for a translation (into Polish) and clarification of how to access some other information mentioned. This and other feedback will be taken into account in developing the 2010 summary, although the cost and feasibility of doing this will need to be considered.

Clive Alcock
Chief Executive

9th February 2010

Background papers: Cumbria Local Policing Summary 2009; Cumbria Police Authority's Community Engagement Strategy; 'Protecting the Public: Supporting the Police to Succeed' (Home Office, 2009)

Race, Diversity and Disability Implications: The format in which the Summary is produced will affect who is able to and likely to read it. Using a document delivered to people's homes, as opposed to other forms of communication such as press articles, public meetings or events in public places also has implications for which groups are likely to receive the information.

Human Rights Act Implications: No direct implications

Strategic Risk Implications: If the Authority does not produce and distribute a Local Policing Summary to all households in Cumbria, it will not meet its statutory obligations. If this is not done in a suitable format, it will miss an opportunity to raise its profile and communicate key messages. If the Authority does not seek to reduce costs where it can, the production of the document will not be delivered in budget.

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