

## BUSINESS CRIME SURVEY: RESULTS

### BACKGROUND

1. Engagement Committee on 26 August 2008 (Minute 21) received a report from the national Chambers of Commerce Business Crime Survey “The Invisible Crime” April 2008, which included questions about perceptions of crime and confidence in the police.
2. The results showed that 56% of businesses were not confident that the police understand the issues that are most important to them and a further 68% did not feel confident that the police were dealing with the issues that are most important to their business. When asked about perceptions of local crime, 81% of respondents felt that crime against business was a problem in their local area, whilst 39% felt that the problem is small.
3. The Committee (Minute 21) agreed that the results of the Business Crime Survey be reviewed to identify any policing issues in Cheshire.

### METHODOLOGY AND PROFILE

4. Having reviewed the national Business Crime Survey, it was decided that more information from Cheshire businesses was required to gather a representative point of view, 54 of the 3916 respondents to the national survey were based in Cheshire.
5. A postal survey was sent to 832 businesses in the policing area during November 2008. Representative sample sizes for each NPU were calculated and the businesses chosen to participate were selected at random from a list of all businesses in Cheshire. Of the 832 businesses, 192 (23.1%) responded.
6. Eighty nine of businesses (46.4%) employed between 1 and 9 people, 79 (42%) employed between 10 and 249 people, 6 (3.1%) were sole traders, whilst 4.7% (9) said that they employed over 250 staff. The largest proportion of businesses (70.3% = 135) stated that they had been in their current location for 11 years or more.
7. The participants were asked about the nature of their business. The majority (61.5%) were in the retail/wholesale sector whilst a lower number stated that they were in the ‘construction / engineering’ sector or in ‘public or voluntary sector services’.
8. The largest proportion (32.3%) were located in a town centre, whilst 22.9% were located on the outskirts of town. The lowest proportion of businesses

stated that they were situated in an office block / complex. 146 (76.0%) were situated in an urban area, while 29 (15.1%) were in a rural location.

## KEY FINDINGS

9. A copy of the full report has been circulated to Members separately. The key findings are summarised below:-

## EXPERIENCE OF CRIME

10. The type of crime most commonly experienced in the last twelve months was damage to vehicles with 26.6% (51) of businesses stating that they had suffered from this. Burglary 16.7%, robbery 17.2% and theft by a non-employee 19.3% were also stated as being experienced. The least common types of crime experienced included arson, e-crime and theft of business equipment.
11. The results from the survey are similar to that found by the national survey. Both found damage to vehicles to be the most common type of crime experienced. The only significant difference is that experience of robbery appears to be at higher level in Cheshire.
12. In terms of anti-social behaviour, young people hanging around (37.5%), vandalism and graffiti (26.6%), and damage to business property (25.5%) were most commonly experienced. Young people hanging around caused problems for more businesses in the retailing / wholesaling (42.4%) sector and in professional services (41.2%).
13. The largest percentage of businesses (29.7%) had experienced between two and five instances of crime during the last twelve months while 27.1% stated that they had not experienced any crime at all in the period. Of those stating that they had experienced crime in the last 12 months, 18.4% of businesses stated that they had not reported any incidents to the police, compared to 22.4% who had reported them all.
14. There are notable differences in the findings of the Cheshire and national surveys. The results in Cheshire suggest that businesses are more likely to report an incident (18%) compared to the findings of the Chambers report (28%).  
Additionally, Cheshire's results indicate that 14% of businesses report 81% to 99% of incidents whereas the Chambers report found this figure to be 6%. However, the Chambers report did indicate that a higher proportion of businesses taking part in its survey reported all crime (37%), compared to the Cheshire survey (22%).
15. Respondents were asked why they had not reported crime. The most common reason given was 'relatively small or no loss or damage to premises or property' (59.8%), while 50.0% stated that it was because they thought there was little chance of the offender being caught. Least common reasons were fear of reprisals and of negative publicity, while no business stated their reason as would increase insurance costs. 13.7% stated that they had other reasons including 'action of police would be minimal', 'from

experience response is slow or non-existent', 'dealt with in house', and 'shoplifters - we don't see them doing it but find evidence later'.

16. When asked whether they thought that crime was a problem in their local area, the majority (87.6%) stated that crime against businesses was a problem to at least some degree, with 11.3% stating that it is a serious problem. 9.0% (16) believe that business crime posed no problems at all.
17. In terms of crime related issues, most respondents considered 'burglary' and 'staff subject to injury as a result of violence' as being most important to them. A significant proportion of respondents also considered 'robbery' and 'theft by a non-employee' to be important.
18. With regards to anti-social behaviour related issues, businesses considered 'damage to business property', 'vandalism and graffiti' and 'young people hanging around' as being the most important to them.

## SATISFACTION

19. Respondents were asked: "thinking about each time you reported your incident(s), on average, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Cheshire Police?"
  - 'It was easy to make contact when I first needed to': 64.8% (72) of respondents stated that they agreed with this statement, while 22.5% (25) disagreed.
  - 'They responded quickly to my initial call / enquiry': 53.4% (55) of participants who answered stated that they agreed with this statement, whilst 26.2% (27) disagreed.
  - 'They investigated the crime or incident I reported': 56.2% (59) of respondents who answered, stated that they were in agreement with this statement, whilst 15.3% (16) disagreed. 20.0% stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed, whilst 8.6% (9) did not know.
  - 'They kept me informed about what they were doing and why': The largest proportion of respondents (46% = 52) were in agreement with this statement, whilst 15.9% (18) disagreed.
  - 'I knew who to re-contact if I required further information': The majority of respondents agreed with this statement (56.0% = 56), whilst 29% (29) disagreed.
20. The majority of businesses who answered the question "taking the whole experience into account are you satisfied, dissatisfied or neither with the service provided by Cheshire Police?" (56.7% = 81) stated that they were satisfied with the service provided by Cheshire Police. This compared favourably to the 20.3% (29) who stated that they were dissatisfied.
21. The majority of participants that answered (76.4% = 126), stated that they were confident the police understood the crime and anti-social behaviour

related issues that were most important to their business. This compared favourably to the 23.6% who stated that they were not confident.

22. The majority of respondents (82.9%) stated that they think the police are doing a 'fair' to 'excellent' job in the area local to their business', whilst only 12.6% believed that they are not.
23. The results from the Cheshire survey also suggest that the majority of businesses are confident that the police are dealing with the crime issues (75%) and anti-social behaviour issues (66%). This indicates that the lower levels of confidence found by the BCC survey (32%) may not be representative for the force area of Cheshire.

## CRIME REDUCTION

24. The majority of participants (66.5% = 107) were not aware of a Community Safety Partnership or a Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership) in their local area, whilst 33.5% (54) were aware of at least one. 31 participants (16.1%) chose not to respond, which could suggest they were not aware or that they did not recognise the terminology used. Over half stated that they thought the business community should be given a greater role in local crime reduction partnerships. The results of the Cheshire survey are at odds with those of the Chambers of Commerce, with 61% of respondents feeling that Community Safety Partnerships or CDRPs are effective in tackling business crime compared with just 38% in the national survey.
25. The police were thought to have given the largest proportion of the most helpful crime reduction advice (34.3%), with security companies and insurance providing 7.7% each.
26. Respondents were asked "How effective do you consider each of the following to be in reducing crime against your business?":-
  - Security devices: The majority (88.4% = 137) considered security devices to be effective in reducing crime against their business.
  - Better staff training: The vast majority of businesses responding (86.6% = 117), believed that better staff training is effective in the fight against crime.
  - Grant assistance for security: 46.8% (52) of participants who answered, stated that they thought that this would be effective, whilst 8.1% (9) did not.
  - Private security patrol: 49.2% (60) of respondents considered this to be effective against fighting crime targeted at their business.
  - Business Watch / Shop Watch: 36.3% (44) of businesses answering this part of the question believe this measure is effective in reducing crime against them, whilst 51.2% (62) stated 'don't know' perhaps indicating they had no knowledge of 'Business Watch / Shop Watch'.

- Smart Water: The majority of respondents 74.8% (77) stated 'don't know' in response to this part of the question, again perhaps indicating a lack of knowledge of Smart Water.

## CONCLUSION

27. Whilst the findings from Cheshire businesses are in agreement with some aspects of the findings of the British Chamber of Commerce survey, the suggestion that businesses have a lack of confidence in the police is not supported. Findings in this report suggest that most businesses in the force area are confident that the police are doing a good job.

## RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the findings of the survey are shared with the Chambers of Commerce at a meeting on 12 February 2009 and the resulting discussions be used to inform future engagement activity;
- (3) the findings of the survey be shared with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in the policing area to inform their community strategies; and
- (4) the Authority conduct further focus groups with Cheshire businesses to explore the findings in more depth and inform future activity about how to influence confidence and satisfaction.