



**Final report of the
Communication & Consultation Scrutiny
Group**

August 2009

Glossary of terms used in this report

APA	Association of Police Authorities
BC	Borough Council
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment
CDAP	Cheshire Domestic Abuse Partnership
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CPS	Crown prosecution Service
GONW	Government Office for the North West
HMCS	Her Majesty's Courts Services
IDAHO	International Day Against Homophobia
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LGB&T	Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MOSAIC	A community segmentation marketing tool based on a national data set.
NI 4	The percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their area
NI 21	The percentage of people who agree that the police and council are successfully dealing with crime and antisocial behaviour in their area
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SCS	Sustainable Communities Strategy
VLI	Vulnerable Localities Index

INTRODUCTION

1. The Communication & Consultation Scrutiny Group was established by the Authority on 24 February 2009 (Minute 98), to “map and review community consultation and communication activities by statutory partners to inform the Authority’s Contact Plan.”
2. Members appointed to the Scrutiny Group are Bob Hodson, Emily Lam and Terry Savage.
3. Partners included in the work of the Group were the “relevant” CDRP partners who also serve on the Local Strategic Partnership (Police, Fire Authority, Primary Care Trusts and Local Authority), and the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) partners (HMCS, Probation and Prison Service).
4. The Group’s work is separate from, but related to, the Partnership Scrutiny Group, formally created by the Authority on 16 December 2008 (Minute 73) to

“To appraise the effectiveness of the Authority’s contribution to partnership working by carrying out a detailed investigation into the Authority’s involvement in partnership working, to identify areas for development and improvement”.
5. In addition, the findings of the Communication & Consultation Scrutiny Group have become an integral part of the work to inform the Constabulary and Authority’s Confidence Strategy and is being used by partners to inform their Sustainable Community Strategies and engagement plans.

BACKGROUND

6. In accordance with many pieces of legislation relating to the delivery of public services, the Authority, Constabulary and other partner agencies have statutory duties to inform, consult and involve the public in decision making. An overview of these duties are provided as Appendix 1.
7. Many surveys and engagement exercises take place across the policing area to meet these duties, and whilst effective in meeting their separate objectives, the public are being asked similar questions by different authorities
8. Often, the results of such exercises are not shared between partners and the outcomes are not fully cohesive. There is also limited consideration of the timing

of communication or consultation which can overlap and therefore cause consultation fatigue amongst the public.

9. As public services move towards achieving single performance measures relating to confidence and satisfaction to inform Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets and Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA) there is a new focus on improving outcomes for local people and places, based on perceptions and feelings rather than processes. Local Strategic Partnerships are already working in this area to develop and inform Sustainable Community Strategies and public services also have a requirement to develop and consult the public about our equality schemes.
10. Whilst improvements have been made in recent years, there is scope to improve the way community priorities are used to inform decision making and policing priorities. The Authority has successfully developed consultation and engagement methods for many communities but “partnership working” has been identified as a weakness in the self assessment.

METHODOLOGY

11. Members of the Scrutiny Group met in March, May and June 2009 and were provided with a monthly progress report against the following:-
 - Write to partner Chief Executives to advise them of the work planned by the Scrutiny Group and ask for their support;
 - Work with Constabulary to ensure that the work of the Scrutiny Group and the Confidence Strategy are fully integrated;
 - Research partner websites as a “member of the public” for information about public engagement opportunities;
 - Survey Most Similar Group and neighbouring Authorities activity (to inform this and the Partnership Scrutiny Group); and
 - Meet with partner agencies to map communication & consultation activity.
12. The work of the Scrutiny Group primarily focussed upon building effective working relationships with partners to join up communication and consultation activity where appropriate. Partners included the “relevant” CDRP partners who also serve on the Local Strategic Partnership (Police, Fire Authority, Primary Care Trusts and Local Authority), and the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) partners (HMCS, Probation and Prison Service). Over twenty meetings with partners ranging from one to one meetings to workshops to undertake mapping activity have taken place during the review.

13. It was clear during the initial work that different agencies are at different stages of development in planning communication and consultation activity. This has been exacerbated by the formation of the two new unitary authorities. As a result, there will be no *end date* to this piece of work as communication and consultation exercises develop with partners in line with their Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements. This activity will be carried out jointly as appropriate and incorporated into the Authority's Contact Plan and the proposed Partnership Strategy.
14. Ultimately, partners are aiming to develop a shared resource across public service providers to manage engagement activity and to support multi-agency engagement strategies.

COMMUNICATION

15. Cheshire wide strategic communications leads met to map the myriad of newsletters, leaflets and press releases which are issued to the public throughout the year to align messages and publications where possible. Whilst it is important that the Authority continues to provide an annual 'Your Policing' to meet its statutory duties to produce a Local Policing Summary, there is scope to produce a second publication each year in partnership with other public service providers.
16. Opportunities to produce joint publications are under discussion with each of the local authorities and The Fire and Rescue Service with respect to branding, costs, content and distribution. A recent Ipsos MORI report commissioned by the Home Office "*Local newsletters about crime and anti-social behaviour evidence based recommendations*" suggests that newsletters which depict police or council branding and are delivered through the door are more likely to positively influence confidence in public services than newsletters with CDRP or community safety branding. Options for joint publications will be presented to a future Engagement Committee for decision in early 2010. Early indications suggest that Cheshire West and Chester would be willing to produce a publication in partnership with statutory authorities whilst Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington would prefer to charge a page rate for partners to buy space in the in-house publications. This is the approach that the Fire Authority has taken previously.

CONSULTATION

17. 'Have Your Say' meeting dates have been offered to all four CDRPs to use to fulfil their statutory duties to hold "Face the People" meetings. All have accepted the invitation but no firm dates have been agreed.

Policing Priorities

18. Engagement Committee on 12 May 2009 (Minute 12) agreed to a standard survey to be used throughout the year for consultation with the public about their policing priorities. The survey incorporates questions relating to NI4 and NI21 namely to measure the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in the locality and dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour by local councils and the police. The results will be shared with partners to build upon the findings from their Place Surveys and to inform their Sustainable Community Strategies.

Confidence

19. The Authority has worked with the Constabulary to produce a Confidence Strategy which includes communication and consultation as an integral element of its delivery plan. The Confidence Strategy was agreed by the Authority on 30 June 2009 (Minute 33). A survey has been developed in the Authority's name to be conducted by telephone and will be used to measure progress against the single confidence measure (NI21) and to understand in more depth what stimulates confidence and satisfaction of the public about policing. The results will be statistically significant to +/-6.8% at neighbourhood policing unit level.
20. The survey will be conducted during August and September and exceeds the minimum technical requirements developed by the NPIA, APA and Home Office. It has been proposed that the survey will be conducted once per quarter in order to evaluate changes in confidence and to smooth external factors which may adversely affect perceptions on the day of asking.
21. The results will be geographically mapped onto existing crime, VLI, MOSAIC data etc. to group areas of satisfaction v crime etc. This will be used to identify groups and areas with high / low confidence levels. Four locations will then be selected to design, test and implement communication, engagement and operational policing interventions as follows:-

High Crime

	<p>Targeted Intelligence led Crime Reduction Communication and feedback Active engagement and community involvement</p>	<p>Crime Reduction & Prevention Operational Policing interventions</p>
Low Crime	<p>Problem solving Visibility Communications</p>	<p>Minimal intervention General communication and feedback</p>
	Low Confidence	High Confidence

The areas will be re-surveyed to measure the results and feedback will be provided to the communities involved.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

22. A summary of the partnership groups which have been established to co-ordinate joint activity are provided as Appendix 2.

Local Criminal Justice Board

23. Further to the Louise Casey Report; Building Confidence in the fight against crime, and the subsequent white paper *Engaging Communities in Criminal Justice*, emphasis being placed on community engagement and confidence by criminal justice partners and the Office for Criminal Justice Reform. The Authority has been invited to join the Cheshire Multi-Agency Community Engagement Steering Group which includes officer representatives from Probation Services, HMCS, Prisons, CPS and the Constabulary.
24. The Board recognises that understanding and prioritising communities, consultation, engagement and contributing to confidence and satisfaction outcomes should be done on a partnership basis, use existing tools and methods. To date, the group has mapped each agencies planned communication and consultation activity, monitors the work of the Halton pioneer area pilot scheme and has enjoyed some early results such as working together with magistrates at Cheshire Show and at the LGB&T youth event organised by the Authority in May. Representatives from HMCS and Probation Services have agreed to provide an input to the September 'Have Your Say' meetings and the group is working on a shared calendar to plan future activity.

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service

25. The Fire and Rescue Service are fully support of a joined up approach. The Fire & Rescue Service also chair and host a county wide group which plans and manages 3rd sector engagement activity which the Engagement Manager has joined. It is intended that this network will be used to consult about public service single equality schemes later in the year.

Primary Care Trusts

26. PCTs are partners of the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). West Cheshire PCT are leading on the development of a "hub", a web based events calendar to co-ordinate consultation across all public bodies. Funding has been approved to employ two administrators to work for Cheshire Community Voice to develop the calendar which will contain details of all events and surveys and will alert over 9000 people, split into thematic interest groups, about the events. Once established

and tested in West Cheshire, it is planned to extent the content and 3rd sector database to Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington. 'Have Your Say' meeting dates are included on the calendar and it is recommended that the Authority remains closely involved with the work.

WARRINGTON

27. Officers of Warrington Borough Council LSP have already completed an exercise to map their communication and consultation activity and have developed a database on which the Authority's Engagement Manager has been offered training. There is also a long established Partnership Engagement Group (PEG) which seeks to develop their work in line with their Sustainable Community Strategy. There are opportunities for joint working at neighbourhood and strategic level.

HALTON

28. Halton Borough Council has commenced work to audit its own engagement and consultation activity in order to inform their engagement strategy which will be presented to the LSP in September 2009. The Authority's Engagement Manager has been invited to join the Halton Engagement Network with is seeking to develop a partnership engagement strategy. The LSP has agreed to review inclusion of NI21 in their LAA set of target indicators and the CDRP was supportive of the proposal and activity will be progressed through the engagement network.

CESHIRE WEST & CHESTER

29. Several meetings have taken place with officers of Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) Council. The Authority's Engagement Manager has been invited to join the CWaC engagement sub group to develop a joint engagement strategy, plan for the community strategy consultation, develop 3rd sector engagement and develop joint surveys. CWaC has used the Authority's Contact Plan as a basis. The Authority hosted a partnership engagement meeting to map activity in July 2009.

CESHIRE EAST

30. The Authority has agreed to take the lead for community engagement and reassurance for Cheshire East CDRP. This relates to National Indicators NI4 and 21; namely to measure the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in the locality and dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour by local councils and the police. A delivery plan has been developed and an engagement strategy has been drafted for approval by the CDRP. Meetings have taken place with key officers to develop the work further and an engagement sub group has been established.

CONCLUSION

31. Whilst work is progressing well, there is disparity between the four unitary authorities and their need to be separate from each other in order to meet the objectives laid out in their sustainable community strategies. A *one size fits all* database will be more difficult to achieve in the shorter term and so it is recommended that the Authority remains an active member of the separate engagement groups in order to develop joint working as part of the role and responsibility of the Engagement Manager and the outcomes are used to inform and plan the Authority's communication and consultation activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That

- (1) communication and consultation activity continue to be mapped and used to inform the Authority's Contact Plan Action Plan;
- (2) communication and consultation with partners be included in the Authority's Contact Plan and proposed Partnership Strategy;
- (3) "Have Your Say" meetings be offered to the four CDRPs for use as "Face the People" meetings;
- (4) the Engagement Manager attend the engagement sub-groups of the Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Criminal Justice Board, as appropriate to develop joint opportunities for communication and consultation;
- (5) proposals for joint publications be presented to Engagement Committee for consideration; and
- (6) Authority consultation and communication activity be included in the Cheshire Community Voice "hub" to inform the 3rd sector about how they can get involved.

The report and recommendations were supported and endorsed by Engagement Committee on 25 August 2009 (Minute 22).

APPENDIX 1

AN OVERVIEW OF PARTNER DUTIES TO CONSULT WITH COMMUNITIES

POLICE AUTHORITY DUTIES

1. The Police Act 1996 Section 96 (amended by paragraph 30 of the Police and Justice Act 2006) states that arrangements shall be made by the police authority for each police area for obtaining:-
 - the views of people in that area about matters concerning the policing of the area;
 - their co-operation with the police in preventing crime in that area; and
 - seeking the cooperation of the community in preventing anti-social behaviour in addition to the prevention of crime.
2. The Police Act 1996 Section 7 states that “every police authority shall, before the beginning of each financial year, determine objectives for the policing of the authority’s area during that year and consider any views obtained by the authority in accordance with arrangements made under section 96.
3. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 17 states that “without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies (which includes police authorities) to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.
4. The Police and Justice Act 2006 Schedule 9 defines a “local crime and disorder matter as including in particular forms of crime and disorder that involve anti-social behaviour or other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment in the area represented by the member, or the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in that area.”

POLICING DUTIES

5. The Government’s public sector reform programme is aimed at increasing the ability of citizens to influence the provision of public services, as well as reducing the ‘perception gap’, whereby the public believe that many aspects of life (including levels of crime) have worsened, often in spite of statistical evidence to the contrary.
6. From April 2009, the Home Office introduced a single national target for policing, which concentrates not on a general sense of confidence, but specifically on how public priorities are met, and which includes the local council as well as the police. (*How well do the police and local council deal with the antisocial behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area?*). By 2012 the Constabulary must improve by 15% (with an interim milestone of 10% by 2011) against its current baseline of 43.5%.

THE DUTY TO INVOLVE

7. The Government White Paper 'Communities in Control – Real People, Real Power' published in July 2008 states that: "The White Paper sets out to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives. It is about creating strong, prosperous communities and delivering better public services through a rebalancing of the relationship between central government, local government and local communities."

Key issues are viewed from the perspective of individual citizens and include:

- being active in your community
 - having better access to information
 - having an influence
 - challenge
 - redress
 - standing for office
 - ownership and control.
8. While the White Paper focuses on local councils, police forces and health authorities, CLG has made it clear that its requirements also covers fire authorities. This means that from April 2009, public services have a 'duty to involve' which requires named bodies to take appropriate steps to involve people in decisions, policies and services that may affect them or be of interest to them.
 9. Since then the Government has continued to demand that public authorities not only consult residents and businesses but empower them to influence key decisions on local policies and services. The Police and Justice Bill has established 'Community Calls for Action' – the right of local people to require action on community safety issues they feel the police or other services have not tackled effectively.

LOCAL AUTHORITY DUTIES

10. The new performance framework for local government, which was set out in the Statutory Guidance *Creating Strong and Prosperous Communities October 2007* is about improving the quality of life in places and better public services. It brings together national standards and priorities set by Government with local priorities developed by the local authority and its partners. A set of national outcomes and a single set of national indicators by which to measure progress against them are a key building block for the new framework.
11. In October 2008, as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), the Government announced a new single set of 198 national indicators for local authorities and local authority partnerships. These are indicators for Local Authorities working alone or in partnership.

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT (CAA)

12. The first CAA report (including both the Organisational Assessment and the Area Assessment) will be published by November 2009 and are likely to be given widespread prominence both locally and nationally. It is clear that all partners must be able to demonstrate commitment not just to delivering the LAA targets, but to working together to meet community priorities. The Citizen Focus and confidence agenda is a central part of the inspection, as this quotation from the Audit Commission, writing on behalf of all the Inspectorates, demonstrates:
13. "...in determining how well community safety priorities express community needs and aspirations, we will explore the extent to which local communities are able to influence the setting of local policing and community safety priorities. We will consider how effectively citizens are involved in the setting of local priorities and local spending decisions on policing and community safety."
14. The CAA focuses on 'outcomes and how well local public bodies work with each other, the private and voluntary sectors, other organisations working locally, and their local communities'. The inspectors will look not just at indicators such as the LAA and the 198 elements of the National Indicator set, but also at the views of local people and voluntary agencies. The area assessment will focus on three main questions:
 - How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
 - How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
 - What are the prospects for future improvements?

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS (LSPs)

15. The Statutory Guidance *Creating Strong and Prosperous Communities October 2007* Section 2 *Governance and Accountability - 2.4 The Role of the LSP* states that they will "have oversight of and coordinate community consultation and engagement activities of individual partners and where appropriate, coordinate them."
16. The duty requires local authorities to take those steps they consider appropriate to involve representatives of local persons in the exercise of any of their functions. In terms of fulfilling the duty, authorities are expected to consider:

Accessibility: Authorities should ensure that representatives of local persons are informed/consulted/involved in a way that considers their needs. The appropriate method of engagement will depend on local circumstances and the audience the authority is trying to reach. Authorities should monitor the effectiveness of the chosen method of engagement.

Proportionality: authorities should consider the resources needed to inform, consult, and/or involve appropriately. the extent of the engagement should be proportionate to

the significance of the issue - both to the authority and to local people - and to the benefits to be gained from involvement.

Coordination: authorities should ensure that activities to inform, consult and involve representatives of local persons do not take place in isolation, but as part of an integrated approach across the area. As such, authorities should have a coordinated approach to information provision, consultation and involvement.

Partnership Working: work with partners through their local strategic partnership to coordinate information provision, consultation and involvement and share relevant knowledge.

Timing: authorities should consider when representatives of local persons should be informed, consulted and/or involved. In line with best practice it should be as early as possible to ensure that authority functions are shaped around the needs and aspirations of the community.

APPENDIX 2

PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT GROUPS

Group	Purpose	Chair	Members	Frequency	Benefit
Warrington Partnership Engagement Group	<p>Ensure consultation and engagement activity is led by, and follows the principles outlined in, the Sustainable Community Strategy.</p> <p>Maintain a link with the Warrington Partnership Board by providing regular updates on consultation and engagement activity and findings, and progress on the Partnership Engagement Strategy action plan.</p>	Camille Gamble – LSP	Warrington BC Fire & Rescue Police Authority Constabulary Housing Trust PCT Job Centre Plus	6 weekly	<p>Map and identify joint activity</p> <p>Currently developing Partnership engagement strategy to inform Sustainable community strategy, CAA and therefore, the Authority's Contact Plan.</p> <p>Demonstrate partnership working.</p>
LCJB Engagement Steering Group	To implement and monitor actions to contribute to the joint business plan which seeks to improve confidence in the criminal justice system through community involvement.	Geoffrey Appleton HMCS	Police Authority Constabulary GONW CPS HMCS Probation Local Authorities (representation tends to be limited to Halton as the pioneer area)	6 weekly	<p>Map and identify joint activity</p> <p>Implement decisions made by LCJB Consultative Group and Board.</p> <p>Progress joint working eg Have Your Say meetings & IDAHO conference</p>

Halton Engagement Group	To implement and monitor engagement activity determined by the Safer Halton partnership (CDRP) to contribute to LAA outcomes.	Shelah Semoff – LSP	Halton BC Fire & Rescue Police Authority Constabulary PCT	Bi-monthly	Map and identify joint activity Currently developing Partnership engagement strategy to inform Sustainable community strategy, CAA and therefore, the Authority's Contact Plan. Demonstrate partnership working.
Cheshire East Engagement Sub Group	To oversee and co-ordinate the mapping of engagement activity; To monitor progress of NIs 4 & 21 To determine the engagement information to be disseminated to Local Area Partnerships for further action To identify areas of low confidence and co-ordinate targeted engagement activity accordingly To advise the CDRP on how it can deliver the PREVENT agenda To report on activity/outcomes to the CDRP strategic board	Damon Taylor	Authority Constabulary Local Authority Probation Fire & Rescue CDAP	Bi-monthly	Map and identify joint activity Currently developing Partnership engagement strategy to inform Sustainable community strategy, CAA and therefore, the Authority's Contact Plan. Demonstrate partnership working.

Cheshire West & Chester Engagement Sub Group	Mapping and co-ordinate current and planned engagement activity of all LSP partners to inform SCS, LAA and CAA. Identify duplication and remove inefficiency Agree a joint engagement strategy	Joanne Jones - LSP	Police Authority Constabulary Local Authority Fire & Rescue LCJB	16 July 2009 Task and finish	
County Wide Communications Leads Group	Mapping and co-ordinate current and planned communication and publications of all LSP partners to Identify duplication, remove inefficiency and join up where appropriate:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation • Campaigns & publications • Critical Incidents • Websites 	TBA	Police Authority Constabulary Borough Councils Fire & Rescue PCTs	Bi-monthly	
Cheshire Equality and Diversity Leads Meeting,	To develop a co-ordinated approach to communication and involvement of Stakeholders within Cheshire. A forum to enable local Stakeholders to discuss key issues. Develop a co-ordinated approach to training	Erin Fulton – Fire & Rescue Services & Stephanie Lawley - NHS	Unitary Authorities Police Authority Fire & Rescue Services Probation CPS Information Commissioners office	Quarterly	Economies of scale in consultation. Shared learning Demonstrate partnership working.

	<p>and development. Share knowledge and understanding of Equality Impact Assessment and other key Equality & diversity issues. Developed a co-ordinated approach to community Engagement.</p>				
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