

**Summary of issues submitted at 'Policing the Future' Public Meeting
Held at County Hall, Glenfield on 24 May, 2011**

You asked about

The closure of police buildings, utilising new technology and policing in the community

Answers

We have reviewed our estate as we seek to provide local officers and staff based in local communities. This strategy is not about the withdrawal of services, but is about putting officers in the heart of the communities we serve. Services will be maintained and we will strive to improve these where-ever we can. The estates strategy offers us flexibility and will enable us to work out of areas of greatest need. We still have response officers and beat teams. We are actively seeking premises situated in the heart of communities, particularly where we can co-locate with business and retailers in premises frequented by the public. We already have officers working from over 60 such locations including schools, libraries, colleges and supermarkets. This means the officers are closer to their communities. The use of technology has helped us to map where our officers are as well as the use of hand held computers and mobile data terminals.

We have also reviewed our vehicle fleet, to ensure that we use every vehicle more effectively. This means that we need less vehicles, saving a significant amount of money.

You asked about

The IPCC report into the police contact with Fiona Pilkington and her daughter between 2004 and 2007

Answer

We have apologised to Fiona Pilkington's family, as we did following the inquest in 2009. We accept the findings and recommendations of the IPCC and in retrospect we would have done things differently. In the intervening years, we have made changes, including training 2500 officers and staff around identifying vulnerable people and those at risk. We have also introduced a new call handling system which helps the call handler to identify vulnerable people and repeat callers.

The Police Authority have held the Chief Constable to account and scrutinised the changes. A new assurance plan has been implemented that will enable the Authority to identify, scrutinise and provide assurance on themes emerging from the review of critical incidents.

We never stop learning. Policing is a 24/7, 365 day a year business that involves managing risk.

You asked about

The reduction in numbers of officers and staff and staff morale

Answers

Given a 15% reduction in budget, decisions were made based on operational requirement and available resources. These are challenging times, calling for a number of tough decisions, which means that a number of police staff roles sadly have needed to be made redundant. There has also been a number of voluntary redundancies and staff retiring which altogether means we are be a smaller organisation. People are concerned about potential changes to pensions, redundancy and this inevitably has an impact on morale. However, we still have a workforce of motivated officers and staff, many of which go the extra mile and a recent Chief Constable Awards Ceremony recognised many employees for a variety of good work over and above what would be expected.

Some good news is that due to retirements and careful budgeting we are hoping to recruit 20 new officers in the Autumn.

You asked about

Changes to beat boundaries and deployment of officers

Answer

We understand the need to keep Neighbourhood Teams, which we are endeavouring to do. However, boundaries need to be in line with those of our partners in local authorities for more effective joint working.

With regards to deployment, we task our resources to where there is a need; times change and we need to change with them. The response needs to be proportionate to the risk whilst recognising that relationships with local people are very important.

You asked about

Volunteers and partnership working

Answer

We are lucky to have so many volunteers who work in our organisation and partner volunteers such as NHW which is an important part of our business. Volunteers and Special Constables provide vital support to our organisation, and we value that. The 'Big Society' will become more important in the future. Partnership and engaging better at a local level is a focus and we work closely with partners such as the universities and local authorities to make sure Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland is a safe place to visit, study, work and live.

You asked about

People's perception of crime and fear of crime

Answer

Prisons are full as offenders are put there through the courts. Police officers in Leicestershire Constabulary make around 23,000 arrests each year, and we continue to work closely with other organisations within the Criminal Justice System.

Results from the last British Crime Survey showed that overall crime was down in our area and through working in partnership with a variety of agencies such as the NHS, Fire and Rescue Service, Probation, local councils and the voluntary sector we all aim to make people feel safer. The chance of becoming a victim of crime is thankfully, very low.

Whilst we provide reassurance to communities through consultation and engagement, we want people to tell us when they think we are doing things right, and equally, tell us about things we should perhaps stop doing - things that they don't think are essential. It's the must have, nice to have and don't need to have equation. Going out and engaging in the right places is part of this, but we have to balance risk and available options.

You asked about

The impact of the Olympics and hosting of Team GB and Japan

Answer

We have an extensive planning process in place, led by an Assistant Chief Constable, which includes liaison with Loughborough University, local authorities, and the Local Resilience Forum, to ensure we are in the best position to receive the teams. There are many logistical issues but we must also remember that the teams coming to stay in our area is good news for us. We will deal with this and continue our day to day business. We have to manage the risk which is unpredictable. Whilst our reserves are used to help fund public order and large events such as this, we will be seeking appropriate cost recovery.

You asked about

Prioritising of concerns/offences relating to drugs

Answer

Drugs are always a priority as they are definitely a driver of crime.

Drug issues will be identified through local neighbourhood teams and where appropriate, made into local priorities.

Resources are dedicated to drug crime as they often link to other crimes and we regularly carry out covert investigation and drug enforcement operations. We also undertake drug testing of people in police custody.

You asked about

CCTV

Answer

We have lots of liaison between the CCTV operators. We have picked up people directly from CCTV input. They can in some cases help us deploy officers. It does help us catch criminals as was exemplified in a recent local radio broadcast.

You asked about

Police and Crime Commissioners

Answer

Changes in governance means that one person will be charged with holding the Chief Constable to account. That person will be directly elected, with initial elections scheduled for May 2012. At the moment there are 17 people all with different business skills, which will be replaced by just one. The changes need to be managed carefully. The Police and Crime Panel will actually scrutinise the work of the Commissioner, not the Force. However, things are changing rapidly and what we say today may change by our next meeting!

You asked about

PCSO Powers

Answer

PCSOs are valuable members of our neighbourhood teams but they do not have the same powers as a police officer. The powers given to a PCSO vary slightly from Force to Force, but have to be kept within national parameters. If they have more powers, their role will change and we believe that people want PCSOs to have greater visibility, not less.

You asked about

The way we communicate especially with young people

Answer

We try very hard to communicate with all our communities. It is important that we are even more transparent which is why we embrace new technology such as publishing crime data on line and using social media networks. A number of our neighbourhood officers are now reaching out to schools and youth groups through Twitter and Facebook. We also continue to use traditional media outlets, such as local papers, radio and television.

You asked about

Why does the purpose police station which opened on 20 May 2002 now have to close nine years later? It is after all a new building; can it not be better used? Shepshed has been deemed a town, what has changed to remove this status? Could this decision to close be reviewed as the residents have supported a petition and we have also written to the various authorities

Answer

Leicestershire Constabulary has faced a challenge of delivering £30 million worth of savings by 2014. Through 2010-2011 we have already identified £15million of the savings required. Such a large saving has meant that the Constabulary has taken a whole scale review of how we deliver the services that are important to our community. It is clear communities want to retain officers and staff to deliver the service rather than the buildings they work from.

To support this we have introduced mobile computers to officers so that they can do a majority of their paperwork out in the community rather than behind closed doors. For 2011-12 we have committed to a target of increasing visible patrol time by 20%. This has been supported by neighbourhood surgeries and many improvements with technology to allow you to e-mail your beat team or leave them messages.

All of our buildings were reviewed as to whether they were fit for purpose and offered the Constabulary best value for money and some were clearly beyond our current requirements. I made a commitment that where offices were removed this would be done in consultation with the local community and alternative community offices would be sought prior to the sale or relinquishing of any office.

We now have over 69 Neighbourhood teams located in offices at various locations across the force, thereby being accessible to local people.

As you are aware Shepshed police office is shared with the Fire Service. We are currently in discussion with the Fire Service to potentially retain a smaller proportion of the building for your local beat team. Alternatively we are also looking at alternative properties within the town. We appreciate all comments from the community on the proposals as they develop.

You asked about

Are the public right to be more reassured, on a day to day basis, by the policeman on the bike who has got to know his local community than by passing police cars?

Which will the government cuts affect the most?

Answer

Establishing the exact factors that influence public reassurance in policing is difficult. This is due to it being a complex combination of factors such as media, crime rates, personal encounters with the police and visible patrols. It is clear through consultation that communities felt the Constabulary should prioritise visibility of officers whilst it delivered the savings we are required to achieve (£30 million by 2014)

In the first part of our savings plan we kept all beat officer numbers the same and delivered the savings from other areas of business such as reducing the costs of

buildings and reducing support staff roles. Police officers use a variety of methods to patrol their beats and whilst the pushbike is a useful method of patrol I am sure you appreciate it does not give officers the ability to respond as quickly to incidents. Therefore the constabulary has tried to strike a balance between a number of different methods of patrol that keep us accessible to the community.

I would like to highlight that the officers in patrol cars will also in general be local to your area and although they might not be part of your beat team they will have knowledge of the locality.

At the Chief and Chair event I explained the savings that the Constabulary needed to achieve by 2014. These total £30 million. Through extensive plans we have already delivered savings of at least £15 million. The future plans for delivery are currently being developed and it is therefore too early for me to speculate on which areas of policing will be affected by the savings. Leicestershire Constabulary has utilised this opportunity to look at how we can deliver policing more efficiently and effectively, many of these savings will actually improve performance. I took on board all the comments that were made on the evening about how we should prioritise areas of business that the community feel should be protected. We also have to balance the desire for visible policing with the need to deliver those areas of policing that are often not visible to the public such as child protection and counter terrorism work.

You asked about

Why am I no longer receiving information about criminality in my area despite belonging to neighbourhood watch?

Answer

We are currently in the process of introducing a new system with which we will circulate information to our communities; once this is introduced circulations will return. Traditionally the constabulary had just shared statistics with neighbourhood watch groups. These figures did not really equip you to assist us in preventing and solving crime. As such a lot of work has gone into looking at what information is most useful to share with Neighbourhood Watch and other members of the community. For up to date information on your area you will also find the crime mapping website useful. www.police.uk if you enter your postcode into this site it gives you current crime information for your area. In relation to your newsletters and updates on your beat your local team will be able to keep you informed. If you do not know who your beat team are you can call 0116 2222222 and be given the appropriate contact details. Alternatively if you go to the Leicestershire Constabulary website and enter your postcode it will identify your beat team. There is then a link for you to directly send an e-mail to them.

You asked about

In my life time (nearly 80 years) there has been a disempowering by the state of the general public from dealing with antisocial behaviour and crime themselves, which from my personal experience contributes to an increase in crime. Are you considering how general public can be more engaged?

Answer

For many different reasons some members of the community might not feel equipped to speak to neighbours or local residents about incidents that have caused them distress or which they consider to be anti-social behaviour, I would therefore always encourage members of the community to call us if they are concerned.

The current Government is currently considering a Green Paper on sentencing which will look at various ways the community can be involved in dealing with offenders. One example which is currently being tested around the Country is Neighbourhood Justice Panels to decide on punishments for low level crimes. This idea is currently being considered for implementation within Leicestershire.

Locally we have implemented restorative justice which involves the victim (if they wish to be involved) in influencing the punishment an offender receives. This, for example, allows offenders the opportunity to make good damage they have done.

You asked about

In the 90's there were 15 Police Officers at Ashby, there is now only 1. Where have they all gone?

Answer

The neighbourhood team for Ashby consists of 1 Sgt, 2 PCs, and 2 PCSOs. In addition to your local officers, response officers are now based at Coalville.

Since the 1990's policing has broadened. Areas of work such as our response to Domestic Violence; Child Protection; Firearms; Organised Crime and Counter terrorism work all relate to our communities and although they do not operate from your local stations I am sure you will agree they are a necessary part of policing.

We continually review the balance of policing we assign to different areas of business to ensure that we are targeting our limited resources to where they will have best effect in securing the safety of the people of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

You asked about

Will the new system see less community policing?

Answer

Leicestershire Constabulary has currently achieved £15 million of savings; however we need to achieve a total of £30 million by 2014. So far we have managed to preserve neighbourhood teams as we recognise the importance of Neighbourhood policing to our community. Instead we focused the savings on reduction of buildings and back office functions. The plans for phase 2 of our savings are being developed. All the comments received from the community at the Chief and Chair events will contribute to the discussions we will have on how resources should be allocated.

You asked about

How bad will the funding cuts affect police performance?

Answer

At the Chief and Chair event I explained the savings that the Constabulary needed to achieve by 2014. These total £30 million. Through extensive plans we have already delivered savings of at least £15 million. The future plans for delivery are currently in their infancy and it is therefore too early for me to speculate on which areas of policing will be affected by the savings. Leicestershire Constabulary has utilised this opportunity to look at how we can deliver policing more efficiently and effectively, many of these savings will actually improve performance. I took on board all the comments that were made on the evening about how we should prioritise areas of business that the community feel should be protected. We also have to balance the desire for visible policing with the need to deliver those areas of policing that are often not visible to the public such as child protection and counter terrorism work.

You asked about

What are the implications to the force in cuts made by government?

Answer

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You asked about

Street lights are turned off – all elderly residents. Could solar lighting be used?

Answer

Although this is not an issue that we could progress alone, we work closely with partner agencies on such issues and will forward your suggestion to the Local Authority.

You asked about

Could you please publicise Street Pastors more?

Answer

I recognise that on the evening I did not refer to the valuable contribution made Street pastors; however I have been impressed by the work of the street pastors which I have seen at first hand whilst out on patrol in Leicester City centre. I appear on their website endorsing their efforts.

The panel were asked ...

If money was no object what one thing would you choose to make policing better?

Answer

- More people, people are the most important asset we have
- Reducing the fear of crime.
- Best equipment and systems

And finally ... the Chief Constable asked

In the light of budget constraints, what should we stop doing?

Answer

There were no suggestions forthcoming.