

LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

PAPER MARKED

E

Meeting **CONSULTATION & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

Date **THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2009 – 2.00 P.M.**

Report of **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Subject **LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND STATISTICS AND
RESEARCH GROUP (SARCOG)**

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides details regarding the Leicestershire and Rutland Statistics and Research Group (SARCOG) and, in particular, the Consultation and Engagement Sub-Group.

Background

2. The overriding aim of the group is to ensure that Research and Analysis is carried out in a joined up way in partnership across all the public sector organisations across the county.
3. All relevant public sector organisations are members of SARCOG and have agreed to the aims and objectives which were ratified at the SARCOG meeting of 24 August 2009.
4. Amongst the SARCOG sub-groups is the Consultation and Engagement sub-group which is headed by Research and Information Team Leader at Leicestershire County Council, the policing service is represented on this sub group by Ch.Insp. Adam Streets. Indeed I believe that he represents the wider "Criminal Justice system" on the sub-group as the other CJ agencies are represented in SARCOG but do not have a place on this sub-group.
5. The aims and objectives of the sub-group were agreed at the meeting as:
 - to act as an advisory and task group for SARCOG on consultation and engagement matters;
 - to map and maintain an overview of the main structures and mechanisms for consultation and engagement;
 - to improve efficiency and effectiveness, including through identifying and securing opportunities for joint consultation or engagement activity;
 - to co-ordinate public satisfaction/perception surveying (eg the Place Survey) and advise on actions to secure improved public satisfaction scores;

- to develop arrangements which will ensure the sharing amongst partner agencies of data and intelligence generated, the effective analysis of the data, and the feeding back results to the public and stakeholders;
 - to promote and share best practice amongst partners.
6. There was agreement amongst SARCOG members that no consultation takes place unless at least one of the following criteria is met:
- To improve Service Delivery?
 - To promote organisational change?
 - To establish new services?
 - To establish new methods of delivery?
 - To establish preferred methods of communication with customers?
 - To predict future areas of service demand?
 - To produce efficiencies through channelling of public communication?
7. In addition a statistical “control” will be placed on consultation to ensure that over surveying does not take place, so even if a proposed exercise may meet the above criteria if a “statistically sufficient” quantity of surveying has already taken place then any further examination of the same subject area should be discouraged.
8. There was an acceptance by the Sub-Group that the current position where all agencies are acting independently of each other is the first challenge that must be addressed.
9. The Sub-Group will therefore be “mapping” all Consultation and Engagement being carried out across Leicestershire and will (in line with paragraph 5 second bullet point) be taking overall control to stop the duplication and unnecessary work as soon as is practical.
10. In future the process will be that all planned consultation exercises will be submitted to SARCOG who will decide initially whether:
- The consultation is necessary in the first place (it may not meet one of the eight criteria, it may be a repeat of an exercise recently carried out by another agency or it may be considered of “limited statistical value”).
 - Whether the work is should be carried out unilaterally or jointly
 - Whether the timing is appropriate.
11. It should be noted that SARCOG is not itself a unilateral organisation, it is a representative of all the Public Sector organisations in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and hence only aims to “refuse” or “amend” requests where there is a clear benefit to the public in doing so. This is an overriding aspiration of SARCOG and one which all partner agencies have signed up to at previous meetings.
12. It was stated that in many cases regular consultation programmes are on-going and there is no intention that they will be affected, for instance, there is a statutory requirement for surveying of victims of certain crime types that are carried out by the Police, this will continue but by “registering” with SARCOG it will be clear to all other partners that this is going on and they can either avoid contact with this type of people to avoid “burdening” them, or it may be that other agencies in the Criminal

Justice system may wish to incorporate some questions of their own in these surveys rather than carrying out a separate exercise.

13. The CRAVE survey was used as an example of a current consultation exercise where there would be an aspiration to encourage other agencies to incorporate areas that are of interest to them into the same survey since the incremental cost of this is likely to be significantly less than running a separate survey.
14. This will have an impact on organisations who have a consultation and engagement regime that is loose and relies on ad hoc consultations rather than a planned schedule. This was accepted, but equally there was a feeling that best practice should be to be working to a structured planned schedule in any case. There will always be exceptions to this but SARCOG would not want to encourage a situation where an organisation does not have a structured plan of what consultation events will be taking place a fair way ahead of these events.
15. Another aspect that the Sub-Group is keen to introduce is the concept that consultation should not be categorised as being on behalf of specific organisations but rather it should be “Theme” based and some of these “Themes” may cut across more than one agency (for example, one suggested was “Criminal Justice system”) or cover a particular demographic group (such as “Young People”). This may be a cultural change for some organisations who are used to operating “in organisational silos” but one which is felt will improve both the process for those being engaged with and the quality of the information being collected as there will be less danger of respondents misinterpreting the area that they are being asked about.
16. There is a strong belief that one driver of “lack of confidence” is the lack of “joined up” consultation and the intention must be to ensure that any contact is “high value” and “low frequency”. It was suggested by more than one attendee that “confidence” itself can be reduced by the process of assessing confidence, if, for example, the same people are being contacted by various public sector bodies asking for their opinions on very similar subjects. The Sub-Group aims to reduce the number of “contacts” that a member of public might potentially have whilst increasing the quality and value of each contact.
17. The group recognises that there are statutory duties for various public bodies regarding consultation with the communities, but believes that these requirements will not be compromised by ensuring that SARCOG monitors that there is a “joined up” approach since the requirements are to “ensure that the public are consulted” and not “to do the consultation themselves”. So there is no issue if, for instance, a Council includes elements of the service provided by the Police in a consultation and then feeds the Police Authority the results since the Police Authority is able to assure itself that the public have been consulted with. This is particularly relevant for consultations with “hard to reach” groups where a number of topics can be covered in “one sitting” rather than different agencies having to arrange different events to cover just their areas of responsibility.
18. Another aspiration of the sub-group is to act as “surveying” consultants to all public sector organisations across the area and it was agreed that all public surveys should be passed through the group to ensure consistency of question styles etc. In light of this, even though there was already a representative of the Policing Service on the Sub-Group, Glenn Brown asked if he could join to give the group the benefit of his surveying expertise, this was agreed. The policing service therefore has a greater representation on this sub-group than other public sector groupings.

Joint Consultation Exercises approved by SARCOG

19. Two specific exercises which are already in a planning stage were communicated and partner agencies were both invited to participate and discouraged from planning any similar exercises:

20. **Consultation with Business Communities**

It is intended that 1,000 Business leaders will be contacted by Leicester and Leicestershire Support Unit in late Autumn 2009 (and results available in time to assist in 2010/11 priority setting) and asked for their views on a range of subjects, the aim is to do 90-100 per district with 320-350 in the City. However, as the funding was sourced through the Economic Sub-Region the scope of the exercise would not cover Rutland which is linked with Lincolnshire as a Sub-Region. Ch.Supt.Nixon expressed an interest about including questions relevant to the policing service. The contact is Caroline Boucher at Leicester and Leicestershire Support Unit.

21. **Public Consultation regarding Public Service priorities in light of cuts in funding**

Leicestershire County Council have been commissioned to carry out an area wide consultation on behalf of all public sector organisations regarding the levels of local taxation and precepts and what services the public would want to prioritise this public spending upon. This is still in a planning stage but all public sector organisations will be contacted in due course and in the meantime are asked not to commence any similar exercises in isolation. The contact is Andy Robinson at Leicestershire County Council.

Recommendation

22. The Committee is recommended to:

- (i) approve Police Authority membership of SARCOG;
- (ii) note the structures that will be put in place under SARCOG and ensure that future consultations are planned and implemented within this framework; and
- (iii) note the 2 planned Consultation exercises that have already been approved by the SARCOG sub-group.

Implications

Financial – none; Legal – none; Diversity – the diversity of respondents has been captured where possible and indicated in the report; Risk management – none.

Background Papers

None

Persons to Contact

Sarah Hoare, Engagement & Communications Officer. Tel: (0116) 229 8980
Stuart Fraser, Performance Analyst, Tel: (0116) 229 8987
Email: police.authority@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk