

Leicestershire Police Authority

Communication Strategy

2010-2013

Approved:
Review Date:

Definition of communication

For the purposes of this strategy, communication is defined as

“The sharing or exchanging of information, news and opinions to achieve greater understanding.”

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Outline Activity Schedule

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Our Vision

“To ensure the best and most effective policing for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, meeting the needs of our diverse communities.”

With regard to communication the vision is underpinned by the following values:

- The way in which the Authority communicates is shaped by consultation with its audiences and therefore methodologies utilised will be diverse, designed to appropriately reach all sectors of the community.
- The Authority’s communication provides clarity on the Authority’s role, its responsibilities, its aims and objectives.
- The Authority communicates openly, honestly and professionally, enabling members of the public, stakeholders and partners to reach informed decisions about policing.

Introduction

The purpose of this communication strategy is to establish a framework to ensure that Leicestershire Police Authority communicates as effectively as possible with all its target audiences.

Following a number of challenges, the Authority is now in a position to build upon its existing processes to develop a consistent approach to communication to establish the Authority's brand image and deliver its key messages to diverse audiences. Where appropriate it will compare and contrast messages with the Constabulary.

Police Authorities, unlike many other organisations in the public sector, do not deliver a direct service. Therefore it is essential that all communication demonstrate the role of the Authority and how this works to secure an effective and efficient police service in consultation with, and on behalf of, the local community.

The need for a robust approach to communication is highlighted by the Government, HMIC and the Audit Commission, and the Statutory duties placed upon the Authority. Research has shown that the general public prefer to receive their information via the local media and leaflets rather than electronically, which this strategy takes into account.

Alongside this the single confidence target has increased the need to communicate widely and support the work to engage with the public.

This document has been prepared with a genuine desire to drive improvement and deliver enhanced communication to the Authority's audiences. It provides the blueprint for communication activity for Leicestershire Police Authority for the next three years and will be evaluated on a regular basis.

Why is communication important?

Communication is a core part of everyone's role within the Authority. Without clear, relevant and timely communication throughout the organisation, the best possible service will not be delivered. It is vital that every member of staff takes responsibility for both giving and receiving information with others.

The Audit Commission guidance states that there should be good intelligence gathering and community consultation mechanisms, which take into account different interests and perspectives and are used to inform priority setting. It also states that public bodies should provide feedback to those involved and be more efficient at getting input from service users and then acting upon it. The Authority's priorities should respond to both national and local priorities and these should be effectively communicated internally and externally.

There is a direct link between effective communication and satisfaction. The more that people feel informed, the higher the overall satisfaction rating is likely to be. People who feel the Authority keeps them well informed are also more likely to believe that they are getting value for money, thus increasing public confidence in the Authority and policing in Leicestershire.

Benefits are seen as:

- Increased awareness of the Police Authority
- Greater understanding of the challenges to policing
- Management of expectations leading to increased satisfaction
- Increased partnership working
- Greater cohesion with both external and internal audiences.

Scope of this Strategy

This strategy covers the following elements of Leicestershire Police Authority's communication:

- Reactive and proactive media communication
- Electronic communication (E-shots and website)
- Publications, Policies and Plans
- Committee Reports, Minutes and Agendas
- Internal communication
- Communication to support Community Engagement Activity
- Communication to support specific initiatives

The Target Audience

It is accepted that one size does not fit all. The 'public' is a collection of people with vastly differing needs and expectations of the police force. The target audiences below are not an exhaustive list, but an illustration of the breadth and variety of different segments that need to be considered. The Police Authority aims to deliver appropriate information to each sector of the target audience.

External

- General public and residents of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland
 - The business community
 - Rural communities
 - Urban communities
 - Victims and witnesses
 - Elderly people
 - Young people
 - Ethnic and community groups
 - Those whose first language is not English
 - Those who live in fear of crime
 - Those who are vulnerable
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transexual Community
 - People with disabilities
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- National Associations (eg Victim Support etc)
 - Local and national media – (published, broadcast and multimedia)

Internal

- Members of the Police Authority
- Officers of the Police Authority
- Officers and support staff of Leicestershire Police
- Contracted suppliers to Authority and Force

Partners and Stakeholders

- Partners (eg Community Safety Partnerships)
- Stakeholders (eg Neighbourhood Watch, DAATs)
- Central Government (inc Home Office)
- HMIC and Audit Commission
- Local government and authorities
- Local councillors and politicians including MPs
- Criminal Justice Board
- National boards – (APA, ACPO, NPIA etc)

Key Communication Objectives

These can be summarised as follows:

- The Police Authority holds the police to account on behalf of the public
- To raise the profile of the Authority to ensure that all audiences have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Police Authority
- To promote the Authority as the bridge between the police service and the public
- To encourage community engagement by involving, informing and reassuring people, through creative, varied and carefully selected communication vehicles
- To support the work of the Constabulary in increasing confidence and satisfaction in local policing
- To raise awareness of the benefits provided by the Authority's partnership and collaboration work
- To communicate decisions taken by the Authority and their impact upon local policing and local people.
- To impart performance information to all audiences
- To demonstrate that the Authority listens to people, and sets local priorities to tackle the things that matter most to local people.
- To raise awareness and understanding of policing issues and challenges to help local communities set realistic policing priorities for their neighbourhood.
- To protect the reputation of the Authority
- To communicate honestly, openly and transparently, in a timely fashion
- To support the delivery of the aims and objectives contained within the Authority's Business Plan and Improvement Plan

Commitment

It is vital that expectations should not be raised unrealistically and that the Authority should respect confidentiality and engender trust, so communication will be supported by a series of commitments to guide all aspects of the communication work carried out by the Authority.

Leicestershire Police Authority is committed to:

- Communicating in an open and transparent fashion,
- Working in partnership with other organisations
- Continuous improvement in performance
- Ensuring that the community is informed
- Communicating a variety of messages clearly, concisely and effectively
- The highest standards of conduct and the promotion of diversity
- Ensuring value for money and good use of available resources
- Ensuring that communication is productive, appropriate, effective and fully integrated into its activities
- Eliminating barriers to effective communication
- Meeting its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act (2000)
- Evaluating the success of the different methodologies of communication.

Key Messages

- The Police Authority is responsible for maintaining an efficient and effective police service for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and holding the Chief Constable to account
- The Police Authority carefully monitors the performance of the Police Force, setting challenging targets to drive continual improvements. It has put in place effective mechanisms to ensure its scrutiny of anti-social behaviour is more robust to protect the vulnerable in society
- The Police Authority is the budget holder for policing in the county and sets the amount of money local people pay towards policing through their council tax. It monitors expenditure to ensure good value for money on behalf of local residents
- The Authority is responsible for engagement with the diverse local communities to involve people in shaping police service delivery and listen to their views. The feedback from its consultation is used to set policing priorities, drive improvements and ensure that policing tackles the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter most to people. As part of this function the Authority will inform the community how the outcomes of consultation have been used to shape the delivery of local policing.
- The Police Authority is responsible for the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme to obtain independent verification that detainees in custody are being looked after in accordance with their rights and in decent, safe conditions
- The Police Authority is committed to the six strands of diversity – age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief and ethnicity - and equality of opportunity
- The regular meetings of the full Police Authority and its Committees are open to the public, to enable them to see the decision making process in action
- The Authority fully supports the Constabulary in its work to meet the standards of the Policing Pledge. This includes the improvements in communication with the public, neighbourhood priority setting and the complaints process
- The Authority is the independent ‘watchdog’ for local policing, it acts as a critical and challenging friend to the Constabulary, to drive improvement.
- The Police Authority is committed to local partnership working and collaborative working with other forces

- The Police Authority investigates complaints against senior officers and oversees the process of all complaints
- The Police Authority is committed to the Citizen Focus agenda, including Neighbourhood Policing, and keeps people informed of police performance.
- The Police Authority has a number of statutory duties, including appointing the senior officer team. More information on these can be found in leaflets and the website.

These key messages will be supported by both reactive and pro-active messages and news items.

Obviously, these key messages are generic and will be used as required in the Authority specific communication initiatives. Communication for specific initiatives will be utilised as part of the pro-active programme to raise the profile of the Authority.

Key methods of communication

The following vehicles will be used, as appropriate, to communicate the agreed messages to **external** audiences:

- Branding material
- Press releases and interviews
- Member networking opportunities
- Face to face meetings
- Leicestershire Police Authority website
- Partner publications and websites
- Police Authority meetings
- Committee papers
- Partner meetings
- Dialogue with local and national politicians
- Policing Plan and Local Policing Summaries
- Council Tax leaflet
- Information leaflets – dedicated and non-specific
- Advertising in local newspapers
- Printed matter – posters and letters
- Exhibition panels
- New technology and social media as appropriate
- Localised information with other partners**
- Consultation mechanisms

****Partners** include the following:

- Community Groups
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (Community Safety Partnerships)

- Equality/Diversity Agencies
- Responsible Authorities
- Local and Parish Councils
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Fire Authority
- Business Forums
- Health Partners
- Other Law and Order Groups (Courts, Probation, Crown Prosecution Service etc.)
- Criminal Justice Board
- Independent Advisory Groups

The following additional vehicles will be used to communicate the agreed messages to **partners**:

- Stakeholder news – sent electronically
- Agenda dispatch with invitation

The following vehicles will be used as appropriate to communicate the agreed messages to **internal** audiences:

- Any of the above as appropriate (in advance of public accessibility)
- Staff/members handbook
- Editorial in internal newsletters
- Key news e-mailed across the Authority and relevant officers
- Staff networks
- Intranet
- Notice boards
- Briefing sessions
- Awards Scheme

Who will communicate?

The Authority Secretariat will provide:

- press and public relations
- media handling
- branding direction and management
- on-call cover
- crisis management
- support to the members and secretariat for communication issues
- copywriting and production services for Authority publications as required
- input to partner publications and website
- media training and advice
- information to assist with evaluation
- information on general policing issues in the media which may affect the Authority communication/decisions
- advice and support for the promotion of consultation/engagement work including feedback opportunities
- timely support and information as required to members and the media consultants on all the items above
- feedback of material and information gained from consultation and engagement activity
- internal information
- verification that legislative responsibilities are being met

Authority members will be available for:

- networking opportunities
- face to face meetings
- Authority meetings
- information sharing
- dialogue with local and national politicians
- partnership work
- press interviews (Chair and Vice-Chair)
- briefing sessions

Branding

The Authority's 'brand' is, in essence, its face to the world and therefore it is important that this image reflects the Authority values. The Authority 'brand' will be refreshed and reinforced to effectively raise the profile of the Authority and illustrate the progress it has made.

The relevance of the Authority's strapline will be reviewed with members and staff from time to time as appropriate.

Media Training

Some members and officers, such as the Chair and Vice-Chair, are more likely to be approached for media interviews than others.

It is important that they have the confidence to undertake this role, therefore, where appropriate, media training will be provided. It will cover what is newsworthy, how to respond to difficult questions, what to expect, making the point that you wish to make and mistakes to avoid.

Environmental Scanning

It is important that Members are aware of Government and media (national and local) issues that may have direct, or indirect, relevance to their work. The Authority secretariat provides weekly updates of pertinent information via email/briefings and reports.

Community Engagement

The Authority will ensure that community engagement activities are appropriately publicised in a timely fashion to encourage involvement. The Authority's Community Engagement Officer will publicise details of the event for advance publicity purposes and disseminate the responses swiftly for either public or group specific feedback as appropriate.

Evaluation

Evaluation of activity as a result of this communication strategy will allow judgement of both individual and overall successes.

The method of evaluation by activity varies and progress against the annual activity plan will be reported to the Authority.

Barriers to Communication

Having established that the provision of information is of paramount importance it is also essential to recognise that there are barriers to success. These include:

- Budgetary restrictions
- Cultural differences
- Attitude and long-standing beliefs
- Lack of interest or time
- National media campaigns
- Timescales
- Use of jargon
- Disengagement with all types of public service
- Where English is not the first language
- Audio or visual impairment
- The type of communication tools used

To address these issues we will:

- Assess the budget available
- Be mindful of cultural needs and expectations
- Offer alternative formats
- Be aware of topical issues
- Use clear and simple language
- Provide explanations of acronyms and avoid jargon
- Use easily readable fonts at a size no less than 12 pt wherever possible
- Provide the widest practical accessibility features on the website
- Use tools such as text messages and picture cards for different audiences
- Ensure that wherever possible, the timescales for the provision of information are practical
- Use creativity and imagery designed to increase interest

Success Factors

The successful implementation of this communication strategy will depend on a number of factors including:

- The commitment of the Authority to adopt the strategy and to support its implementation in terms of resource.
- Any change in Government or Government policy which alters the current expectations placed on Authorities and Forces.
- The availability of finance to support the initiatives arising from this strategy.
- The 'newsworthy' element of the Authority's work – eg, public meetings, controversy, consultation exercises for feedback.
- Clarity and timeliness of briefing material.

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Summary

In support of this Strategy an Annual Activity Plan will be produced, setting out the key communication activities for the year ahead, against which progress can be measured.

It is also supported by a media protocol between the Authority and the Constabulary and document on media procedures.

It is acknowledged that the success of all elements will depend upon a number of critical factors and that all members and staff of the Authority are committed to assist in its development and delivery.

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