



**WEST MERCIA  
CONSTABULARY**  
TOGETHER - WORKING FOR SAFETY AND JUSTICE



**West Mercia  
Police Authority**

# **WEST MERCIA CONSTABULARY AND WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY**

## **JOINT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

**Version 2  
April 2008**

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# 1. Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy: Aim and Objectives

## 1.1 Introduction

The White paper 'Building Communities, Beating Crime', published in November 2004, set out the second phase of the Government's intended reforms to policing. Since this time, a number of statutory and guidance documents have been produced which are driving forward work by West Mercia Police Authority, West Mercia Constabulary and our partners. Examples of such documents include Professionalising the Business of Neighbourhood Policing, the National Quality of Service Commitment and Review of the Partnership Provision of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

In recognising the above drivers for change and the importance of consultation, engagement and communication with the communities of West Mercia to both the Police Authority and Constabulary, this second Community Engagement Strategy outlines the Constabulary's and Police Authority's respective roles with regards delivering effective consultation and engagement. It also presents the strategic approaches to be taken by the Constabulary and the Police Authority over the coming twelve months in order to consult and engage with the communities of West Mercia. This Strategy supports and complements our joint Three Year Strategy, '**4000+ an even better place**' and our **4000+ programme of change**.

## 1.2 Aim and Objectives

### 1.2.1 Aim

The principal aim of this Joint West Mercia Constabulary and West Mercia Police Authority Community Engagement Strategy is:

**To improve West Mercia's Communities' levels of confidence in their local police and to provide reassurance.**

In addition, the strategy sets out to:

- Clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the Constabulary and the Police Authority with respect to consultation and community engagement.
- Fulfil our statutory duties around communicating, consulting and engaging with our communities.
- Support our Three Year Strategy '4000+ an even better place'.

The Constabulary and Police Authority intend to achieve this aim through the greater involvement of our communities – whether they are living, working, spending time or passing through Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin or Worcestershire – in determining how they are policed to ensure they get the best from our policing and to provide a better quality of life for residents of West Mercia, as set out by our Objectives (see Section 1.2.2).

## 1.2.2 Objectives

The strategy sets out the following objectives to ensure the aim is achieved:

- A. Meaningful and reassuring interaction between the force and the public.
- B. Meaningful and reassuring interaction between the Police Authority and the public.
- C. Gathering and taking into account public opinion.
- D. Providing feedback and information to the public.
- E. Working with partners to deliver co-ordinated and effective action.

## 1.3 West Mercia Police Authority

*Responsible for securing the maintenance of an efficient and effective police service for the communities within West Mercia.*

The Authority's statutory duties include making arrangements, in consultation with the Chief Constable, for obtaining the views of local people about matters concerning policing and for taking these views into consideration in determining policing priorities. The Authority is also required to obtain the co-operation of local people with the police in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Authority prides itself on being a listening Authority and, as such, the views of the communities it serves are paramount in its decision-making processes, including agreeing policing priorities and setting the police budget. The information received also helps the Authority in its role as an independent body monitoring, overseeing and scrutinising the effectiveness and efficiency of West Mercia Constabulary. Although the Authority cannot interfere with day to day operational decisions, it aims to consult upon and reflect public opinion on policing matters and, in discussion with the Chief Constable, is able to influence key policing issues within West Mercia.

Nationally, the Authority is able to influence policing policy and lobby on behalf of West Mercia for grants and support for specific projects through active membership of the national Association of Police Authorities and direct contact with Home Office Ministers and officials.

By working to the objectives outlined above, effective consultation and engagement will enable local communities, service users, partners and other stakeholders to contribute to the work of the Authority in a structured and formal way.

*(How the Authority is contributing to the achievement of the five objectives can be found in Table 1, Appendix A.)*

## 1.4 West Mercia Constabulary

*Responsible for service delivery and developing, delivering and implementing consultation and community engagement arrangements.*

Consulting and engaging the people of West Mercia is critical in ensuring that the Constabulary continuously improves the service it offers to its customers, whether these be service users such as victims of crime, people living or spending time within the force area, partners working with us, or colleagues working within the organisation. The force also uses the results of consultation when developing its Annual Policing Plan whilst some consultation activities are essential in order for us to meet statutory obligations.

*(How the Constabulary is contributing to the achievement of the five objectives can be found in Table 2, Appendix A.)*

## 2. Community Engagement and Consultation: Improving levels of Public Confidence and Providing Reassurance

### 2.1 What is community engagement?

This section defines the term 'community' and 'community engagement'. It also looks at why we should engage with our communities.

#### 2.1.1 What does 'community' mean?

When we think about 'communities', we often think of groups of people living in the same area (geographical communities). However, there are also other types of community which include:

- Those sharing **personal attributes** (such as age, gender, ethnicity)
- Those sharing **beliefs** (stemming from religious, cultural or political values)
- Those sharing the same **economic position** (occupational or employment status, income and wealth, housing tenure)
- Those possessing the same **skills** (educational experience, professional qualifications)
- Those sharing a particular **relationship to services** (tenants, patients, carers, providers)
- Those sharing a particular **situation or circumstance** (such as victims of crime, complainants)
- Those linked through '**place**' (attachments to neighbourhood, village, city or nation)

People can belong to several different communities at once.

The aim of this strategy is to improve West Mercia's communities' levels of confidence in their local police and to provide reassurance and, in particular, to most effectively target our engagement and consultation activities such that

we access those communities which have the lowest levels of public confidence and reassurance.

### 2.1.2 What does 'community engagement' mean?

The aim of community engagement is to build communities **where people are actively involved in developing their community**. It is about communities and public organisations (for example the police and other criminal justice agencies and local authorities) working together to bring about change by identifying and meeting the community's needs.

Community engagement involves:

- **Consultation** – this means communicating and talking with people in order to find out and understand their needs and views, involving people in making decisions about the things that affect them and responding to what this community group tells you (e.g. the Police Performance Assessment Framework User Satisfaction Surveys and the Crime and Safety Surveys).
- **Capacity building** – this means developing the skills, abilities and confidence of the community resulting in communities where people can take effective action and play a leading role in further developing their communities.
- **Empowerment** – this means providing people with real opportunities to get involved, to influence decision making and to have a say and is the best way of developing **long-term sustainable solutions**.

#### 2.1.2.1 Community engagement principles

Community engagement helps to ensure that:

- Our policing services **reflect and respond to the views, needs and concerns of our communities**
- Our communities feel **involved in and responsible for improving their quality of life**
- Solutions work over the **long term** and are **sustainable**

## 2.2 What is public confidence and reassurance?

**Public confidence** in the police is measured nationally by the British Crime Survey (BCS) question 'How good a job do you think the police do in your local area?' (Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) 2.3); respondents who indicate that they think the police do an excellent or a good job<sup>1</sup> are considered to have confidence in the police service.

Levels of public **reassurance** were formerly measured nationally through the BCS; however, with the introduction of the Assessments of Policing and

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents are provided a five-point scale ranging from excellent through to very poor.

Community Safety (APACS) in April 2008, this is no longer a Statutory Performance Indicator. Previously, public reassurance was measured through a series of questions which asked respondents about their levels of worry regarding particular crimes<sup>2</sup>. West Mercia continues to measure feelings of reassurance locally through use of the annual Crime and Safety Partnership Survey (C&SPS).

Looking at the national picture, despite the most recent results of the BCS showing levels of crime to have stabilised in 2005-06 following year-on-year reductions since 1995 (equating to a 40% fall), and police recorded statistics showing crime levels to have fallen consistently since 2003-04, the public perception is still that crime levels are increasing, with two thirds (65%) indicating this in the 2006-07 BCS when considering the previous two years. As a result, levels of public confidence in the police and feelings of reassurance have not increased accordingly over the same time period: the BCS shows that levels of worry about crime have remained stable since 2005-06 following a longer period of steady decline since 1998, whilst levels of public confidence in the police remained steady between 2005-06 and 2006-07.

Looking at the situation in West Mercia, according to 12 months' BCS figures up to September 2007, 51.5% of respondents are confident that their local police do a good job, giving us rankings of 21 and 4 (where 1 indicates the top performing force) when compared to the 43 forces in England and Wales and the 8 forces making up our Most Similar Forces (MSF) group respectively.

In terms of reassurance, 12 months' BCS figures up to September 2007 show that 8.5%, 10.5% and 9.6% of respondents worry about burglary, car crime and violent crime respectively, giving us respective MSF rankings of 4 for burglary, 4 car crime and 2 for violent crime. (It is worthy of note that the 2006-07 figures and MSF rankings in relation to worry about vehicle and violent crime show marked improvements compared to 2005-06, where the equivalent figures were 11.1% and 7 for vehicle crime and 12.6% and 4 for violent crime.)

Looking at data around confidence taken from the West Mercia C&SPS, over the last four years, the trend has been one of slightly falling levels (from 41.7% in 2004 to 39% in 2007).

### **2.3 Factors affecting levels of public confidence and reassurance**

Public confidence in the police and feelings of reassurance are also measured locally by the West Mercia annual Crime and Safety Partnership Survey (C&SPS) which is sent to around 60,000 West Mercia residents each summer.

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<sup>2</sup> Respondents are asked 'How worried are you about...?': having your home broken into and something stolen; being mugged and robbed; having your car stolen; having things stolen from your car; being raped; being physically attacked by strangers; being insulted or pestered by anybody while in the street or any other public place; being subject to an attack because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion. Respondents are provided with a four-point scale ranging from very worried to not at all worried.

Analysis of previous survey results show that there is a strong and significant relationship between public confidence and feelings of reassurance such that, if a community does not feel safe, they are also less likely to think that their local police are doing a good job (although this is not always the case). Similarly, if an individual has received a poor service from the police, they are also less likely to feel safe and to have confidence in the police.

### 2.3.1 Confidence – Reassurance Cycle

As stated above, confidence and reassurance are intrinsically linked and can be represented as a cycle (see Figure 1). This essentially contains four key elements: **community engagement**, **problem solving**, **interactive police visibility**, **communication**:

- Analysis of results from the C&SPS show that **worry about crime – or low levels of reassurance – are caused by issues**, or the perception of these, in communities' local areas. It is, therefore, fundamental that we undertake effective consultation and **community engagement** activities in order to ensure that we identify what these issues are so that we can go on to tackle them.
- **What we as the police do about these issues determines feelings of confidence**. The key, therefore, is good **problem solving**. In particular, feelings of confidence are driven by public perceptions around how well we:
  - Understand the issues affecting local communities
  - Take action to deal with community issues
- Central to the confidence-reassurance cycle are police visibility and communication:
  - **Interactive police visibility** – in particular foot patrol (resulting in one-to-one interaction with communities) has been found to be key to public confidence
  - **Communicating effectively** with communities regarding crime and disorder issues has a positive impact on feelings of reassurance and confidence and can be used to counteract the more negative impact of the local and national media (i.e. newspapers and radio).

Looking at the factors affecting confidence and reassurance in more detail, analysis of the 2007-08 C&SPS results reveals that the following factors significantly impact upon levels of public confidence and reassurance:

### 2.3.2 Public confidence

If we achieve the following, analysis has shown that levels of **confidence increase** from 39% to **97%**:

- Public *agree* that we deal with the things which matter to communities (**problem solving**)
- Public are *satisfied* with police / CSO visibility (**visibility**)
- Public *agree* that we deal with minor crimes (**problem solving**)

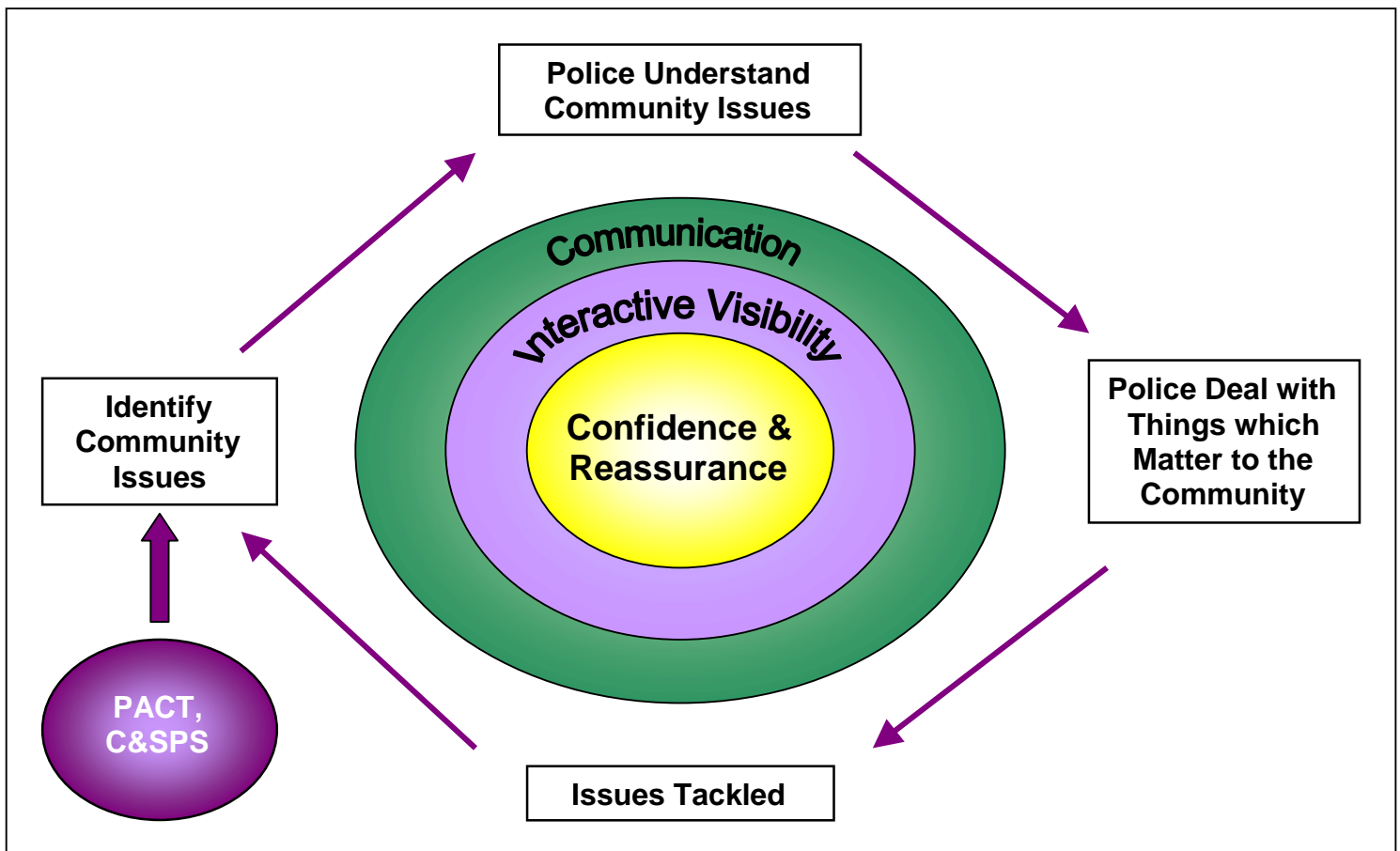


Figure 1: Confidence – Reassurance Cycle

- Public *agree* that we understand the issues in community's local area (**engagement**)
- Public *agree* that they feel well informed with regards crime and disorder issues (**communication**)

Conversely, if the public have the following perceptions, levels of public confidence fall to **2%**:

- Public *disagree* that we deal with the things that matter to communities (**problem solving**)
- The public state that they see a police officer / CSO *less often* than once every 2-3 months (**visibility**)
- Public *disagree* that we understand the issues in community's local area (**engagement**)
- Public *disagree* that they feel well informed with regards crime and disorder issues (**communication**)

When considering service users, public confidence is also linked to satisfaction with the service provided; this is particularly so with victims of reported crimes (see Figure 2).

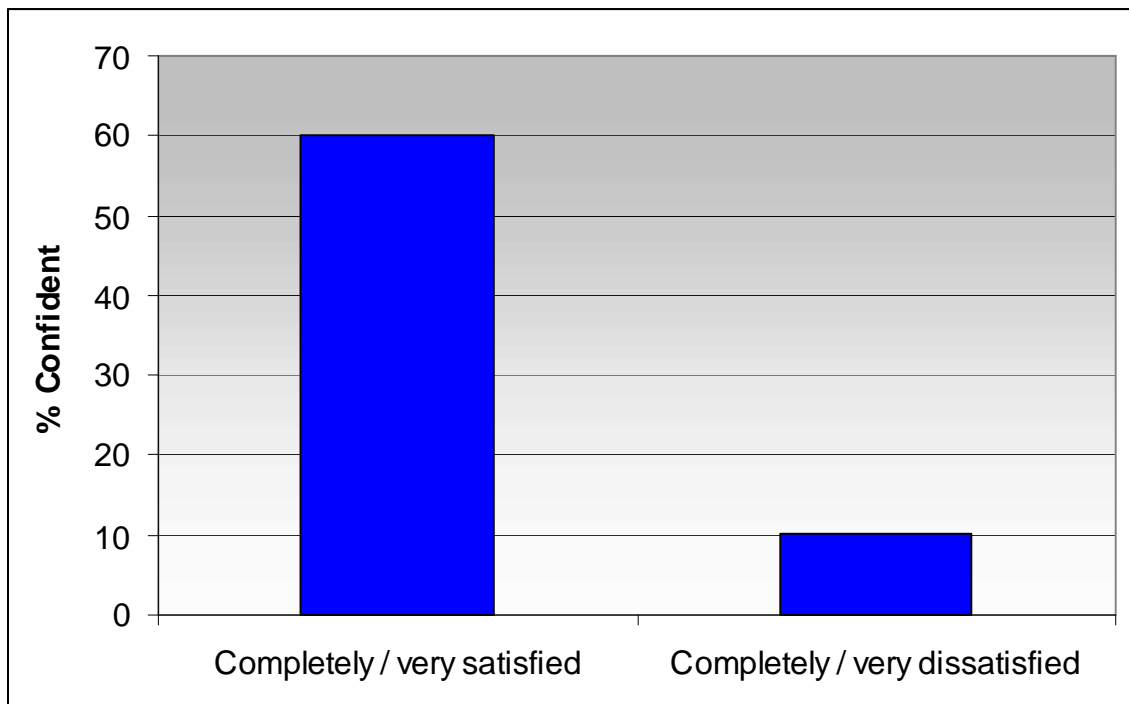


Figure 2: Impact of victim satisfaction on levels of public confidence (source: West Mercia PPAF User Satisfaction Surveys 2007-08)

### 2.3.3 Reassurance

As stated above, low levels of reassurance are caused by the presence of issues in an individual's local area or the perception of these.

Analysis of the 2007-08 C&SPS has demonstrated that if an individual has the following perceptions regarding their local neighbourhood, feelings of reassurance increase from 45% to **68%**:

- **Groups hanging around** **NOT** a problem
- **Underage drinking** **NOT** a problem
- **Drunken disorder** **NOT** a problem
- **Car crime** **NOT** a problem
- **NOT** been a **victim of crime** in the previous 12 months

Conversely, if an individual perceives the following, feelings of reassurance fall to **25%**:

- **Mugging / robbery** **IS** a problem
- **HAVE** been a **victim of crime** in the previous 12 months
- **Anti-social behaviour** **IS** a problem
- **Car crime** **IS** a problem
- **Vandalism** **IS** a problem

## 2.4 Engaging with communities to increase levels of public confidence and reassurance

Community engagement can contribute towards us raising levels of public confidence and feelings of reassurance through the following ways:

1. **Actively involving communities during the development of services helps lead to community-initiated problem-solving initiatives / solutions resulting in services that meet our users' needs and feelings of community empowerment.**
2. **Engaging with communities helps us gain a better understanding of the crime and disorder issues affecting our communities which will, in turn, help us to tackle these issues leading to crime and disorder reductions.** In addition, through involving, supporting and working with them, communities feel more empowered and so take an active role in identifying and meeting their own needs, thus resulting in **sustainable and long-term solutions.**
3. Through an active involvement of communities and better communication between the police and communities, we can develop communities' level of knowledge and **ensure that communities' perceptions around levels of crime and anti-social behaviour better reflect reality, thus leading to reductions in worry about crime and disorder.**
4. **Involving and engaging with communities leads to increases in police visibility.** Further, an evaluation of the National Reassurance Policing Programme concluded that regular engagement, through formal (e.g. public meetings, focus groups) and also informal (e.g. face-to-face contact during foot patrols) mechanisms, is **key to reducing levels of worry about crime and ensuring that communities' perceptions of crime better reflect reality.**
5. We know that certain groups within communities feel less confident and reassured than others (e.g. males, those falling into the youngest age bands, victims of crime (in particular those victims which have not reported their crime to us), those living in areas subject to higher crime and disorder rates). **By targeting our engagement activities so that these particular groups are accessed, we can maximise the positive impacts of these activities in terms of communities' levels of confidence and reassurance.**

## 2.5 Four Key Engagement Strands

Our engagement activities for the next twelve months can be broadly divided into four inter-linked strands: 1) Local Policing engagement (PACT); 2) victims of crime 3) strategic decision-making 4) working in partnership (see Figure 3).

### 2.5.1 Local Policing Engagement Strategy – Partners and Communities Together (PACT)

In April 2006, the force implemented Local Policing. The overall aim of Local Policing is to achieve confident and secure neighbourhoods by providing communities with greater:

- **Access** to policing services through a named point of contact
- **Influence** over policing priorities in their neighbourhood
- **Interventions** through joint action with partners and communities
- **Answers** by providing sustainable solutions and feedback

The force area consists of 145 Local Policing Areas (LPAs), each with a dedicated Local Policing Team (LPT) made up of a Local Police Officer (LPO) and Community Support Officers. Each LPT is responsible for ensuring that the communities living within their LPA are provided with opportunities to have a say regarding policing in their local area. The policing services delivered by a Local Policing Team should reflect and respond to the communities' views and, through the willing involvement of partners and the community itself, long term solutions should be delivered leading to improvements in the quality of life for those communities living and spending time in that Local Policing Team area. The Constabulary has developed a menu of Local Policing consultation and engagement methods – all have been branded Partners and Communities Together (PACT).

As stated above, it is the issues themselves – or communities' perceptions of these – which cause low levels of reassurance. PACT is a tool which should be used to ensure that we understand the issues in a local area and then go on to deal with these (**two of the drivers of public confidence**). And, through carrying out these activities we are increasing our **visibility – also a driver of confidence**.

In order to make our engagement activities as effective as possible, each Local Policing Area has been profiled and categorised as falling into one of four high level community types dependent on its position within the 2x2 matrix (the matrix uses crime levels and levels of worry about crime to profile each of the LPAs). Four recommended engagement strategies have been developed for each of the four community types, using options from the PACT menu of community engagement methods.

In addition, it is crucial that Local Policing Teams make special efforts to **target** those pockets of our communities which have the highest levels of worry about crime and the poorest perceptions of the police. These pockets tend (although not always) to coincide with demographic / geographic communities with particular characteristics (e.g. high levels of crime, low rates of crime reporting, high percentages of people aged between 16 and 24). Detailed community profiles which incorporate a range of datasets (e.g. deprivation, census and Mosaic data) have, therefore, been developed for each Local Policing Area.

Full details of the Local Policing PACT engagement strategy, including community profiling, can be found in the 'Local Policing Guide to Community Engagement'.

Local Policing Community Profiles can be accessed via the Local Policing intranet site.

## 2.5.2 Victims of Crime Engagement Strategy

As stated above, whether or not a community member has been a victim of crime is a key factor determining their level of confidence and feelings of safety. A principal group of service users engaged in regular consultation with West Mercia Constabulary has been, and remains, **victims of crime / incidents**. Through routinely and regularly listening to and involving our users, and then using this information to direct the way we deliver services, the Constabulary can ensure that we are delivering a service which meets our users' needs and which is in accordance with our CARE<sup>3</sup> Principles. This, in turn, will lead to improved user satisfaction levels and increased levels of confidence in the police.

A specific engagement strategy has been developed which focuses on engaging those direct service users who have called made a call to us for service and have reported their crime or incident to us. This is delivered through two principal means:

- Police Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) User Satisfaction Surveys
- Victim of crime focus groups

For full details, see the Victim of Crime Engagement Strategy.

However, not all victims come to us for assistance and a significant proportion of crimes / incidents remain unreported by victims; these are, therefore, not reflected in police statistics. For example:

- The 2007-08 British Crime Survey (BCS) states that, nationally, less than half (41%) of crime is reported to the police. Rates of reporting vary significantly by offence type, with thefts of vehicles and burglaries most likely to be reported (93% and 81% respectively) and, conversely, theft from the person and vandalism being least likely to be reported (35% and 32% respectively). Further, only 30% of crime is recorded and so reflected by police crime statistics.
- The 2007-08 West Mercia C&SPS indicates that 15% of respondents have personally been a victim of crime in the previous twelve months; this compares to a figure of 7% of the population when using West Mercia police recorded statistics.
- Further, C&SPS results show us that, of those respondents who indicated that they had been a victim of a crime in the past twelve months, just under half (45%) of them did not report their crime to the police.

Results of the C&SPS suggest that a lack of confidence in the police and, in some cases, previous poor experiences of dealing with the police, are the reasons for these groups' complete disengagement from the police. The most

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<sup>3</sup> CARE Principles: Communicate, be Accountable, Respond, Educate; for further information about these, see our 'Be the Difference Customer Care Booklet'.

frequent reasons cited by respondents of the 2007-08 C&SPS for not reporting a crime are as follows:

- Police would not have taken it seriously / would not have been interested
- Police couldn't have done anything
- Thought it was unlikely that anyone would get caught

Analysis of the C&SPS reveals that certain population groups have a lower propensity to report their crime:

- People aged between 16 and 19 years (18.5% indicated that they had been a victim of a crime which they had not reported in the past twelve months compared with 5.1% of the rest of the survey respondents).
- Single-parent families (12.7%).
- Non-whites (12.3% compared to a figure of 5.2% for whites).

Different approaches are required in order for us to engage with different groups of crime victims with, perhaps, the biggest challenge being those victims who do not report their crimes to us. Proactive approaches to engaging with these communities in order to increase public confidence in the police and to encourage reporting are vital; this is being delivered through Local Policing Teams targeting their engagement activities towards these particular demographic groups.

### **2.5.3 Informing Strategic Decision Making**

It is a statutory requirement for the Police Authority to take into account public opinion when agreeing the policing objectives. Each year the Police Authority and Constabulary review their joint planning process for the production of the Joint Policing Plan, to ensure that it is developed taking into account public opinion and partnership proposals and commitments.

Public opinion also informs the Authority in its role of monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the Constabulary. The March 2006 Corporate Governance Arrangements Review of the Police Authority, by independent auditors, identified the degree to which the Authority engages with the public as best practice.

The views of the public are equally important to the Constabulary when making decisions about policing strategies and service delivery.

In addition to input from the Local Policing PACT and victim of crime engagement strategies, public opinion will continue to be gained through a variety of mechanism, such as:

- The results of the annual Crime and Safety Partnership Survey. In 2008 the survey will be posted to around 60,000 residents and will ask questions in relation to confidence in the police, worry about crime, experience of crime and reporting crime and local issues in their neighbourhood.

- Public meetings and Events. New style public meetings and events, branded “Policing Matters”, are being introduced across West Mercia in 2008. They will provide the opportunity for the public to meet their local Police Authority Members, Divisional Commander and partner agencies, listen to updates on policing matters relating to the force and division and express their views.
- The results of User Satisfaction surveys (users include victims of crime and people who have reported an anti-social behaviour incident).
- Trends in complaints received.
- Police Authority Members’ involvement in their own communities and as the Authority’s representative on various partnerships.
- Annual consultation with partners, community and business representatives, including local authorities on proposed policing priorities and budget implications.
- Ad hoc consultation on specific issues.
- The five Policing Boards, which monitor Divisions in relation to delivery of Policing Plan Priorities with regard to community engagement, partnerships and performance.

We will continue to regularly review our consultation and engagement mechanisms, plans and our strategic planning process to ensure that:

- a) Public opinion, through a wide variety of methods, feeds into our strategic decision making processes.
- b) Our approaches to gathering public opinion meet the differing needs of all of our communities.

In developing our consultation exercises to inform strategic decision making we will establish:

- What we need to find out and who we need to seek opinions from
- What existing information is already available to us (through the Constabulary, Authority, or partners)
- Where additional information is required, the best consultation methods to use for the various sectors of the community we wish to consult
- How we will provide feedback on the results and what actions have been taken

The Police Authority will publish details of its planned consultation exercises to inform strategic decision making and the results on its website.

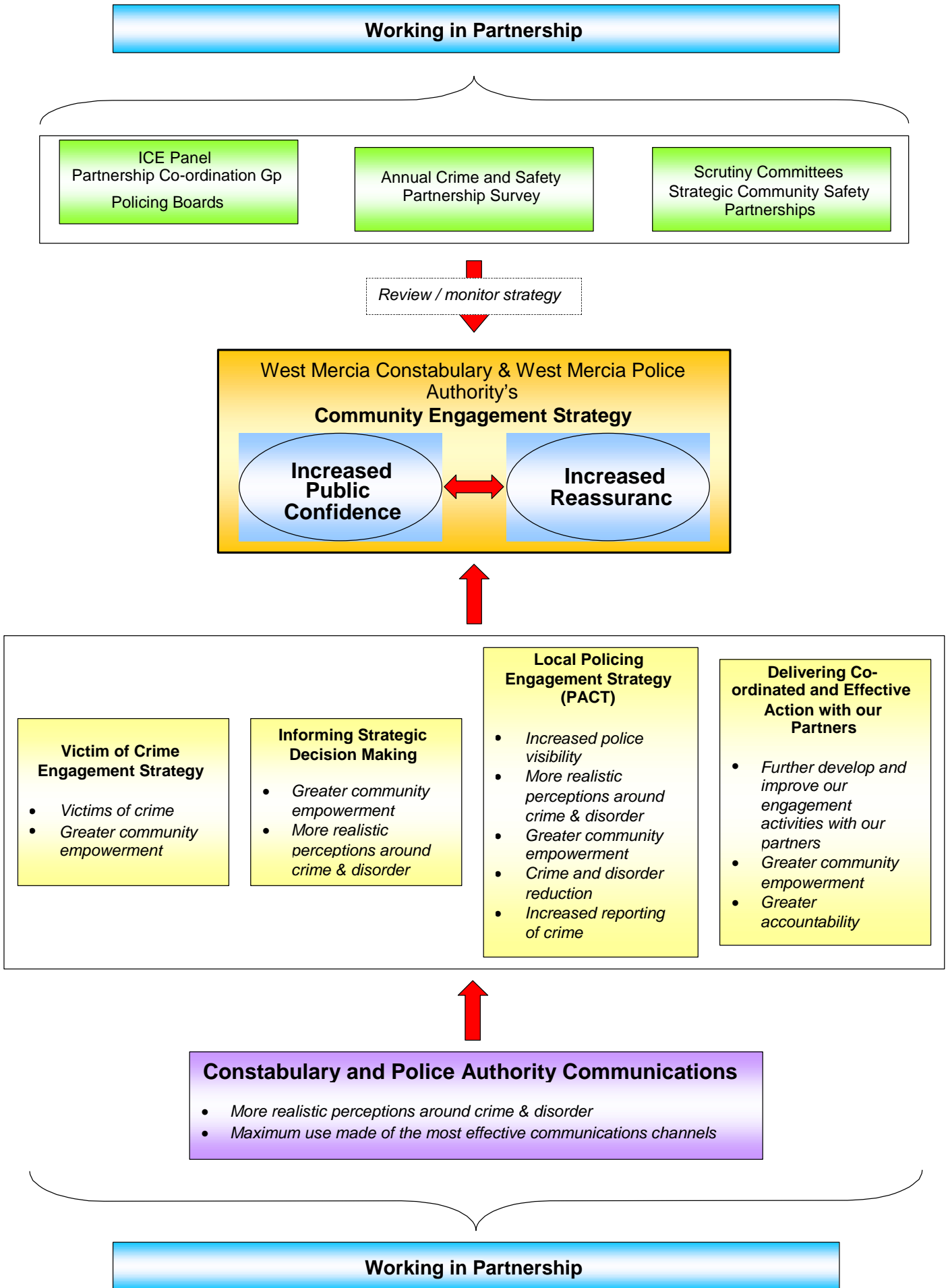


Figure 3

## 2.5.4 Working in Partnership

Where possible and appropriate, we will ensure that our communication, consultation and engagement activities are co-ordinated and consistent with partnership arrangements. We will also explore opportunities for working in partnership to communicate, consult and engage with all communities to ensure that our arrangements are as efficient and effective as possible.

The Local Government White Paper “Stronger and More Prosperous Communities”, October 2006, supported by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, provides a framework for local action which is intended to strengthen partnership working and to give communities a bigger say in identifying and tackling local safety priorities. Local authorities, the police and other relevant partners are encouraged to co-ordinate their consultations.

The implications of the Local Government White Paper proposals and the National Standards and Good Practice Guidance for Crime and Disorder Partnerships are likely to impact on this strategy and particularly the PACT activities. We will continue to work with County/Unitary Strategic Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships and local authorities in West Mercia to develop our partnership working. The Police Authority has set up a Partnership Co-ordination Group to co-ordinate this work, which supports delivery of Objective E of this joint strategy.

Our partners include:

- **Local Strategic Partnerships**

These partnerships are co-ordinated by the relevant local authority and involve regional, public and local agencies and the voluntary and community sectors working together to improve the quality of life for communities, which includes making communities stronger and safer, and meeting local needs. Both the Authority and Constabulary are represented on the four County/Unitary Local Strategic Partnerships across West Mercia.

The Local Government White Paper 2006, supported by the Local Government and Public Health Bill, proposes strengthening the role of Local Strategic Partnerships. They will provide the forum for setting the strategic vision for the area, based on local needs. This will be captured in a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). They will also agree priorities for improvement in the Local Area Agreement (LAA), the aim being to have complete coherence between the SCS and all the other plans for the area, including the policing plan. A new duty will be placed on named authorities, including the Constabulary and Police Authority, to co-operate to agree the targets in the LAA and to have regard to relevant targets in the LAA.

- **Community Safety Partnerships (also known as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs))**

There are currently eleven Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across West Mercia. The Police Authority and Constabulary are both statutory partners along with the Local Authority, Primary Care Trust and Fire Service. These partnerships, which are co-ordinated by the District or Unitary Local Authorities, are made up of a variety of agencies whose aim is to work together to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, reduce the fear of crime and reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol.

We will continue to work with our partners to implement the regulations and guidance introduced following the Crime and Disorder Review. Of particular relevance to this strategy is one of the six Hallmarks of Effective Partnerships for Community Safety Partnerships, published in 2007, "Engaged communities."

- **Local Authorities**

There are currently over 500 Parish Councils, 13 District Councils, two county councils and two unitary authorities within West Mercia which the Police Authority and Constabulary are committed to engaging with. This is largely achieved through the Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 makes the following provisions, the implementation date for which has been postponed.

- Local authority overview and scrutiny committees to introduce arrangements to extend their remit to include decisions made and action taken by responsible authorities under the Crime and Disorder Act (statutory Community Safety Partnership partners).
- Implementation of the Community Call for Action, the tool by which members of the community can trigger a response by community safety partners regarding for crime and disorder matters.

In addition, in response to the Local Government White Paper, Shropshire successfully bid for unitary status. The five district/borough councils and county council will be replaced by one unitary authority with revised community engagement structures from 1 April 2009. We will continue to work with the Council to develop co-ordinated, co-terminus community engagement arrangements.

- **Criminal Justice System**

Agencies include Crown Prosecution Service, Prisons, Youth Offending Service, Magistrates and Crown Courts, Probation Service and the Legal Services Commission.

- **Neighbourhood Watch**

The West Mercia Neighbourhood Watch Association is an organisation in its own right which the Chief Constable supports by supplying staff and resources on a forcewide basis. Neighbourhood Watch exists to:

- Cut crime and the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour
- Provide reassurance to local residents and reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
- Encourage neighbourliness and closer communities
- Improve the quality of life for local residents and tenants

The Constabulary has a police lead who represents the force and whose role is to support Neighbourhood Watch groups across the force area. In addition, each of the five divisions across the force has a Neighbourhood Watch administrator who is a paid member of police staff. The force also supports Neighbourhood Watch groups by supplying venues for meetings and by meeting the associated costs. The level of support extended to Neighbourhood Watch by West Mercia Constabulary was recently demonstrated by the Constabulary's hosting of a nationwide Neighbourhood Watch symposium.

With the implementation of Local Policing, even stronger bonds will be built with local Neighbourhood Watch groups.

### **3. Communications Strategies**

It is vital that our communities know and understand how they are able to have a say and how their opinion has been taken into account. Effective communications strategies by the Constabulary and Police Authority are, therefore, key components of our joint engagement strategy.

This is reiterated when considering the results of the C&SPS which revealed the importance of *how* we communicate to our communities regarding crime and disorder issues. Whilst particular communication strategies can be seen to be effective in increasing public confidence in the police (for example by utilising the local media such as newspapers and television and by developing local fact sheets), paradoxically, results suggest that these communications also serve to increase levels of worry about crime. It is therefore vital that we carefully consider our separate communications strategies and the links between them (i.e. what we choose to communicate, the methods we choose to use and how we target these communications).

## 4. Community Engagement Strategy: Further Areas for Development

In developing this strategy, good practice, areas for improvement and gaps in provision have been identified. It is intended that the good practice will be built upon as shown in Tables 1 and 2 Appendix A (these tables show how the Authority and Constabulary will contribute to the five objectives of this strategy). Areas for improvement and gaps in provision will be addressed through the action plans (Tables 3 and 4 Appendix B). In particular, it is recognised that further development is required to:

- Review our consultation and engagement activities to ensure that they are inclusive.
- Assess, with our partners, the implications of anticipated guidance and national standards for this Joint Consultation and Engagement Strategy.
- Consider our separate communications strategies and links between them.

Progress will be monitored by the Inclusivity and Community Engagement (ICE) Panel.

## 5. Monitoring and Reviewing the Community Engagement Strategy

### 5.1 Constabulary

The Constabulary will monitor the impact of the Community Engagement Strategy through the following means:

- Annual statistics obtained from the following questions from the **C&SPS**:
  - In your opinion, how good a job do you think the police are doing in your local neighbourhood?
  - Please indicate whether you can remember any actual times when you have felt worried about the following happening to you in your local neighbourhood?
  - Have you been a victim of crime in your local district in the past 12 months which you did not report to the police?
  - When thinking about the past 12 months, have crime rates got better, worse or stayed the same?
  - When thinking about the past 12 months, have anti-social behaviour rates got better, worse or stayed the same?
  - Community influence: influencing decisions in your area; involved in decision-making processes.
  - Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:
    - The police in your local neighbourhood understand the issues which affect your community;

- The police in your local neighbourhood are dealing with the things that matter to people in your community;
  - The police can be relied on to deal with minor crimes;
  - You feel well informed with regards crime and disorder issues in your neighbourhood.
- The following **Key Performance Indicators** for 2008-09:
    - P1 User Satisfaction – percentage satisfied with Whole Experience
    - P2 User Satisfaction – percentage satisfied with Follow Up
    - P3 – confidence in local police
    - P4 – perception of Anti-Social Behaviour
    - P5 – perception of Local Drug Use / Drug Dealing
    - P7 – Assessment of PACT engagement activity including schools / youth activity
    - P8 Percentage of Local Policing Actions completed in target time
    - S3 – British Crime Survey measures – risk and fear of crime
    - S4 – Percentage who agree police seek views on crime and ASB in their area
    - S5 – Percentage who agree that the police are dealing with crime and ASB in their area
    - S6 – Percentage who agree the police understand issues that affect this community
    - S7 User Satisfaction – percentage satisfied with Ease of Contact
    - S8 User Satisfaction – percentage satisfied with Police Actions
    - S9 User Satisfaction – percentage satisfied with Treatment
    - S10 User Satisfaction – percentage satisfied with Anti-Social Behaviour
    - S11 User Satisfaction – Racist Incidents
    - S12 User Satisfaction – gap between white and BME victims with overall service
    - S15 – Percentage of people who perceive drunkenness a problem in their local area
    - S16 – All LPAs to have one or more police priority in place in their local area

## 5.2 Police Authority

The focus of the Authority's Inclusivity and Community Engagement (ICE) Panel is on force wide community engagement, consultation, communication and customer focus issues. The Police Authority via the ICE Panel will monitor:

- The impact of this community engagement strategy through annual statistics obtained from the above questions from the CSPS (see Section 4.1 above).
- Progress against the Authority's action plan set out at Table 3 Appendix B.
- Progress against the Constabulary's action plan set out at Table 4 Appendix B.
- Progress on Local Policing and Victim of Crime Strategies.

- Implementation of PACT across the Force

The ICE Panel also monitors the implementation and effectiveness of both the Authority's and Constabulary's Equality Schemes. This includes, in conjunction with the Constabulary, monitoring the extent to which diverse communities of West Mercia have access to information and services

The five Policing Boards monitor delivery of the Joint Policing Plan at divisional level in relation to community engagement (including PACT), partnership working and performance.

The Partnership Co-ordination Group (PCOG) supports delivery of Objective E of the Joint Community Engagement Strategy – Working with Partners to deliver co-ordinated and effective action (See Appendix A). The Working Group:

- Undertakes the work to complete the Police Authority's action plan in relation to Objective E of the joint community engagement strategy (see Appendix A).
- Develops, oversees and co-ordinates the Police Authority's partnership arrangements taking into account Government legislation, guidance and anticipated national standards. In particular Community Safety Partnerships, Stronger and Safer Communities Boards/Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements.
- Co-ordinates the activities of the five Policing Boards, including implementation of the above proposals.
- Co-ordinates reports, information and key messages to Partnerships via Police Authority representatives.
- Receives and monitor reports from Police Authority representatives on partnerships and ensure that issues for action by the Police Authority are referred to the appropriate Panel/Committee and acted upon as appropriate.

PCOG, which reports to ICE Panel, and on LAA issues to Strategic Panel, comprises: The Chair and Vice Chair of ICE Panel, Chair of Force Performance Panel and the Chairs of the five Policing Boards supported by the Assistant Chief Constable (Territorial Operations), the Deputy Chief Executive of the Police Authority and the Authority's Community Engagement Manager.