

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY**

#### **Background**

Members expressed concerns as to the effectiveness of public meetings in village halls, following the spring 2008 schedule of public meetings. Members were concerned that the meetings were not providing an accurate picture of the opinions and priorities of the communities of Sussex. Although every effort was made to arrange the meetings at suitable times and locations, it was felt that they were still not accessible to a wide range of the community.

#### **The Authority adding value**

In Spring 2008, the Authority began a thorough review of our community engagement activity. The Community Engagement report to the May 2008 Community Engagement Steering Group meeting discussed the benefits of working more efficiently with the local engagement and consultation activities of the CDRPs. The public meeting format was abandoned in favour of taking our questions and information to meet the people, instead of asking the people to meet with us. The Authority has attended a number of large public events to meet with different communities, e.g. Pride at Brighton, South of England Show at Ardingly, and the Eastbourne 999 display event.

The Authority was a founding member of the Sussex Improvement Partnership. The Partnership has funded a project looking into shared consultation across Sussex. The resulting Shared Consultation Partnership is inclusive of officers from a number of agencies across Sussex. The Force Consultation Coordinator now chairs these meetings and administrative support is provided by the Authority. The partnership is seeking better ways to share information by enabling access from partner agencies to consultation portals. This provides access to past consultation methodologies and results, future consultation schedules, toolkits and guidance.

The report to the July 2008 Police Authority meeting stated that the Authority's revised approach had resulted in the engagement of a far greater number of people from a more diverse background. Since July 2008, developments have also been made, combining our need to consult the communities with the CDRP duty to involve and be accountable to the public. The CDRP 'Meet the People' events have been a useful addition to the Authority's community engagement programme and Members have been actively involved.

The Neighbourhood Policing Scrutiny committee guides and scrutinises both the work of the Authority and the Force community engagement teams. A new Lead Member and Officer for Community Engagement have been appointed and are working closely with the Force Consultation Unit to reduce duplication and achieve more together.

"The Police Authority and the Force have built and developed a very productive and mutually supportive relationship. And of course, many of the mechanisms that the force utilises to conduct robust community

engagement, such as the telephone researchers conducting local public confidence surveys, are only in place because the Police Authority supported the growth bid to secure them." Paul Price, Consultation Coordinator, Sussex Police.

The appointment of a Press and PR Officer has transformed our ability to be proactive in communicating information throughout our community engagement activities and this work will continue.

The Continuous Improvement Group has invested in the development of the Authority's website which was re-launched in October 2009 and is based around the four core duties of police authorities: Setting Strategic Direction, Scrutinising Performance, Community Engagement and Securing Value for Money. The response to the new format has been very positive. The website was designed to speak directly to the public and this was encapsulated in the new strap line; *Sussex Voices Shaping Local Policing*. The 'Engaging with You' pages allow members of the public to get in touch with the Authority, hear feedback from the public and keep informed in a number of ways:

- **Twitter** – ensuring the Authority is more accessible to young people
- **RSS Feeds** – allowing interested parties to keep up-to-date with developments
- **Automatic Email updates** – to enable members and officers to be notified of news and updates regularly

The Community Engagement Action Plan and the new Communications Strategy include a focus on developing the website as a consultative tool. Officers will be exploring the use of surveys and polls whilst providing access to survey results and appropriate feedback.

The Community Engagement Action Plan for 2010 includes close scrutiny of Sussex Police consultation and engagement activity and an understanding and oversight of the engagement being undertaken by the neighbourhood policing branch. It also includes continued involvement with CDRP multi agency public engagement events, Police Authority public and stakeholder events, budget consultation and work within the Shared Consultation Partnership making better use of resources. The Authority will work closely alongside the Force Consultation Unit to identify gaps in knowledge to improve ways of accessing and listening to the public, with the result of improving our policing service.

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