

## **Policing priorities/budget focus groups**

### **Summary of main issues raised in focus groups and reply slips**

#### **Introduction**

3 focus groups were held in total in Gateshead, South Tyneside and Hexham. 42 members of the authority's citizen panel attended.

#### **Aim of the focus groups**

The main aim of the focus groups was to:

- Find out if panel members agreed with the priorities
- Assess whether there were any other priorities for the public;
- Obtain more views from the public to help inform the priorities for the future.

#### **Format of the focus groups**

A presentation was given at the start of the meeting by force and authority officers. This gave panel members more information as to what had influenced the priorities, how the priorities were to be achieved in the future and how the budget was set. Members were then asked for their views on each priority.

#### **Summary of main findings**

The majority of participants agreed with the priorities, however, 'increasing public confidence with our diverse communities' and 'reducing crime and anti-social behaviour' were felt by most as high priorities. Some participants felt that creating a diverse, effective and flexible workforce was not important and more of a long-term priority. There was also a general understanding that 'increasing safety and reducing criminal activity on the roads' and tackling serious and organised crime & terrorism' were very important and that they were specialist areas of work.

#### **Main comments/suggestions:**

- The majority felt that police presence was missing from their local area and that this was important in order to gain confidence in their local policing service and develop relations with the police.
- It was felt by most that providing more information about what the police are doing would improve confidence in the police. E.g. some participants did not understand what neighbourhood policing meant or did not know that CIO's were being put in place.
- It was mentioned by one participant that young people do not have the confidence to report minor crimes e.g. theft of mobile phone
- Some people are not confident in using the current mechanisms (e.g.101) for reporting small crimes/issues. It was suggested that a local e-mail address/contact number and printed reporting forms in libraries

would alleviate this problem and would provide a source of intelligence for the police.

- Lack of feedback was raised by many and it was felt that it leads to a lack of confidence in the service overall and a reduction in reporting future crimes/incidents.
- Concerns were raised by most participants about the safety of PCSOs (due to lack of equipment) and their lack of powers.
- Some felt that having a direct line to a local Police Officer would be useful.
- It was also felt by most that the police working more closely with young people in schools etc should be given priority to help prevent and reduce crime/anti-social behaviour. It was also felt that more facilities/activities should be made available to young people.
- It was stated by some participants that parents need to take more responsibility for young people rather than relying on the police to do everything.
- It was mentioned that the police need to make themselves approachable to different cultures, as there are language/uniform barriers.
- An issue was also raised about young people not applying for the police force due to negativity from their BME communities.
- People driving whilst on their mobile phone was raised by most as an issue that needs dealing with. Some participants also asked if they could report people whilst driving on their mobile phone.
- There was a general feeling by most that 'the police's hands are tied' when taking crimes to court. A lack of confidence in the CPS/courts was expressed by most participants.
- Some participants raised concerns about cars parking on pavements
- It was also felt by some that it is difficult, in some areas, to contact the police when they are needed quickly
- It was stated by some that they do not feel safe walking outside, at night.
- There was a general feeling that the police have too much paperwork and targets, which prevents them from doing their job.