

Policing priorities – feedback from crime victims and local businesses

Market Research Report for Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner

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1. Introduction, objectives and method

1.1 Introduction and objectives

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) have a legal obligation to consult widely with the public and different communities, including victims and businesses, when formulating Police and Crime Plans. Within Surrey various survey methods are used for this feedback. However, large quantitative surveys can under-represent minority groups, and by their nature have limitations in terms of depth of understanding.

A separate research exercise was therefore conducted in January 2013 to provide a more detailed understanding of how policing is experienced today, and feedback about the PCC's priorities and budget as he develops his Police and Crime Plan for the coming years. This document summarises the main findings and conclusions from the project.

The research reported here comprised in-depth focus group discussions and personal interviews. The objectives (with varying emphasis appropriate to each discussion) are explained by the topic guide used (see Appendix). In summary the objectives were:

- To obtain detailed feedback about the PCC's published 6-point priority plan for Surrey policing (using the 1-page summary sheet – see Appendix).
- To debate reactions to the PCC's plans for Council Tax changes, using the budget factsheet provided by his office (see Appendix).
- To understand recent experiences of crime and policing, and what trends are evident.

1.2 Research methodology

The project combined 4 focus groups and 11 in-person interviews, using four main towns across the county. The 4 discussion groups, each of 2 hours duration, were conducted between 7th-10th January 2013 as follows:

Guildford and Redhill:	7 th and 9 th January:	Victims of crime – 14 participants
Woking and Epsom:	8 th and 10 th January:	Local businesses – 18 participants

Participants for the victims of crime groups were identified and approached using the Surrey Police database. Most had suffered a crime or ASB incident during mid 2012; we recruited a wide cross-section and experiences included a serious assault, several burglaries and various more minor theft incidents. We also met with several serious domestic abuse victims, talking to them at a separate session in Redhill (contacted with the help of ESDAS – see below).

Local business participants were mainly sourced via an email campaign conducted on our behalf by Surrey Chamber of Commerce, supplemented by our own direct approaches. In this way a wide cross section of local businesses from all sectors was represented. All groups contained a mix in terms of gender and age groups.

In addition to the focus group sessions detailed above, we also conducted face-to-face interviews for about an hour each with 13 individuals, representing partner agencies and organisations supporting crime victims and business sectors, as follows:

Victim Support Groups

Victim Support – Surrey & Sussex Divisional Manager
Young victims / witnesses support services – Surrey Manager
Relate – West Surrey Service Development Manager, Woking
Your Sanctuary (Woking based domestic abuse agency) - Manager
ESDAS (East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services, Redhill) - Manager
NHS Public Health – Surrey Alcohol & Communities Co-ordinator, Woking

Business Organisations

Countryside Alliance – South East Regional Director
Woking Asian Business Forum – Founder and Chairman; also Dep. Lieutenant for Surrey
WABF (as above) – committee member plus MD, Galaxy Cars (largest Woking taxi Co)
Federation of Small Businesses (3 representatives: Chairmen and Regional Directors)
Surrey Chambers of Commerce – Chief Executive, Woking

It was evident that many partner agencies, whilst reporting a good relationship with Surrey Police, were concerned about their future funding from the PCC. Several put forward evidence about how their work provided a long-term return, and savings in terms of reduced future crime.

The discussion with the above organisations used the same topic guide as the groups, but focused more on their existing relationship with Surrey Police and heard their practical suggestions for improvement, in the context of the PCC's 6 main priorities.

1.3 Using this report

Whilst this style of qualitative research by its nature has limitations in terms of sample size and locations used, a very good cross-section of these audiences was represented. As such, we feel that the main findings and conclusions contained in this report are highly valid, although they should not be presented as 'hard evidence'. All findings reflect the views and perceptions of participants.

Our interviews were audio recorded and groups both part-filmed and recorded. Audio files and DVDs can therefore be made available should you wish to view and listen to them. Edited highlights will also be available. Permission has been gained for their use for strictly internal purposes only. A range of quotations are reproduced in grey italics in the report below to illustrate our findings.

2. Executive summary

This report is based on detailed discussions with crime victims, local business representatives and partnership agencies in January 2013. Discussion groups were held in 4 locations with 32 participants, and a further 13 participants took part in personal discussions.

The main items of feedback and suggested actions from participants were:

1. The zero tolerance stance put forward by the PCC is widely welcomed and supported, although many did not understand the limits and implications of the principle. Hence more detailed communication of his plans, and the actions that are required to achieve them, was requested.
2. All those spoken to are keen to engage with the police to achieve the core aim of lower crime, and safer communities as a result. A wide range of groups and communication channels can help more in promoting community safety, and at the same time provide the police with useful intelligence. Respondents reported that Neighbourhood Watch is a useful system in some areas, but thought that it needed wider (re)-promotion and moving into the digital age.
3. Many other 'Watch' style networks are used already by different groups and communities (retailers; farms and rural businesses; students; the gay community; Woking taxi drivers...). The police are invited to join with and use these networks for two-way feedback far more actively.
4. Certain local policing teams have excellent reputations, and are characterised by strong and visible local Neighbourhood Commander leadership (e.g. in Epsom & Ewell). Copying what successful local officers do well was therefore recommended. One downside of such success is that respondents felt that the best staff are often moved around and promoted quickly, resulting in a lack of local continuity.
5. The experience of police response times was variable and quite poor for some domestic abuse calls and many business crime incidents in particular. Respondents therefore wanted better response-time standards on a consistent basis, to reflect the zero-tolerance objective.
6. Existing partnerships with a wide range of agencies in Surrey that protect victims and prevent crime are considered to be strong. Agencies believe they produce a good 'return on investment'. As the system serves the county well currently, they feel that wholesale changes are not required. They suggest that some efficiencies and better co-working are perhaps needed though.
7. Police communications and PR are generally considered to be poor quality and too infrequent. Better links to and regular contact with local media are requested; this will help boost public image, confidence and internal morale.

8. Victim support is considered to be good, and much improved in recent years. Additional investment is therefore not thought to be a priority. One exception is support for domestic abuse victims. Agencies felt that this is an under-reported crime in Surrey – whereas crime as a whole is below average. Because the nature of this crime is more difficult to define and tackle, it is felt that it gets lower priority which can result in more serious abuse cases. More support and police training is therefore requested.
9. Most spoken to would like to see a far more effective and firmer criminal justice system, but many do not think the PCC can influence the system in a significant way at a local level, as suggested by his outline priorities statement. They also believe that his power to seize the profits of crime for local use is limited. Instead, some think that PCCs working together as a group nationally will be the most effective forum for influencing Government and law makers, and in bringing improvements to the criminal justice system.
10. Council tax changes. All found the detail of this debate difficult to understand, but they broadly supported the PCC's plans and distrusted the Government's tax freeze grant offer. People will readily support a modest increase in police funding through their Council Tax, but want to see that an increase brings tangible benefits.
11. Businesses welcome the opportunity to support policing, safer neighbourhoods and better communities, and many reported that they do so already in a wide variety of ways. They do not expect to provide direct cash sponsorship, but do expect the police to take the lead if more support of other types is required, and have provided ideas.

Small businesses especially do expect a more equal partnership in return, which provides them with prompt support from the police when they experience crime against their businesses. The FSB in particular has put forward detailed and constructive ideas in a briefing document sent to all PCCs, and welcomes debate. The FSB and Surrey Chambers of Commerce would welcome a closer partnership with Surrey Police and the PCC.

3. Reactions to the PCC's stated priorities

Overall reactions and themes

Debate around the six stated priorities below, on the 'Kevin's Promise' sheet (see Appendix) accounted for a major part of all our discussions. A summary of the main reactions and suggestions follows, under the six priority sub-headings. Feedback on the first four items was especially energetic, and various themes are linked.

In general participants were supportive of the wider goals and proactive tone of this statement, and especially the principle of firmer policing. Many respondents reported positive experiences of policing and are keen to see further improvement (see detailed experiences reported in Section 5 below). For example:

'The police were fantastic... (serious assault victim)...over the course of two months...I had great support from the police' (Assault victim, Guildford)

'We were burgled and the case went to the Crown Court. The service (from the police) was amazing; I was exceptionally surprised by how supportive they were and how well they did their job, to be honest.' (Burglary victim, Woking)

Respondents generally thought that our laws were already strong enough, but that enforcement needed to be stronger.

'This is what's been done in New York...the laws are there...we just need resources, and laws need to be enforced...we don't need to start writing laws.' (Businesses, Woking)

Several agencies and partners were pleased that the PCC's priorities would focus especially on youth crime, which they agreed should be a particular priority. With increased youth unemployment and more now falling into the NEET category, it was felt that putting resources towards keeping youths out of crime and focused on work and useful activities was essential.

Whilst agreeing with much of its direction, many respondents did find that the language used throughout this document was rather blunt and emotional. They wanted terms defined precisely and more evidence-based analysis and actions provided. They were keen to hear a more refined plan to deal with zero tolerance. Partner agencies would like to see a strategy based around crime figures. In summary, most felt that this was an election manifesto, rather than a detailed strategic plan to debate, and was therefore limited in scope.

'This is all the stuff we would like to see, but I wonder if it's just the sort of thing you hear from politicians...it's a very ideal list, and I hope they can fulfil these promises.' (Victim, Guildford)

'There isn't a lot that's new here – this is already happening. This is a politician's manifesto' (Housing Trust, Epsom)

'All this is happening already in the neighbourhood in which I live and work – we are quite lucky.' (Coach operator, Epsom)

'A lot of this is waffle...give us 4-5 points that we really understand' (Newspaper publisher, Woking)

'It is dealing most with the outcome of crimes, rather than why it happens in the first place – I think we ought to do both' (Victim, Guildford)

People were concerned that some plans were outside the remit of what a PCC could influence – although not certain about what powers exactly the PCC had. A further major concern was around resourcing in such a tight budget environment:

'We are sounding terribly cynical...this is a manifesto that we don't expect to be delivered...the politics don't allow it...he hasn't got the money to enable it to be done...and he hasn't got the powers to enforce it. We are going to be pleasantly surprised if it's delivered!' (Business forum, Woking)

A further general observation was that the stated priorities seem to focus on urban, residential policing. Various people were concerned that the PCCs plans also specifically addressed rural Surrey residents and businesses.

3.1 Take a zero-tolerance policing approach

I will lead a relentless focus on those who blight our lives: anti-social louts, violent bullies, burglars and those who deal drugs to our young people. We will seize the profits of their crime.

Providing more detail

As summarised above, all participants supported the over-arching theme in this message, but wanted to hear more detail from the PCC. They simply found the above summary too blunt and generalised.

Many also recognised that problem areas varied greatly by area, across what is largely a low-crime county. Depending on what individuals thought zero tolerance meant, they were more or less confident that such a policy could indeed be enforced.

'I think it would be a great mistake for someone coming in to this role (PCC) to think that radical changes were needed.' (Victim, Guildford)

'I think it's really good – it's talking about local initiatives like those already happening.' (Business – Epsom)

Drug and alcohol abuse and ASB

This is certainly a major concern, and many supported the PCC's statement. However, most are keen that a common-sense attitude is taken to policing this on the streets. Lower level ASB needs to be sensitively handled and a balanced approach taken to 'young

people just being young'. The work of partner organisations like Street Angels was applauded (see Section 5).

It was widely recognised that society as a whole needed to share responsibility for many ASB problems, so strong support from parents, teachers and many other partner organisations was definitely required, working to a common agenda. Re-enforcing respect and wider behaviour change were wider society challenges.

'It needs to be tackled in a holistic way...ASB is the start of the rot...it's not a police-alone issue...zero tolerance is easy to say...now it's about delivery' (Businesses – Woking)

Those working in the drug area also share concerns about helping addicts and those with problems, in the face of tighter budgets. It was reported that the Drug Intervention Programme is well thought of and relied upon by the courts, but agencies believe that a decision to fund it will rest in future more squarely with the PCC.

Resources needed

One further obvious issue raised widely was the ability to deliver on the zero tolerance promise in a budget-cutting environment, as the objective appeared to require far more resources. It may be that existing resources can be used more efficiently, but most think that Surrey Police is already fairly lean after the cuts and reorganisations of recent years. Some wanted more funding for zero tolerance towards alcohol related crime specifically to come from late night bar and club taxes, as this would be a fairer system.

'I only ever see police officers walking up and down the High Street...but there are relatively few pubs...they need to patrol where the food is sold – where I was jumped'. (Assault victim, Guildford)

'We have regular minor contested road incidents near our offices, with always 3 cars and at least 5 police officers in attendance for 2 hours. Such a waste of resources. Yet when we report a theft crime for the business premises, they rarely attend that half day or day' (Business – Epsom area)

'Police officers at night need to come far more often from Camberley (to Woking). Where's the cost argument, if a potential assault becomes a murder?' (Victim, Woking)

Some made the point that the bureaucracy of recording crime (giving a crime number) was a great burden; the police would need to issue severe warnings more often instead, to deal with the volume.

There is certainly frustration that the police cannot be firmer with various activities that might require more resourcing, with the ability to issue more on-the-spot fines. Behaviour often mentioned included poor driving habits, driving whilst holding/talking on a mobile phone, and local speeding. Respondents would welcome firmer action such as more random checks, and more public information campaigns and advertising.

Seizing the profits of crime

Participants did question the degree to which the PCC or police can seize the proceeds of crime, and down to what level this would be cost effective. The general assumption was that crime proceeds and fines stay within the Criminal Justice System. Some also wondered if significant proceeds of crime would anyway be recoverable. The principle of local repatriation of proceeds was welcomed if it could be delivered. There were suggestions that extra fraud staff, for example, could be entirely self-funding and probably fund additional staff too.

An assumed lack of powers led some to suggest that a body of PCCs sharing a strong common vision/plan would be the best forum nationally to influence policy makers.

'That's quite an eye-catching phrase...but whether he can do this I don't know. Can we deliver on the spot fines?' (Victims, Redhill)

3.2 More visible street policing

I will use my experience to reduce expenditure on back office roles and use the ill-gotten gains of criminals to pay for patrol officers.

Resourcing and making savings elsewhere

Reactions to this priority went hand-in-hand with those about zero tolerance explained above. The particular concerns are around resourcing and affordability, and the sensible further savings that can still be made in 'back-office services'. Respondents are concerned that extra bureaucracy/form filling is not simply passed on to front line officers, and that resources are indeed sensibly deployed. There was a general perception that savings on 'back office roles' was easily promised but would be less easily delivered as significant cuts had already been achieved over the last 3 years.

A further concern is that more front line officers, whilst an obvious superficial crowd pleaser, may simply mean more poorly trained / less experienced officers. Respondents also want to see more policing in appropriate areas only, and patrolling in relevant ways (on foot, car or bike as needed).

'We need targeted extra street policing – not just randomly applied...and cycling more would be a good idea.' (Victims, Redhill)

'In Australia, they use loud opera music to disperse crowds of lads from shopping centres...' (Victim, Guildford)

Wider powers and sanctions

Respondents think that more effective community policing needs extending or more fully utilising, including on-the-spot police and PCSO powers to fine and sanction. They think that local police chiefs have some discretion, and support the idea of more on-the-spot fining for less serious crime and ASB breaches. This seemed a very practical way to

deliver 'zero-tolerance' policing very directly, with fewer extra resources and bureaucracy, and a reduced burden on the courts.

Some wondered if more 'frontline' policing wasn't possible now – they notice an extra surge of policing before Christmas for example, to deter drink-driving. So respondents asked why such resources can't be deployed year-round.

It was questioned whether the PCC or Surrey Police had the legal powers to redirect crime proceeds towards local police funding or initiatives, and when exactly this might apply.

'This is a naïve phrase...it throws up all sorts of legalities doesn't it?' (Victim, Guildford)

'To seize the profits of crime you have to find them, and to find them you have to have resources...and you will need back office staff (for that)' (Business, Epsom)

The reaction to the idea of keeping crime proceeds locally partly reflected lack of knowledge on the subject, although senior business participants bluntly thought the idea 'will not work'.

3.3 Put victims at the centre of the Criminal Justice System

I will ensure that victims are given a quality service from reporting a crime to giving evidence. The professionals in the Courts and Police work for you, sometimes they forget.

Perceived failings of the Criminal Justice System

There was certainly widespread concern voiced about the weaknesses in the Criminal Justice System and sentencing powers generally, in contrast to police efforts made to apprehend criminals and prevent crime happening. Concerns about the justice system sometimes reflected disappointing personal outcomes, and a frequent 'lack of closure'.

'My feeling is that the criminal should be at the centre of the system! My experience of the police, is that legally everything is done to protect the rights of the criminal...I think criminals are far too well protected – I'd like to see them in the spotlight.' (Serious assault victim, Guildford)

'Saying zero tolerance is all well and good, but at the end of the day, once someone's arrested it's not down to the police it's down to the CPS...that's where I've had more issues...(due to) we don't have enough evidence...nothing gets done. And once they are released, you have no further support.' (Domestic Abuse victim, Redhill)

The need to support victims

Support for victims was widely seen as an important aim, but one that was largely delivered as well as it could already, once a victim is identified and 'in the system'. The problem that victims have is with the Criminal Justice System as a whole, and the demands that it makes on you as a victim. The 'support' that victims really want is more crime being successfully prosecuted.

'The problem is getting cases into the courts in the first place' (Business, Epsom)

' I don't need those phone calls and letters...the support I'd really value is knowing...that all was done ...that they knew where my stuff went and there was some hope of getting it back. I want to know that someone is really working on my behalf.' (Business victim, Woking)

We were told that Surrey Police now passes on details of almost all victims / witnesses to Victim Support. This organisation also considers that it now has 'a very strong relationship and understanding' with Surrey Police, including a regular monthly meeting. Victim Support was concerned about longer term funding once funds are more comprehensively controlled by a PCC, and how this change might result in a very unequal system / postcode lottery for victim support, nationwide.

One concern with victim support reported by several victims was that providing a general degree of concern was fine, but that specific feedback about actions taken and longer-term outcomes after a crime was lacking, even if the crime was unresolved; victims just want to be assured that all that could be done was done.

'Victims are customers of the police. For me, it's about being kept informed...I'd like feedback about the outcome: 'this is what we have done...actions x,y,z. Because we have found a and b, we are unable to progress further' – you could understand and accept that more.' (Business, Epsom)

Hence respondents felt that Victim Support services need funding as they are today, but were not seen to be in need of additional funding or major change. The one exception was supporting young witnesses and crime victims in court (aged 16 and under?), according to the manager of this service who reported that these support services were very variable across Surrey.

The PCC's remit

We again heard concerns about whether the PCC could indeed impact the workings of the Justice System, or Crown Prosecution Service. Many spoken to would like to see change to these systems, as they see them as weak in terms of their workings, lack of prosecutions and modest sentencing.

But the feeling was that we have an independent judiciary, and that the Surrey PCC would not have the scope at county level to change policy. It was suggested that PCCs would need to work together as a national group to present an effective lobby to Government.

3.4 Give you the opportunity to have a greater say in how your streets are policed

I will set up local policing boards to bring decision making closer to neighbourhoods. You will be able to participate and have your views heard.

We heard about a wide variety of good local initiatives and joint agency action groups operating already, but also some areas where far less seemed to happen. Many also know

about local policing clinics/meetings, where they could make their views known if required. In Epsom, a number of businesses considered that they already had effective policing boards – and questioned whether the PCC knew this.

Respondents reported that they engage with these initiatives when they have the need or desire to do so. The obvious way to engage more effectively and democratically was considered to be ensuring that existing best practice processes are copied in a consistent way countywide.

'Maybe we are not really aware of what is already in place – so before changing it all, they should advertise what is there.' (Victim, Guildford)

Some wonder whether their voice can really be heard – but perhaps the new PCC system will improve confidence:

'He wants us to think that we have a say, but we really don't.' (Victim, Guildford)

The main problem with the PCC's idea was that policing boards were not defined in terms of their proposed structure, remit or cost. Some questioned whether these were entirely new, and/or an extra layer of bureaucracy?

'This sounds like an additional piece of police bureaucracy...he's got to pay for it, organise it...' (Victim, Guildford)

Hence there was disquiet about what these boards would achieve. Respondents felt that the idea needs to be explained far more carefully and costs/benefits weighed up before they could pass judgement. Further, it was felt that there would be limited enthusiasm for another new forum unless clear additional benefits were likely; people felt that twice-yearly local meetings/clinics provided sufficient opportunity.

If the idea is progressed, business organisations are keen to ensure that the business community is properly represented, because they say that participation on various forums across the county now is very variable.

3.5 Protect your local policing

I will work with Police Chiefs to maintain the morale and ethos of service of your officers. I will do this by supporting them against unreasonable criticism and ensuring their voice is heard. We cannot expect them to take on the criminals unless we back them.

Whilst the final two objectives were accepted, they were not considered to be as important as the first four externally-focused ideas reported above.

The above goal was widely agreed with, but it was taken for granted that any organisation / chief executive would seek to support the organisation's staff in their work. Some were frankly surprised to see this item listed amongst the priorities.

'I think it's really essential for the boss to say 'I'm really going to support my team'' (Victim, Guildford)

Having said this, some realised that morale must be a problem for the force now, and needed to be a focus. Some assumed that the objective was included as a result of high profile national stories, but questioned whether the issue was a priority for Surrey Police.

'I would reverse these last two objectives, with police professionalism first. I have no question about the professionalism (of the Surrey Force), but the revelations of the Leveson Enquiry and others...leave one very disturbed.' (Victim, Guildford)

'I've known many policemen over the years. Many have left, saying 'I'm no longer a policeman, I'm an accountant, and I don't want to be that.' (Newspaper publisher, Woking)

This priority was therefore viewed as an internal aim that, whilst important, would be addressed as a matter of course. It was assumed that the Chief Constable already supported her staff whenever appropriate and whenever a case for support was indeed 'reasonable'. The wider 'backing of the police' message could be delivered as an integral part of a stronger PR/image process referred to elsewhere.

3.6 I will be uncompromising in the standards you expect from your police

With public support comes an expectation that your police deliver a quality service. I will expect the Chiefs to inspire their officers and unlock their passion to deliver a professional, courteous and positive approach to policing. You pay for it, you have a right to expect it.

As with the staff backing and morale objective above, this last item on the list was considered to be important but already widely delivered; some were therefore surprised to see it listed as 'a priority promise', although several said 'standards need to be right at the top (...of the list)'.

We found at the start of all discussions that all participants reported very high levels of satisfaction with police conduct and professionalism. Hence although important, a quality service in terms of professionalism was already thought to be delivered.

Ensuring high standards was seen as a basic expectation. Standards of professionalism need to be maintained at an already very high level, and monitored. Wider standards of service delivery need some local improvement (see experiences detailed in Section 5 below).

4. Funding – Council Tax and gaining outside help

4.1 Council tax ideas: backing for the PCC's plan

Victims in particular did not really understand why they were being consulted about what seemed to them to be minor changes to their Council Tax and relatively technical issues.

'I would want professionals and senior police chiefs to make that judgement (about the policing budget necessary)...I'm not qualified enough to know' (Victim, Guildford)

Although overall affordability of Council Tax bills is a concern for respondents, a relatively modest increase of several percent is not seen as significant, if that increase is deemed necessary. Participants do not feel sufficiently qualified, or aware of the detailed facts and statistics, to decide about complicated budget calculations. Hence enthusiasm about the budget topic was muted, compared to the far weightier policing priorities debate.

The main point made was that a modest increase was acceptable if the priority programme was delivered. However, respondents widely thought that the manifesto document did not detail sufficiently precise actions.

Some were concerned that the PCC might get 'bogged down by finance' and distracted from his priority agenda.

'If he's saying it will go up, but we will achieve this lot, then I'm happy...that manifesto is not telling us how he's going to do it...it's political spin. What is zero tolerance?' (Businesses, Woking)

Participants accepted that, in the face of significant Central Government reductions in the policing budget, it was reasonable to have a modest local Council Tax increase to limit the overall reduction in budget. Some were concerned about the impact of an increased police share of Council Tax if this implied cuts to other locally funded services, such as day centres and the youth service.

Council Tax increases are considered progressive to many – better off residents will pay more and can afford a modest increase; those on low incomes often get help to pay this bill. Participants certainly questioned why Surrey received a much lower funding proportion from Central Government, and in general were confused by the issue.

The details of the Government's two-year grant offer were only vaguely understood. Those that did comment on the offer regarded it with suspicion.

'This grant will be paid for by taxpayers anyway!' (Victims, Guildford)

'The Council Tax freeze grant from Government is a fraud. I have to say, when I talk to local residents, they say they want a decent police force and will pay for it...the price of not doing it is too high.' (Councillor, Epsom)

The grant simply seemed to defer the moment when better police funding would be needed, if we are to afford zero tolerance policing. Most were quite happy to take the PCC's recommendation, and assumed that his advice and experience would be sound.

In general, the feeling was that as the PCC had been properly and democratically elected to do the job, he needed to be trusted to make the best decision about the precept and overall funding levels for policing; this was not an issue to really interest the average resident or crime victim.

Businesses respondents shared similar views about funding to crime victims. Although our business participants were better equipped to understand the consultation paper, they were still surprised by the level of detail that they were being consulted about – and were happy to entrust the right decision to the PCC and accept the recommendation he put forward.

As businesses though, they were more inclined to accept a modest rise in tax only if a return on investment (better policing) could be shown. Hence, the PCC has the backing of the business community, but will need to detail exact actions and expenditure decisions clearly.

In the same way, plans for capital expenditure were of no significant interest to businesses. The responsibility for such matters and the ability to make the right decisions was thought to rest with the Chief Constable in consultation with senior staff and the PCC, with potential professional guidance. One main comment was that funding appeared to be largely financed by sales of assets – which are in finite supply.

4.2 Will businesses help with policing and crime prevention?

We prompted a debate about how businesses might assist the police more in their crime deterrence efforts – whether this be in terms of direct sponsorship, time, venues or any other help.

The first thing to report is that many businesses already feel they do a fair bit 'for the community'. They often have a sense of civic duty, and some take part in allowing meetings to take part on their premises (e.g. Rosebery Housing Trust in Epsom), mentoring school children about careers and citizenship (Asian business network in Woking), or visiting schools and telling them about the working world (a variety of businesses spoken to).

'We help by going in to schools now, to talk about the environment, etc...I understand that...but not the blatant sponsorship through advertising. I've also got some spare office space – so could put a couple of officers up – then I'd have a good police presence!' (Landscape business, Knaphill)

'When schools come on visits to the garage, we include information about the consequence and cost of vandalism, and knock on effect in the community...it does have an effect...we have seen reduced graffiti on our buses.' (Bus operator, Epsom)

Further options

The above examples reflect the most obvious ways in which businesses offer help now. However, there was a clear sense that if a local police officer asked for a contribution in a certain way (providing a service; time to put a newsletter together, a venue, etc), businesses would try to help. There is a clear kudos from 'helping the police / your community'. One sensed that the police would need to make the first move though, as businesses do not readily appreciate the more help is required.

Other ideas put forward by businesses to help the policing effort were:

- Offering space for locating officers / PCSOs
- Putting on a free event to raise funds for Victim Support
- Using an empty shop front in Woking to promote policing (subject to planning consent – not always forthcoming from the local council)
- Monthly newspaper columns – from the PCC or Chief Constable: what's going on
- A column/letter every 2 months from the PCC for the Surrey Chamber of Commerce newsletter (could be used in various publications)
- Helping with radio links between retailers and the police
- Helping voluntary sectors work with NEET sector youngsters / providing services as 'rewards' on their credit schemes (e.g. free trips to Chessington Theme Park)

Businesses widely support involvement in such roles and will often 'give' more, but not direct financial sponsorship. One legal company in Woking had been approached (via a third party) for sponsorship money in return for advertising on patrol cars. Others had heard of such initiatives in the national media. This kind of activity was roundly rejected and indeed scorned; it was thought to be a very bad idea both in terms of giving the wrong image, simply being inappropriate and possibly open to abuse. Surrey Police was therefore discouraged from making further blatant direct advances.

'We were asked to sponsor police cars, via an agency acting on their behalf...it comes back to money...they should not be relying on local businesses ...for charitable handouts to run policing...I laughed.' (Partner, accountancy firm, Woking)

In talking about mentoring youngsters, businesses also suggested that far more use could be made of reformed criminals and retired police officers to make school visits etc. These people are often powerful role models.

What businesses want from the police

The businesses spoken to in groups, and the Surrey Chambers of Commerce and FSB representatives especially, did make a forceful argument for a more equal partnership with the police – rather than the police just turning to them when they needed help. They also pointed out that the PCC's main priorities were all aimed at delivering better policing for residents, rather than businesses, and could this be corrected.

Business respondents want to have crime against them recorded as such, so that the size of this problem is known and acted on; they want such crimes monitored and reduced. They want to see proactive plans for achieving this, and more attention paid especially to

thefts from businesses. The FSB pointed out that their statistics show that many small businesses represent family concerns and individual livelihoods, and that significant theft has a major impact on those concerned. They say the police don't realise this sufficiently (see FSB briefing paper to PCCs).

One senses that the FSB has some very good ideas for tackling crime prevention and delivering zero tolerance, and building better ties and confidence amongst local businesses and communities. They are very ready to engage with the police to progress ideas. This happens at a local level already – examples were provided of a very successful Joint Action Group in the Arun district (Sussex Police). Local business networks, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs etc are also very open to having speakers explain their work.

5. How policing & crime is experienced

Participants in all discussions were keen to give spontaneous feedback about their experiences and their relationship with Surrey Police today. This formed the first part of our discussions, before the PCC's priorities and budget were reviewed.

A wide range of positive and negative stories were related. All participants were broadly supportive of the police and their professionalism, but many suggestions for improvement were put forward.

5.1 The experience of victims of crime

The police generally

The wide range of cases reported usually indicated very good response times to all serious crimes, and an extremely positive attitude and support from officers attending a crime scene or incident. Many were truly surprised by how considerate and supportive the police were at the time of, and in the period after, experiencing crime - whether as a victim of serious assault, burglary or more minor theft.

'We were looked after extremely well; I was really impressed...very efficient...(Burglary victim, Redhill)

'The police first went to the wrong address in Reigate – they copied the postcode down wrongly...but then arrived quickly...they were very good...we were offered victim support...I felt fine but then very shaky the next day.' (Burglary victim, Guildford)

Victims were far less generous about the Criminal Justice System when cases went to court, many viewing the system as ineffective and too biased towards the needs of the accused.

'I thought it was an open and closed case – the police said it would be (it was thrown out – mixed samples)...I was left feeling pretty annoyed.' (Assault victim, Guildford)

A further concern was raised with regard to local licensing decisions, and the awarding of licences for pubs and clubs in areas known to be troublesome already, when there was no provision for extra policing.

Domestic Abuse

One group to report poor police response times were domestic abuse victims – in one serious incident the response time reported was over one hour. Agencies said that many such victims often don't have the capacity to have their voices heard, as they are vulnerable and afraid. The agencies that support these victims acknowledge that defining such abuse and when a domestic incident becomes seriously threatening is often difficult. They therefore warn that lack of training to recognise the signals and slow response times risk tragic incidents. These victims also feel let down by the courts and CPS.

'I don't think it's necessarily training, I think it's resources...there is often only one police car in the whole town. It takes an absolute age, because they have to come from Reigate – that's half an hour by car.' (Domestic Abuse victim, Redhill area)

'It took me a long time to take x to court. It ended up with me having a black face and bruises on my arms and legs...for it to be taken seriously.' (Domestic Abuse victim, Redhill area)

Victims praise the staff in the personal protection investigation units (for domestic and child protection). Several domestic abuse agencies told us that Surrey had a relatively good record in this area but that they now have serious concerns about the reduced size/numbers of PPIUs and their ability to cover the cases before them.

'There are just 4 of these (PPIUs) units across Surrey – the service is massively under-resourced; we (ESDAS) do a lot of their work for them. But do the wider public care about domestic abuse?'

'We come from a background of thinking 'it's just a domestic'. Surrey Police are really good, compared to a lot of forces...the met for example (we are on the border with some clients – such as in the Banstead area)...there is a different culture. Surrey have improved dramatically over the last 12 years...it's rare now to get a complaint about a front line officer...it's down to investment in training that they did, which has now slipped.' (Manager, ESDAS)

The manager at ESDAS reported with concern that the one week specialist training course that they have historically given the police, to understand and react to domestic abuse situations, has been significantly cut back. She reported that their arrangements with the police are very good, and wanted to develop their work together.

The domestic abuse agencies we spoke with handle substantial and increasing workloads; they feel that helping and responding to domestic abuse crime brings a clear 'return on investment', in the sense that it prevents far more serious crime incidents from developing.

Support for victims

Whilst victims praise the support they get from the police and agencies, some think that there can be an 'over-the-top' response, and that the system does not always sensibly allocate police and victim support resources to need. For example, respondents are frustrated to find several officers attend minor incidents, and multiple follow-up offers to support victims are made when the victim has clearly indicated that help is not required at the first contact.

'It seemed that anything daft was the system's fault rather than the individual's fault – they had their hands tied.' (Car theft victim, Guildford)

'We were asked where we were in relation to a serious assault case...we said that on the date in question we were at our house in Spain...they then kept apologising for having to go through lots of other (redundant) questions, like 'did you hear anything on the day'...it seemed absolutely bizarre'. (Victim/witness – Guildford)

'almost followed it up too much – the Victim Support people visited and kept on calling us – I thought 'maybe I should have it, in case later on I feel really traumatised?' (Burglary victim, Redhill)

Especially as resources are tight, victims and witnesses therefore feel that more measured, flexible and common-sense processes are sometimes required.

Crime prevention

Respondents also talked widely about the crime prevention agenda. We had a variety of reports of school and other visits, and good use being made of PCSOs; for example:

'(PCSOs) come in and talk to the children about road safety, safe routes to school, cycling...within the 'people who help us' part of the curriculum. The younger kids seem really impressed – they talk to them at the right level' (teacher/victim, Redhill)

5.2 The experience of the business community

Police relationship, response and performance

Local businesses in Woking and Epsom report generally excellent relations and contact with their neighbourhood police/PCSOs. They do have concerns about patchy and variable response times. They also report that fear of crime is much greater than the reality.

'Surrey remains a relatively safe county. What's far greater is the fear of crime, and there may be issues around detection rates. The impact of community organisations and neighbourhood police teams on reducing the fear of crime is incredibly important.' (Housing Trust, Epsom)

Many business respondents were very depressed about the low proportion of cases resolved, property found and criminals apprehended. Almost all businesses spoken to thought crime had increased in recent years, and lower level / ASB related incidents are perceived to have worsened. There is a strong sense of resignation.

'The police do the best they can with the resources they have. I wouldn't do anything differently. We face far wider underlying social problems.' (Accountancy partnership, Woking)

'I've been running a kebab shop here for 20 years. Most problems are late at night. I used to open until 3am; there was too much trouble; I now close at 12. The police are usually OK; but once they took over an hour to come...most of the time at night they now have to come from Camberley' (Kebab take-away, Woking)

'The police are very sympathetic to our situation, with homeless people coming in. We regularly meet with our two PCSOs. We also have a major problem with bicycle theft – Woking has one of the highest rates in the country...the police can't seem to do much...the thieves are so sophisticated' (Museum manager, Woking)

'We have had various office break-ins over the years, targeting computer equipment. We have found the police in all locations to be superb – but useless, in the sense that nothing is ever retrieved.' (Accountancy partnership, Woking)

Crime against businesses

Business respondents feel that thefts from their premises in particular (compared to other crimes) get low priority. Some poor response times were reported, of many hours (and sometimes days) in some cases. Hence some question whether the PCC's zero-tolerance stance, whilst well-intentioned and widely supported, can be fully resourced and delivered.

'We haven't been overly impressed. Because it's just theft of material goods...we were asked to preserve the crime scene...but they didn't attend for 3 days!' (Landscape garden business, Knaphill nr. Woking)

Those in Epsom thought that response times 'over the border' towards Kingston ('in The Met's area') also tended to be faster.

'Priorities are different (in the met area)...because they have their safer transport teams...our buses are linked there. They can react far more quickly' (Coach and bus operator - Epsom)

Rural areas

Respondents reported that patchy response times in more rural parts of Surrey were a concern, as is the passing of the village police presence / village bobby. Our Countryside Alliance representative acknowledged the policing challenges in the country, where distances are greater and resources fewer, but wanted the police to take a more proactive stance in working with the rural community. Using existing networks such as Farm Watch to warn of crime, report incidents and give advice was recommended.

Variable experience by area

Experiences clearly vary greatly by area. Our Epsom businesses were far more positive than those spoken to in Woking. This might reflect different circumstances, but also seemed to be impacted by an exceptionally good Neighbourhood Commander in the Epsom area. (We heard about a pilot 'risk team' of local neighbourhood officers, targeting high risk offenders and victims, especially ASB and drug dealing).

Various reports were given about how Commander Knight in Epsom led from the front, is piloting new ideas, visits local schools etc, and had generally won the wide support of the local community. See <http://www.surrey.police.uk/my-neighbourhood/epsom-ewell>

The use of PCSOs and CCTV

Businesses had mixed views about the role and cost-effectiveness of PCSOs. Woking shopping centre sees them as secondary security officers, available on the cheap (to them), but of probably limited help in a crisis. Some thought they were useful as deterrence and for school visits; others didn't understand what they were for, and were concerned that they were not a cheap option.

Businesses are concerned about how CCTV may be used or not, how comprehensive systems were and who funded them. Generally, CCTV was thought to be a useful crime deterrent. Respondents noted that Guildford and Woking have sophisticated systems and some had benefited from crimes being resolved by using them; others reported that control centres were left unmanned in the evenings/at night when crime was most likely.

'Many a time we have called to say somebody is escaping down the road; you try to get hold of the CCTV via the radio system...and they are not there! They cause themselves a bit of an own goal – you have to man it 24 hours a day!' (Shopping Centre manager, Woking)

'The councils mainly fund these...they are asking 'are we getting value for money as a Council; are the cameras in the right place?' The PCC would do well to ask is that making a difference' (Councillor, Epsom)

5.3 Engagement and communications

This was a major topic raised spontaneously by all participants, so we have reported it separately.

The need for more engagement

Victims and others feel that there is considerably more scope for the police to actively engage with communities using different existing channels – but especially using email and social networks. Sometimes it was suggested that current processes simply need to be used more widely or better, or more prominently promoted:

'The police panels are already running through social media. I'm a Facebook and Twitter follower of Epsom neighbourhood police team. Craig Knight (Borough Commander) has an online Facebook chat every few weeks and he'll respond to any questions. So the police here are already being quite innovative.' (Housing Trust, Epsom)

'All the bouncers in Guildford clubs and pubs are connected to police radio...there should be signs saying so...and the whole of the town centre is on CCTV, but nobody seems to know that' (Victim, Guildford)

'Where I live we have an active community Facebook group...we had a discussion about crime recently...we concluded that crime generally was not going up, but we were just all so much more aware.' (Victim, Guildford)

A more active dialogue and two-way feedback is considered essential for better policing outcomes and as a way to save policing resources spent on community policing and for intelligence gathering. Considerable dividends are thought likely to result.

'Police need to latch on where they can to existing community events and networks – for example, with our Community Partnership meetings that the local police already attend for a slot every 6-8 weeks' (Housing Trust, Epsom)

Neighbourhood Watch (NW)

Respondents noted that this scheme is very active in some areas, but non-existent in others. Respondents reported that because of its volunteer base and ethos, the experience of the scheme was bound to be very variable. This was particularly so with regard to the volume and relevance of crime updates. The scheme does need some funding, for signage for example, and in some areas local grants have been made available:

'In my area of Stonleigh, NW has been re-launched and we now have every single road covered – it's the eyes and ears of the community...I provided some funds for signage etc, as police cuts means they can't cover this...Budgens in Stoneleigh also helped out' (Councillor, Epsom)

Many thought more NW information could be put online in a better, more targeted way. However, it was pointed out that as many in the county (especially older adults) have no internet access, it was also important for Surrey Police to remember print and radio communications amongst the online and social media options recommended below. (Broadband access nationwide stands at about 3 in 4 adults as of early 2012. See <http://media.ofcom.org.uk/facts/>)

Media relations and PR

Business respondents generally feel that Surrey Police could project a far better image and achieve better outcomes by simply communicating more often and more effectively with the local media. The publisher of the main Woking News & Mail attended our discussion in the town, and felt that a better dialogue should be a high priority. He said that more energetic feedback, press releases and links would be very positive – both from the PCC and senior force commanders / the Chief Constable. Ideally he would welcome a regular column.

Local newspapers and their linked websites remain the most widely used local media channel by the public, according to the annual *Policing in Britain* survey from ASR - see <http://www.andrewsmithresearch.co.uk/life-in-britain/policing-in-britain>

'There is sometimes difficulty in getting information...better communication would be useful, to help them get their views over...people want to know...I would like more and better PR from the police, without the froth' (Publisher, Woking News & Mail)

'We need more effective police PR, based on facts and figures' (Victim, Guildford)

Specific ideas and initiatives

A considerable range of further ideas and suggestions were put forward by respondents to help deliver better engagement between people and with Surrey Police. It was suggested that encouraging these initiatives should be a priority, because they can produce real dividends and build confidence, and they are cost-effective. The main ideas suggested were:

- Promote more Neighbourhood Watch schemes county wide. The scheme remains active in many (better off) communities and in well-established neighbourhoods, but it needs a re-launch fit for the digital-online age. The information people receive needs better geographic targeting so it is not too generalised; people then pay more attention to it. Online networks already exist and enable and encourage communities and groups to feel connected easily, and avoid the delays, distribution effort and expense needed with paper-based newsletters. Paper newsletters will still be needed for those without online access.
- In the same way other networks are used with the same impact. We heard about Farm Watch, various local retailer groups, the Gay Surrey network and students in Guildford, to give a few examples of active online networks. Some local retailer groups (e.g. Woking) used to be far more active, but have stopped working/communicating. In some areas Neighbourhood Watch has failed to work well because residents are very transient, such as student areas in Guildford, and a network linking people by activity may be more successful. It was reported that most of these networks succeed because of a proactive volunteer (team).

'We have no Watch like this – people move from year to year...if I decided to set up one tomorrow, I wouldn't have a clue how to go about it.' (Young victim, Guildford)

- In rural areas, several main organisations, including the Countryside Alliance, the CLA and NFU have close links. It was thought that a single contact point with the police could probably be used to communicate with all of them / their networks.
- Community intervention groups such as Street Angels were reported to have become established, and work in partnership with Surrey Police. We heard about their useful and respected work in Guildford. Some respondents wondered how their approach fits the zero-tolerance ethos put forward by the PCC, suggesting a need for dialogue. See <http://www.gtcc.org.uk/StreetAngels.aspx>

'One of my flatmates volunteers for them (in Guildford). They are fantastic...people don't realise how many situations they solve on the spot...they don't get enough credit' (Victim, Guildford)

- Reminders /a campaign to remind people what to use the 999/101 telephone numbers for, and what services the public can expect at new front counters in, for example, the Epsom council offices (several respondents were unclear).
- Asian businesses in Woking lament the deterioration in regular police contact, and described a previously far closer link involving reciprocal meals and annual cricket matches, that brought positive results. The Asian community in Woking actively wants more regular police contact, visits to their mosque, etc (one of the largest; it

regularly has 2,000 attending on Friday evenings, and an open invitation is extended); the Woking Asian Business Forum is clearly a very influential and well regarded community group – see <http://www.wabf.org.uk/>

- The Asian community in Woking also provides a large proportion of the borough's taxi drivers (c.900, from an Asian population of c.9,000). They feel they are sometimes unfairly treated in disputes about unpaid fares. Their spokesman said that their drivers hear a lot of news/gossip relating to crime and suggested that they could be *'the eyes and ears of the local community for the police'*, as taxi drivers are efficiently linked already via their radio systems to provide early feedback. The police could tap in to this intelligence (or certainly explore the potential).
- Several businesses said that the Community Safety Partnership already brings various interested parties together and achieves considerable success in some areas now, so should be developed rather than replaced.
- At County level the business community has some interaction with Surrey Police but feels such opportunities could be more frequent and varied by location. The CEO at Surrey Chambers of Commerce reported that jointly organised occasional seminars about policing and business at Mount Browne took place, but that these are planned on an ad hoc basis. A more structured annual interactive 'policing and business' debate/seminar, held at several locations across the county, was suggested as a useful initiative. Surrey Chambers and the FSB would be happy to facilitate such initiatives.

Appendix – The discussion guide and prompts

Topic guide for all group and individual discussions

A. Introduction and warm up

1. Introductions. Mobiles on silent please
2. How I work / confidentiality / recordings / refreshments / incentives & recording-sign
3. Explain discussion topic: Policing priorities: your ideas; reaction to the PCC's draft plan and budget implications
4. Introductions: first name and family and job OR business type and size, your role
5. VICTIMS: What was your experience as a victim of crime – if you are prepared to, please summarise in a sentence or two

B. Spontaneous views about policing trends and your priorities (as warm up section)

1. Are the police doing a better or worse job now than a year ago? What changes (good or bad) have you noticed in policing your community?
2. What are the police doing well / less well now?
3. Victims: your main positive/negative experiences of Surrey Police as a victim of crime? What common themes crop up.
4. Businesses: What are your particular concerns and experiences about crime experienced by businesses in the area?
5. Do you have confidence in the police? Score them 0-10/10 on 'confidence in them' – quick poll
6. What should Surrey police have as their priorities over the next 2-3 years? What needs more focus / less focus, remembering that the budget is very tight?

C. Reaction to Kevin's 6-point priority list / actions (Victims will discuss in more detail)

1. Reveal chart with KH 6-point priority plan. Initial reactions? Plus and minus reactions?
2. What's behind each of these goals: what do they mean? How do the police reach that goal? What are the barriers?
3. For each goal: debate bullet points about what the goal means / how to deliver that goal – reactions / what's missing (as per KH document)?
4. What is the priority order for these 6 goals, arrived at as a group? Why?

D. Budget requirements and spend plans (Businesses groups will discuss in more detail)

Intro: Use budget factsheet and let everyone read it.

1. Recap: Surrey gets a relatively low proportion of its funding from Central Government (about half of its total budget). The Government grant to Surrey Police was reduced by 5% in 2011/2012 and 7% in 2012/2013. More cuts are expected this year. So, Surrey needs to rely more on the portion it gets from Council Tax. Even if council tax does increase, Surrey Police still need to make savings.
2. Reactions to the police budget and year-on-year change, overall?
3. Is amount of council tax for policing that you pay fair? What would be fair?
4. The Government has offered PCCs a two year grant (of just under 1% of overall budget) if they freeze council tax next year. The PCC proposes to reject this grant as it would cause a budget shortfall for Surrey Police. Instead he proposes to increase council tax precept by around 2% - or 50p a month / £6 a year for a Band D household. What is your view on this?
5. Central Government has 'capped' the amount of our Council Tax overall, to a 2% increase. Would you pay more than this for policing, if the Government cap was not in place? What sort of increase?
6. If you want to pay less, what areas of policing should be cut?
7. Capital Budget. Recap point 9: *the PCC is proposing to keep capital spend (buildings, ICT, vehicles etc) at a similar level as this year*
8. Reactions? Support? Should police spend on these capital items be higher or lower?
9. (Businesses only) Working in partnership with the police. Ways in which the business community could help / work with the police or PCC? Ever considered? How could this work for your business? Any ideas?
10. PROMPT: Local businesses are involved with policing and citizenship work in various ways e.g. danger awareness (yr 10 schools); junior citizenship days. Businesses provide funds / time / venues. Reactions? Is this useful to you being seen as socially responsible / locally involved?

Summarise: Your top 2-3 police priorities? Thanks and close

Main prompt item for discussion – the PCC’s priority promises

Kevin’s Promise



Take a Zero Tolerance Policing Approach

I will lead a relentless focus on those who blight our lives: Anti Social Louts, Violent Bullies, Burglars and those who deal drugs to our young people. We will seize the profits of their crime.

More visible street policing

I will use my experience to reduce expenditure on back office roles and use the ill gotten gains of criminals to pay for beat officers

Put Victims at the centre of the Criminal Justice system

I will ensure that victims are given a quality service from reporting a crime to giving evidence. The professionals in the Courts and Police work for you, sometimes they forget .

Give you the opportunity to have a greater say in how your streets are policed

I will set up local policing boards to bring decision making closer to neighbourhoods. You will be able to participate and have your views heard.

Protect your local policing

I will work with Police Chiefs to maintain the morale and ethos of service of your officers. I will do this by supporting them against unreasonable criticism and ensuring their voice is heard. We cannot expect them to take on the criminals unless we back them.

I will be uncompromising in the standards you expect from your police

With public support comes an expectation that your police delivery a quality service. I will expect the Chiefs to inspire their officers and unlock their passion to deliver a professional, courteous and positive approach to policing. You pay for it you have a right to expect it.

Prompt sheet for budget discussion

Consultation to inform the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey's Police and Crime Plan – Budget and Precept Proposals for 2013/14

As Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey, it is my role to set both a revenue budget (day-to-day spending) and capital budget (acquisition of long term assets) for Surrey Police that can best help me deliver the six promises I made when I was elected and ensure that Surrey residents and businesses receive an excellent policing service. I am obliged to consult the public and business representatives on my proposals for expenditure before I present my proposed council tax precept to the Police & Crime Panel in February 2013.

At this stage, it is difficult to consult on the finer details of my budgets because the implications of the Government's financial settlement are not yet fully known. This consultation looks at my broad principles for setting next year's budgets for Surrey Police.

Revenue Budget – Government funding and council tax precept

1. Surrey Police is financed partly by grants from the Government and partly by a council tax precept set by the Police & Crime Commissioner. Around half of Surrey's £208m revenue budget this year is funded by Government grant, with the other half generated through local council tax. Unlike some other forces who receive a greater proportion of their funding from the Government, Surrey is very dependent on the money it raises through council tax.
2. The financial climate across the police service is challenging, with Government funding having been cut in recent years and all forces having to make substantial savings to try to protect the frontline. In 2012/13, the amount received by Surrey Police from the Government was reduced by 6.7%. This followed a 4.8% reduction in 2011/12. Surrey Police had to make savings of £7.2 million this financial year; a substantial management and operational challenge.
3. The Government is keen that Police & Crime Commissioners do not increase council tax in the current difficult economic climate. The Government is offering a 2 year grant (equivalent to just under a 1% council tax increase) in return for freezing what council tax payers pay for policing.
4. In Surrey, a 1% police council tax increase gives policing approximately an additional £1m share of the total funding raised from Surrey Council Tax.
5. As the Police and Crime Commissioner I have to consider whether to accept the grant and freeze the police share of council tax or reject the grant and instead increase the police share of council tax.

Accepting the council tax freeze grant and freezing the police share of council tax

6. Council tax for policing would stay the same for two years. The council tax freeze grant is for two years only and when that money is taken away, Surrey Police would have to make up for it in other ways. This could require reductions in service or a steep increase in council tax if I am to meet my promises to deliver on Zero Tolerance.

Rejecting the council tax freeze grant and increasing the police share of council tax

7. Additional funds raised via an increase in council tax are built into the Surrey Police budget over the long-term and would provide more financial stability for the force, enabling me to keep the promises that I made to the Surrey electorate. The amount local people would pay for their policing as part of their council tax would go up (for a band D household, council tax is currently £203 for policing and the increase would be around 50p a month).

PCC proposal

8. My proposal is to **reject** the Government's council tax freeze grant and instead increase the Surrey Police council tax precept by around 2%. This will help ensure that I can set a revenue budget that will deliver my election promises, but more importantly will help to keep the Surrey public safe.

Capital Budget

9. My capital budget will support proposals for new building work, replacement of vehicles and updating of IT infrastructure. This budget will be paid for from a combination of the proceeds arising from the sale of surplus assets, government grant and if necessary borrowing. My proposed capital budget will not require an additional increase in council tax precept over and above the proposed 2% already discussed.

I would really like to hear your views on my budget proposals and thank you for your time.

Kevin Hurley
Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

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