



**Lancashire**  
**POLICE AUTHORITY**  
Your County, Your Police, Your Say

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# **A REVIEW OF POLICE AUTHORITY COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

**December 2007**

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 'A' - Letter and Questionnaire to all PAC Members.

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Appendix 'D' – Letter and responses from CDRP managers.

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Appendix 'F' – Letter and Responses from Local Authorities.

Appendix 'G' – Minute of the Partnerships Forum – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2007.

## **Background – current position**

Administrative guidelines issued in 1982, set the scene for the initial formation of the Police Authority Community Meetings (PACs) and said that they should be used to produce a two-way flow of information enabling chief constables and police authorities to take local views into account when doing their job. Membership should be flexible and wide-ranging whilst not being so large that it became unwieldy. Local councillors and MPs should be part of the membership, as should local services such as probation, education, housing and social services. Further guidance recommended that groups should reflect as wide a range of community interests as possible whilst still being manageable but that statutory body representatives such as police, councillors, etc. should be fewer in number than community representatives.

The County Council's Police Committee held on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 1983 adopted the recommendations of a Special Sub-Committee for establishing local consultation between the community and the police.

Section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 strengthened the guidance by making the arrangements mandatory rather than optional to:

- (a) Obtain the views of people in that area about matters concerning policing of the area and for
- (b) Obtaining their co-operation with the police in preventing crime in the area'.

Currently there are 14 PACs in Lancashire covering the areas of Lancaster, Wyre, Ribble Valley, Blackpool, Fylde, Preston, South Ribble, West Lancashire, Chorley, Blackburn-with-Darwen, Hyndburn, Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale.

Although it was originally agreed that the PACs should meet at least twice a year in practice meetings are currently held three times a year with provision for a divisional meeting or alternative mechanism to be held to discuss policing objectives and resources. The police authority has a lead member for each PAC who participates in the PACs business and is a means whereby information can be passed to and from the meetings. The police and the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership also play a major part in supporting the PACs by their attendance and input.

Section 106 was repealed in August 1996 which means that there is no longer a specific statutory requirement to maintain the PAC structures in their present form. However, the legal requirement for police authorities to consult the public is now consolidated under section 96 of the Police Act 1996. This requires the police authority to continue to make arrangements in each police area for 'obtaining the

views of people in that area about matters concerning policing of the area and for obtaining their co-operation with the police in preventing crime in the area'.

Since the Police and Magistrates Court Act 1994, Police Authorities have become much more active and influential decision making bodies especially in relation to the requirement to produce a local policing plan. Although the introduction of local policing plans have provided a much-needed focus for the activities of local police authorities, in the early years these plans remained largely police-driven. Over the years Lancashire Police Authority have taken a more active approach to consulting the public in their areas over policing priorities and take a more proactive role in the planning process in order to help the constabulary direct resources to areas of most importance.

## Reasons for the Review

The number of attendees at the PACS has fallen year on year and there is a perception that the PACs fail to achieve full community representation.

Since the last review in 2003 a number of other community meeting Groups have emerged and the issues that are often raised at PACs are also raised at these meetings (e.g. PACT, residents associations etc), causing unnecessary duplication.

The introduction of Police and Communities Together (PACT) by Lancashire Constabulary as part of their Neighbourhood Policing approach to tackling crime and reassuring communities is now seen as the cornerstone of engagement. PACTs are generally monthly meetings at which Community Beat Managers (CBMs) and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) meet with local residents and partner agencies to identify and resolve local issues. PACT meetings specific to the demographics of the division are also held to involve those minority groups that would not normally attend the more conventional meetings. Separate PACT meetings are held for specific minority groups such as: -

- The deaf
- LGBT
- Disabled
- Faith
- Young People and
- Asian Women.

Innovative methods are being trialled in these areas, including 'virtual' attendance at meetings (using the internet) and Street PACT meetings. The corporate Neighbourhood Policing team is constantly looking for new ways to ensure the Constabulary effectively captures and deals with the concerns of local communities. The innovative approaches to community engagement for different diverse groups illustrate the good practice around Neighbourhood Policing that has been recognised by the HMIC via the awarding of the only excellent baseline grade for NHP in the country."

In essence, PACT fulfills the criteria in section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 of obtaining the views of people in that area about matters concerning policing of the area and for obtaining their co-operation with the police in preventing crime in the area.

The Local Government White Paper (Strong and Prosperous Communities) (now forming part of the Local Government Public Involvement and Health Bill) has led Councils to review their community governance arrangements. From April 2008 Community Calls for action are scheduled to be introduced which will allow Councillors to raise local issues through a due process and require public service providers (Council, Police, PCT, Fire etc) to provide a formal response to unanswered issues. These are locally based it is anticipated that these be dealt with at a local level, rather than on the agendas for the more strategic focused Council Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

**(Note:** The community calls for action (ccfa) under the Police and Justice Act have been delayed.)

## **The Review**

Lancashire's PAC meetings are still regarded by many as the principal part of the community engagement package that enables the police authority to meet its requirement for 'obtaining the views of people about matters concerning policing and for obtaining their co-operation with the police in preventing crime' and continues to be one of the principal means whereby independent feedback on policing can be obtained.

However, PAC meetings should only be used as a form of consultation should they satisfy key aims or concepts or they can demonstrate that they are preferred by the public in a particular area or community. PACs should not be retained merely because they satisfy a statutory requirement to consult. If it is the case that PAC meetings are unproductive then they should be abandoned in favour of alternative methods allowing the Authority to diversify its methods to further develop the capacity to consult across the whole community having regard to the diverse nature of Lancashire.

There is no single means of consultation/engagement which satisfies all of the key aims or concepts. Therefore, a more realistic test of the effectiveness of PACs is to compare the areas in which they excel and satisfy the key aims or concepts against the performance and effectiveness of similar existing mechanisms available to the public such as PACT.

## **Who was consulted and why?**

The results of the written comments received from the following have been used in formulating this report.

- The members of the Police Authority Community Meetings
- The six Divisional Commanders
- The Parish Council's of Lancashire.
- The 14 managers of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Managers
- The Police Authority staff involved in the administration of the PACs.
- Local authorities
- The Partnerships Forum

### **Consultation with members of the Police Authority Community Meetings**

Over 1000 members of the Police Authority Community Meetings were asked for their views regarding their attendance, the reason for attending, their thoughts on the success and effectiveness of the meetings, a comparison with the constabulary's PACT meetings and alternative forms of consultation. A letter was also sent to all the representatives of organisations and individuals who had not attended a PAC meeting in the last 12 months to encourage future attendance and understand the reasons behind their non-attendance.

The letter and questionnaire sent to all PAC members is attached at Appendix A.

The letter sent to all the representatives of organisations and individuals who had not attended a PAC meeting in the last 12 months to encourage future attendance and understand the reasons behind their non-attendance is attached at Appendix B.

### **Consultation with Divisional Commanders**

This review has also taken the opportunity the Authority to identify, with the six Divisional Commanders, precisely what outcomes they want from the PACs and to see if the PACs can be organised in such a way as to ensure the required outcomes are delivered. Without this clear visioning exercise being undertaken, it is impossible to direct future progress or evaluate outcomes for effectiveness.

A copy the questionnaire sent to all Divisional Commanders seeking their views on the effectiveness of the PACs along with the current and future governance arrangements for consultation/engagement in their divisions are attached at Appendix 'C'.

## **Consultation with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships**

Currently PACs tend to focus on local issues and concerns that are very important but far more relevant to the Constabulary and local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership who can act on the concerns expressed at meetings. In this regard it may be considered best for the public to deal directly with their local policing team through Police and Community Together Meetings (PACT) or local council.

As valued partners the views of the managers of the 14 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships were sought.

A copy of the letter sent to all 14 CDRP managers and responses is attached at Appendix D.

## **Consultation with Lancashire's Parish Councils.**

It is important that the Police Authority works effectively with partners such as Parish Council's. However, there is a growing concern of an increasing duplication of meetings such as Area Committees, PACT and more recently Lancashire Locals at which police officers and police authority members are expected to attend.

The views of all 212 Parish Councils in Lancashire were sought on attendance, the effectiveness of the PACs to be an effective way of gaining local information relating to the Parish Council, and suggestions on other forms of consultation.

A copy of the letter and responses are attached at Appendix 'E'.

## **Consultation with Police Authority Staff**

The staff of the Lancashire Police Authority were consulted via a questionnaire and asked for their views on the effectiveness of PACs, the amount of time each member of staff is involved in the administration of PACs. The staff were also given a number of statements around information sharing and attendance and asked to indicate how successful or unsuccessful they thought PAC meetings were in meeting those aims. A copy of the full questionnaire and responses are attached at Appendix 'F'.

## **Consultation with Local Authorities.**

The Local Government White Paper (Strong and Prosperous Communities) (now forming part of the Local Government Public Involvement and Health Bill) has led Councils to review their community governance arrangements. Local Authorities were asked to outline their current arrangements for consulting on policing/crime and disorder issues and how they envisage establishing an 'overview and scrutiny' function with regards to crime and disorder in the future. Whilst not directly impacting on the current format and effectiveness of the Police Authority Community Meetings this information will assist the Authority in ensuring the most effective format for future

meetings both at district and Force-wide level as well as looking at possibility of joint collaborations with local authorities.

A copy of the letter and responses are attached at Appendix 'G'.

### **Consultation with the Partnerships Forum**

In order for the Authority to enhance its reporting mechanism that allows it to identify public priorities across the force area and prioritise the identified issues for further action the Partnerships Forum was asked for its views on the future role of the Partnerships Forum within the Authority's decision making and planning processes.

A copy of the Minute of the meeting is attached at Appendix 'H'.

## **Attendance**

Although there is a view that the inclusion of elected members and representatives of local organisations on the PACs means that engagement is being carried out with the public. It could also be argued that their purpose was to engage with more 'general' members of the public and local organisations to allow them to express their views on local issues.

An examination of the minutes of the 42 PAC meetings held during 2006/07 revealed that 502 members of the general public attended compared with 315 members of the PAC.

Additionally, at 1 meeting there were no members of the general public at all.

The value of the contributions made by the PAC 'members' cannot be measured but undoubtedly they reflect views and concerns seen from the perspective of the public.

However, whilst PACs are open meetings, there have always been concerns about how well they achieve their aim of reaching a broad and representative cross section of the community they cover. Meetings are not very well attended and even where larger numbers attend, they still only account for a small percentage of the population. Taking Blackpool as an example - a meeting attracting 100 people would still account for less than 0.1% of the town's population of 142,283 (2001 census).

Therefore, by holding Police Authority Community meetings which are open to the public and at which they can express their views on policing issues in their area, the Authority is fulfilling its minimum obligation as required by the Act. However, the above figures give an indication as to the effectiveness of the PACs as an engagement mechanism.

In comparison, the launch of the 'Investors in Policing' campaign during 2007, has enabled the authority to gauge public opinion around the police precept and the policing objectives for 2008/09. This collection of one-off events allowed the Authority to actively engage and raise the profile its profile by consulting with over 1500 members of the public through an open day and six divisional roadshows held at supermarkets across Lancashire.

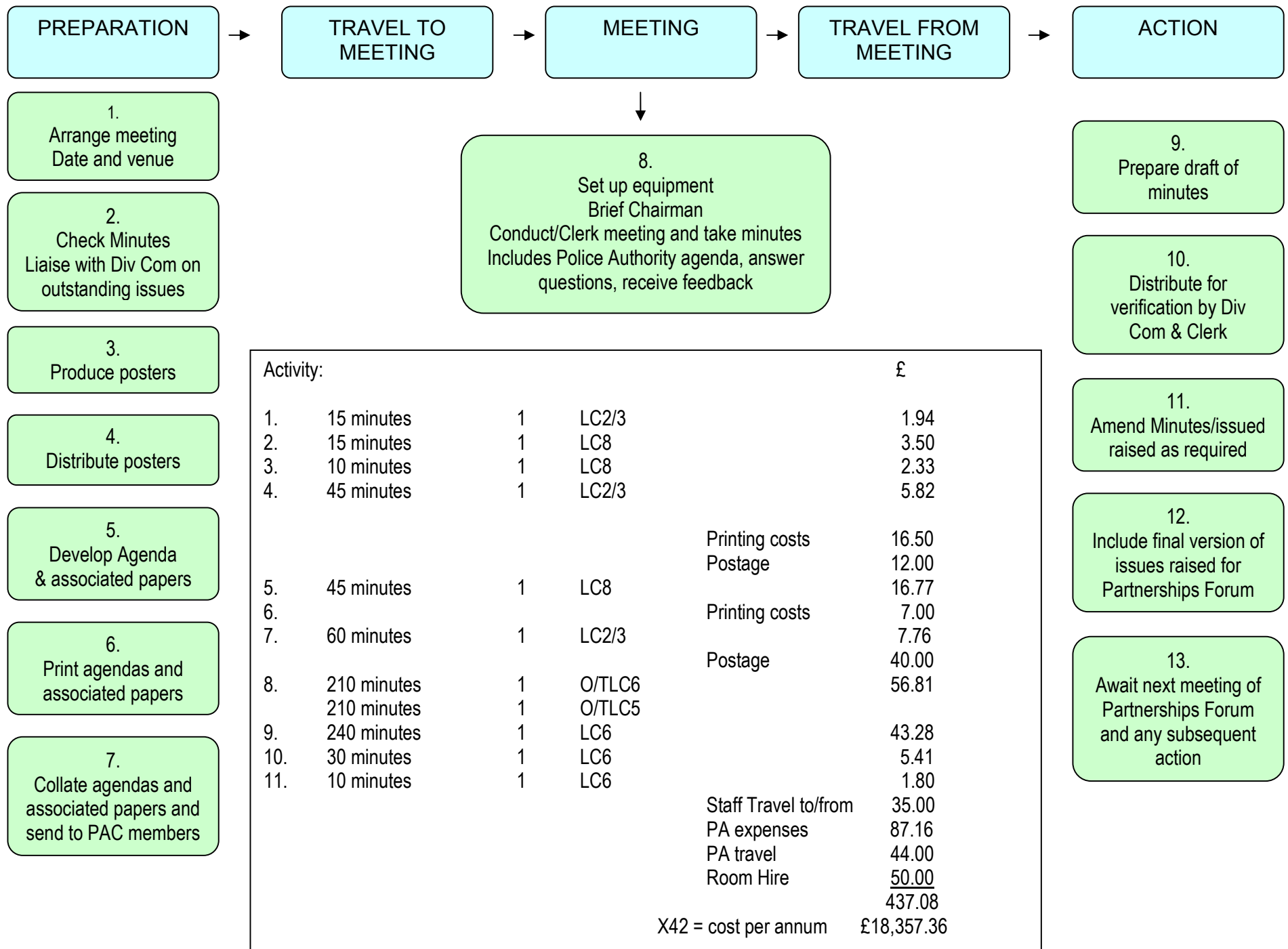
These events clearly assisted the Police Authority to identify a snap shot of opinion on priorities and contribute to the annual policing plan as well as providing valuable information to brief local members of Parliament.

## **Costs and Processes**

Without doubt the Police Authority, in carrying out consultation through Police Authority Community Meetings is expending significant amounts of time, effort and money. This indicates a genuine desire to make the process work but evidence from those consulted suggests that such effort is not obtaining the views of a broad representation of the public.

A process map and the associated costs for PAC meetings are set out below.

## Costs and Process Analysis of Police Authority Community Meetings



## **PAC characteristics**

Typically, PAC meetings in Lancashire have the following characteristics.

- They are held in the evenings at community buildings such as schools or community centres or in Local Authority buildings.
- There is a perception that they are not well advertised.
- There are normally representatives from the police authority, local councillors, CDRP managers, divisional police command teams, the area inspector/sergeant and in some cases the local officer.
- There are on occasion's representatives of other local organisations.
- Nominated representatives of the community chair meetings.
- Meetings are often poorly attended by members of the public, who are sometimes outnumbered by the representatives from the constabulary, police authority and CDRP.
- The attendees are mainly white, over 40 who are used to attending public meetings.
- Although PACs are open public meetings, they find it difficult to attract representative membership of the community they serve. In particular, they have difficulty in attracting members from ethnic minority groups and from people under 35.
- There is a question as to whether the community representatives actually represent a genuine cross section of the local communities.
- Where attendees claim to represent a community group, it is not clear how well they consult with their community to canvass their views or report back.
- In some instances, the same issues are discussed meeting after meeting.
- The attendees only seemed interested in dealing with local issues and not in their important role of commenting on strategic planning and policy.

It is appreciated that the Police Authority requires a mechanism to consult and engage with the community of Lancashire, of which the PACs currently play an integral part. Listening to the views of the PAC members, there are many good reasons why Face to face public meetings should remain and be supported.

Some of these reasons are:

- Local people are best placed to recognise local problems and put forward locally focussed ways of addressing them and agreeing the priorities for action.
- Local people have a vested interest in addressing local issues. These issues affect their quality of life and that of their families and friends.
- Local people have a local focus on the issues and the effects.
- They are better placed to understand the impact of measures put into place to offset effects of local problems.
- It is important that senior police officers meet and are accountable to local people for their decisions.
- They might well know the people involved and there extended family if applicable.

It is important to recognise also that the Authority has worked hard over the years to overcome barriers to face to face participation. These issues relate to public awareness of when and why PAC meetings are held, timings, locations and places where meetings are held and lack of car parking facilities to name but a few.

Additionally, on occasions there have been suggestions that an over reliance on the use of statistics, no use of visual aids to present information and some reports being quite long have detracted from the value of the information that is being given but not necessarily received.

Overcoming these barriers has contributed to the longevity of the PACs compared to similar meetings held by other local authorities.

## **PAC Structure**

When the Police Committee were establishing the PACs in the mid 80's, they avoided being over prescriptive about membership and how the meetings managed their business. It was agreed at the time that each committee should adopt a form and method that best suited the local circumstances.

Then, as now, the outcomes were deemed to be more important than the processes. So far as membership was concerned, it was agreed that no more than two representatives from an organisation should serve on a PAC so as to avoid an organisation dominating proceedings. There was no limit imposed on the number of community members serving on a PAC meeting (so long as meetings were still manageable). This situation remains the same today as it did when PACs were originally set up.

Over the years, the Police Authority has reviewed the structure and role of PACs to ensure that it is seen to be accountable, bottom up in its approach, representative of and accessible to the community and supportive of the communities' needs. This process has clearly contributed to the longevity of the PAC meetings but the recent proliferation of similar meetings and the increasing demands on staff resources are impacting on the effectiveness of the PACs.

PAC meetings have historically been structured around an agreed Constitution and Terms of Reference and a strict Agenda, provided to all members and publicly available, in advance of the meeting, which allows for business to be conducted in an informed, focused and progressive way. The relationship and roles of the Constabulary, CDRPs and Police Authority are clearly defined to ensure that PACs operate effectively. However, the main focus should be on highlighting ongoing issues and dealing with current ones, not revisiting previous incidents habitually.

Whatever the form of the meeting, it will only meet its aims if it is chaired appropriately. If this is not the case, the meeting can lack focus and purpose with the same topic being discussed time after time without progress. In recent years the Authority has facilitated training for PAC Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Authority Members with little or no improvement.

Suggestions have been made that those Police Authority members, who sit on PACs, should undertake the Chairing duties as a matter of course. This has always been met with some resistance by the membership of PACs who wish to keep the meetings locally representative and therefore PACs have been free to nominate their own chairs. As a compromise the Authority member is appointed as a second vice chair to provide support to the chair where appropriate.

It is clear that there can never be a 'one size fits all' approach for dealing with local community issues. The key to strengthening and developing future consultation and

engagement arrangements is to adopt a truly accountable bottom up system which builds on and supports the work of existing local groups and organisations.

## **The Effectiveness and future role of PACs**

Before considering the future of the PACs, perhaps it would be useful to look at their effectiveness as a means of consulting and engaging with the local communities and their ability to hold the Divisional Commander to account.

The Police Research Group's work on public consultation and feedback as published in their Paper 22 'it's Good to Talk' identified seven aims for consultation. They may be regarded as the key concepts relating to any form of consultation adopted by either the Police Authority or the Constabulary.

1. To reach a broad cross section, representative of the whole population in the area that the PAC covers.
2. Identify public priorities to influence the annual policing plan.
3. Identify public priorities for immediate local action.
4. Seek to obtain rapid action to address public concerns.
5. To hold the Divisional Commander to account by obtaining information on performance and impact.
6. Provide the public with information on policing and PAC activity and initiatives.
7. Develop partnerships with the public and other organisations to prevent crime.

Whilst it is appreciated that there is no single means of consultation/engagement which satisfies all of these aims at once, by referring to the responses of those consulted it is possible to identify the strengths of PACs against the 7 key concepts and compare the performance and effectiveness against alternative mechanisms available to the public such as PACT and Area Forums. This way the usefulness of PACs can be determined.

*1. To reach a broad cross section, representative of the (whole) population in the area that the PAC covers.*

In view of the responses from the Divisional Commanders and LPA staff, the Police Authority and the Constabulary spends a significant amount of time, effort and money consulting and engaging with the public through PACs. This demonstrates a commitment to make the process work but evidence indicates that this effort is not obtaining the views of the diverse communities of Lancashire through Police Authority Community Meetings.

Comments from members of PACs indicate that PACs are poorly advertised, poorly attended and do not appear to be representative of the general public. It can be agreed that the latter two suggestions are true. However, every effort is taken to ensure that each meeting receives the maximum publicity possible within the resources available and regular audits suggest that there are few cost effective ways available to improve publicity. There is also evidence to suggest that mass marketing and expensive advertising campaigns through local media may lead to better opportunities to consult with people but is unlikely to encourage participation and questions remain around value for money.

The structure of PACs have been re-shaped many times over the years in an attempt to make them more 'user friendly' with as little bureaucracy as possible. Although this has helped in allowing the general public's involvement it has not encouraged greater participation.

**Concept achieved - No**

*2. Identify public priorities to influence the annual policing plan.*

The terms of reference of the Police Authority Community Meetings provides an element of consultation. However, as one of the main consultation mechanisms used by the Authority they have never been considered to be an effective means of consultation in their present form. Attendance is poor and the issues discussed are of a local nature. Neither of these factors is conducive to identifying public priorities to influence the Police Authority's Annual Policing Plan.

Divisional Commanders have also expressed their reservations about the value of PACs, emphasising that their usefulness is limited by the very local nature of the issues discussed.

**Concept achieved - No**

### *3. Identify public priorities for immediate local action.*

PAC meetings are a good place to raise specific local issues. However, the introduction of Police and Communities Together (PACT) as part of Lancashire Constabulary's Neighbourhood Policing approach to tackling crime and reassuring communities are now seen as the cornerstone of engagement. PACT allows the community to meet their neighbourhood policing team every month, have a say on how their neighbourhood is policed and monitor the Constabulary's performance.

#### **Concept achieved - Yes**

### *4. Seek to obtain rapid action to address public concerns.*

It has been commented on that the PAC meetings are a good place to raise specific local issues or for an individual to vent frustration to the police. If all they are there for is to allow people to make a complaint against the police or a police officer, seek an apology, seek the prevention of replication, seek an explanation, or an opportunity to show annoyance, then the resource, time and effort provided by all that are involved is wasted.

Furthermore, because PACs deal primarily with local issues that are raised at each meeting they do not operate in 'current time' and more often than not seek to address matters that occurred in the past. As a result and given the reporting structure under which they operate the potential for them to show positive effectiveness is severely limited.

There must be more tangible outcomes, particularly around the policing objectives, priorities and target setting from all the resource, time and effort used if PACs are to be effective and fit for purpose. People are much more likely to want to be involved with a process where they see the results of their efforts and realise that they are in a position from which they can influence change.

#### **Concept achieved - Yes**

*5. To hold the Divisional Commander to account by obtaining information on performance and impact.*

PACs are viewed as a means by which the public has the opportunity to access and question senior members of the Constabulary, Police Authority and the local CDRP. If it is agreed that accountability and engagement remains their main purpose then alternative methods need to be used to consult. Furthermore, having already heard from the Divisional Commanders on the PACs apparent failure to adequately hold them to account locally, we need to determine whether the cost in holding the PACs is an effective use of public money.

**Concept achieved - No**

*6. Provide the public with information on policing and PAC activity and initiatives.*

Information on police performance and from consultation is a major issue for both the Authority and the Constabulary. Evidence suggests that although there have been improvements in this area the Authority and Constabulary still do not perform well in this regard. There are benefits to 'face to face' engagement and through the greater use of Police Authority Community meetings as a means of reporting to the communities this may help to improve confidence in policing amongst the public.

**Concept achieved - Yes**

*7. Develop partnerships with the public and other organisations to prevent crime.*

There may well be some merit in a representative of the PACTs coming to talk about PACT meetings. However, there would be a danger of the meetings being hijacked further by all the local things that PACT meetings deal with in minute detail. Any PACT involvement would need to confine itself to issues about the structure, coverage, effectiveness and operation of the PACT structure together with any broad and consistent policing issues being identified that warrant the divisional commander or Authority member considering a strategic approach to commonly occurring issues.

With the recent implementation of PACT and the introduction of the Community Calls for action Agenda scheduled for April 2008 to allow Councillors to raise local issues through a due process and demand public service providers (Council, Police, PCT, Fire etc) to provide a formal response to unanswered issues. It is not inconceivable that the need for Police Authority Community Meetings will disappear.

**Concept achieved - No**

## **Comparison of PACT**

Having referred the responses of the respondents against the 7 key concepts what can be clearly demonstrated is that PACs are not particularly successful in four of the areas and in the three where they do perform well these are now duplicated at other meetings such as PACT.

Many of the organisations represented on PACs such as the local council, residents association, the faith community, local business and local residents are also involved in PACT. Furthermore, due to the very local nature of PACT there is a better opportunity for the PACT to reach a broad cross section of the population in the area the PACT covers.

PACT meetings are a good place to seek to obtain rapid action to address public concerns. Also by tasking local officers to solve problems that are raised by the community and report back to monthly meetings to explain what has been done to improve things or why activities could not take place demonstrates local accountability.

PACT is also able to provide the public with information on local policing activity and initiatives. Explaining what has been done to improve things or explain why activities could not take place enables officers to improve confidence in local policing amongst the public. People are therefore, much more likely to want to be involved with a process where they see the results of their efforts and realise that they are in a position from which they can influence change in their neighbourhood.

## **The Future**

If the Authority was to cease Community Engagement through the use of Police Authority Community meetings there would still be a need for a public forum to hold the Police to account in a wider sense and the review of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may provide an opportunity to do this. The new statutory requirement for individual CDRPs to hold one or more public meetings throughout the year at which senior representatives of the responsible authorities are accountable to the public could be a joint venture. Police, Police Authority and local Council will all need to be there with other key Partners. This is a potential way forward. The rationale for a joint approach will be further reinforced by the introduction of the single performance system for community safety: Assessments of Policing and Community Safety (APACS) in 2008/09.

Furthermore, although local authorities are still awaiting guidance from the Government on future overview and scrutiny arrangements, there has been positive feedback from local authorities that the use of Local Area Committees as joint public meetings could also be a way forward. Such collaboration would also help alleviate a lot of the repetition with other meetings (PACT, residents associations etc) and could be used to engage with the public in identifying public priorities to influence the Police Authority's Annual Policing Plan.

It is clear that should the authority take this view there will not be a one size fits all approach to future consultation and engagement as local authorities in Lancashire have different arrangements for consulting on policing/crime and disorder issues.

Either process would hopefully enable the Authority to maintain the involvement of the current PAC membership and also look to develop the role of the existing Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Views from the Committees could then be fed back to the Authority to consider.

## Summary

In closing, perhaps one point needs to be made, that no change is not an option. Lancashire Police Authority, in common with all other Police Authorities, is operating in a changing environment, and needs to keep all of its functions under review.

Consultation is important to the Authority, but it needs to be dynamic in process and comprehensive enough to flag up those areas of public concern as relates to policing and policing policy that trouble the community most. Only in this way, will the Police Authority be able to reflect those concerns in its 'Policing Plans' and ensure a professional and efficient police service for the whole community of Lancashire.

Looking at the costs associated with PACs the Police Authority is expending significant amounts of time, effort and money. This indicates a genuine desire to make the process work but evidence from those consulted suggests that such effort is not obtaining the views of a broad representation of the public.

Furthermore, despite the structure of PACs being re-shaped many times over the years to make them more 'user friendly' and increase the general public's involvement the traditional method of setting up a formal consultative meeting have had limited success. There may well be some merit in a representative of the PACTs coming to talk about PACT meetings. However, as already highlighted there is a danger of the meetings being hijacked further by all the local things that PACT meetings deal with in minute detail.

The Authority values the time and commitment made by so many of the community who have taken part in our Community Meetings over so many years. This support has been taken into account by ensuring that any future arrangements will involve their continued participation. However, the fact remains that the Authority has to improve the effectiveness and range of its consultation in order to properly discharge its responsibilities, by identifying new ways of engaging with the community.

It is appreciated that there are many benefits to the Police Authority and Constabulary for 'face to face' engagement with the local community and this has been recognised in the review. However, there is a clear message that the majority of the issues raised at PACs are more suited to Constabulary PACT meetings and coupled with low attendance and an inability to attract participation from a broad cross section of the community, PACs clearly fail to adequately identify public priorities to influence the annual policing plan and hold the Divisional Commanders to account.

The Police Authority needs to develop the capacity to consult across the whole community having regard to the diverse nature of Lancashire. The characteristics of the PACs referred to in the review demonstrate that the Authority can no longer place any reliance on PACs to achieve this. Any future process must take account of sensitivity around nationality, faith, gender and race, and use both formal and informal interaction to achieve results against a pre-defined structure.

The Police Authority and Constabulary can no longer expect the public to come to them to be consulted; they need to go out and engage people on their own terms and in locations and situations in which they feel comfortable. PACT street meetings and recent events as part of the 'Investors in Policing' campaign and have highlighted the effectiveness of more informal links in shopping centres and open days etc., to meet people where they go.

However, there is also the need for a public forum to hold the Police to account in a wider sense and the review of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may provide an opportunity to do this. The new statutory requirement for individual CDRPs to hold one or more public meetings throughout the year at which senior representatives of the responsible authorities are accountable to the public could be a joint venture. Police, Police Authority and local Council will all need to be there with other key Partners. This is a potential way forward. The rationale for a joint approach will be further reinforced by the introduction of the single performance system for community safety: Assessments of Policing and Community Safety (APACS) in 2008/09.

## **Recommendation**

- (i) That Police Authority Community Forums be retained in their present format with the addition of PACT representatives to consider issues about the structure, coverage, effectiveness and operation of PACT together with any broad and consistent policing issues being identified that warrant the divisional commander or Authority member considering a strategic approach to commonly occurring issues.

Or

- (ii) That the Authority agree to cease Community Engagement through the use of Police Authority Community meetings after the May/June 2008 cycle and redeploy its resources to improve the effectiveness and range of its consultation in order to properly discharge its responsibilities, by identifying new ways of engaging with the community.
- (iii) That approval be given for the office of the Chief Executive to commence initial discussions to develop one or two joint public meetings throughout the year in each of the 14 council areas at which senior representatives of the responsible authorities are accountable to the whole community.
- (iv) That provision is made in the new arrangements for the continued participation of the existing membership of the Police Authority Community Meetings and the Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

## **Headline Results - PAC members**

Postal questionnaires were sent out to 1,010 PAC members during the September/October PAC cycle.

By 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007, 133 completed questionnaires had been returned. The final return represents a response rate of 13.17%.

- 22% (25) of respondents indicated that they had attended one PAC meeting in the last 12 months.
- 20% (23) of respondents indicated that they had attended two PAC meetings in the last 12 months.
- 33% (37) of respondents indicated that they had attended three PAC meetings in the last 12 months.
- 25% (28) of respondents indicated that they had attended four PAC meetings in the last 12 months.
- 84% of respondents considered that Police Authority Community Meetings are a good way of engaging with the public. However, there are concerns around the attendance at meetings and the length of time between meetings.
- 73% of respondents indicated that they had attended a Police and Communities Together Meeting for their area.
- 62% of respondents thought that replacing traditional face-to-face public meetings with a variety of events such as localised road shows, video booths, touch screen information kiosks, text messaging and e-mails was a bad idea.

### **Respondents were asked to indicate the reason(s) why they attended PACs.**

- The top three most popular reasons for attending PACs were to discuss local policing issues such as burglary, violent crime, car crime (66.9%); Anti-social behaviour (65.4%) and policing priorities and objectives (59.4%). Interestingly, an examination of the minutes of the 42 PAC meetings held during 2006/07 revealed the majority of discussions centred on anti-social behaviour with few discussions around the volume crime issues such as burglary, violent crime and car crime.
- The least popular reason for attending PACs is to discuss council tax information (14.3%).
- Other reasons given for attending PACs include traffic issues; community/rural policing; drug issues and a general interest in local policing.

**Respondents were asked to look at a list of activities undertaken by the Police Authority Community Meetings and asked to indicate how successful or unsuccessful they think PACs were at achieving those activities.**

- 83% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in ensuring that the public has access to policing performance information at a local level.
- 55% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in challenging and influencing police culture and performance.
- 75% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in helping the Constabulary/Police Authority understand community issues and concerns about policing.
- 64% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in helping set policing objectives based on feedback from local residents and monitoring police performance against those targets.
- 67% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in enabling the Police Authority to give the public the information needed to assess police performance and ensure that community concerns are raised on their behalf.
- 84% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in allowing local people have the opportunity to raise local concerns and to question senior police officers.
- 60% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in engaging with people from a good cross section of the community.
- 79% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in enabling the Police Authority to inform the public of the Police Authority's decisions, policies, plans and activities.
- 71% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in promoting a clear understanding of the Police Authority's role, aims and objectives.
- 70% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in helping the Police Authority to work in partnership with other organisations involved in crime and disorder issues.
- 68% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in holding the local Divisional Commander to account on the performance of their particular areas.

**Respondents were asked if they had attended any other meeting in the area in which they lived to specifically discuss or raise police issues.**

- 30.1% of respondents indicated they had attended an Area Forum meeting.
  - 8.1% of respondents indicated that they had attended a Lancashire Local meeting.
  - 11.3% of respondents indicated that they had attended a District Community Safety meeting.
  - 37.6% of respondents indicated that they had attended a Parish Council meeting.
  - 14.3% of respondents indicated that they had attended a PACT meeting.
- Other meetings attended included Resident/Community Association meetings.

**Respondents were asked how they would like us to keep them informed about the ways they could be involved in making decisions about policing in their areas.**

- The top three most popular mechanisms to keep people informed about the ways they could be involved in making decisions about policing were newsletters (82.7), leaflets (57.1%) and posters (52.6%).
- The least popular mechanisms to keep people informed about the ways they could be involved in making decisions about policing were mail (0.75%), local councillors (0.75%) and newspapers (0.75%).

## Results – Divisional Commanders

Questionnaires were sent all six Divisional Commanders for their views on the current effectiveness of Police Authority Community Meetings. Separate to this the six Divisional Commanders were asked to provide information regarding the current governance arrangements for consultation/engagements in the council areas in their division.

By 1<sup>st</sup> December 2007, responses had been received from all six divisions either from the Divisional Commanders or their nominated representative. The final return represents a response rate of 100%.

### Headline Results

- ALL Commanders or their representatives considered Police Authority Community Meetings to be an **ineffective** way of gaining local information relating to policing and the authority.
- 50% of respondents considered that Police Authority Community Meetings hold the Divisional Commander to account.

Additional comments from Divisional Commanders indicate that due to the poor attendance at PAC meetings and a limited interest by the public in performance data they feel they are not truly held to account. Divisional Commanders consider they are held to account more robustly at other events in their areas such as ‘face the people’ and resident meetings attended by senior officers from other agencies and the local MP.

Issues that tend to be raised at PACs are specific local issues or incidents rather than the broader policing issues they are responsible for. There were suggestions that PAC meetings have the potential to be much better but making them attractive to a wider section of the community may only encourage representatives from groups already engaged at other meetings. If they are to continue there is a real need to revisit how PAC is marketed.

**Thinking about a typical PAC cycle, Divisional Commanders were asked to indicate how much of their time was spent in the preparation, attendance and dealing with subsequent actions from PAC meetings.**

- Collectively Divisional Commanders or their representatives indicated that they spent approximately 37 hours on the preparation of Police Authority Community Meetings.
- Collectively Divisional Commanders or their representatives indicated that they spent approximately 73 hours attending Police Authority Community meetings (this included travelling time and also incurred mileage and overtime)

- Collectively Divisional Commanders or their representatives indicated that they spent approximately 27 hours dealing with subsequent actions (minutes etc) from Police Authority Community Meetings.

**Looking at a list of broad aims relating to the Police Authority Community Meetings Divisional Commanders were asked to indicate how successful or unsuccessful they thought PACs were at achieving those activities.**

- ALL Divisional Commanders or their representatives considered that PACs were unsuccessful at reaching a broad and representative sample of the public of Lancashire.
- ALL Divisional Commanders or their representatives considered that PACs were unsuccessful at identifying public priorities to influence the Annual policing plan.
- Only ONE of the respondents considered that the PACs were fairly successful in identifying public priorities for immediate action/and or divisional plans.
- 67% of Divisional Commanders or their representatives considered that the PACs were successful in providing the public with information on policing.
- Only ONE of the respondents considered that the PACs were successful in developing partnerships with the public.
- 83% of Divisional Commanders or their representatives considered that the PACs were successful in obtaining rapid police action on public concerns
- 83% of Divisional Commanders or their representatives considered that the PACs were successful in obtaining information from the police

**Divisional Commanders were asked to look at a list of specific activities and asked to indicate how successful or unsuccessful they thought PACs were at achieving those activities.**

- 67% of Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are successful in ensuring that the public has access to policing performance information at a local level.
- ALL Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are unsuccessful in challenging and influencing police culture and performance.
- Only ONE of the respondents considers that PACs are fairly successful in helping the Constabulary/Police Authority understand community issues and concerns about policing.

- ALL Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are unsuccessful in helping set policing objectives based on feedback from local residents and monitoring police performance against those targets.
- Only ONE of respondents consider that PACs are fairly successful in enabling the Police Authority to give the public the information needed to assess police performance and ensure that community concerns are raised on their behalf.
- 83% of Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are fairly successful in allowing local people have the opportunity to raise local concerns and to question senior police officers.
- ALL Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are unsuccessful in engaging with people from a good cross section of the community.
- 33% of Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are fairly successful in enabling the Police Authority to inform the public of the Police Authority's decisions, policies, plans and activities.
- 33% of Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are fairly successful in promoting a clear understanding of the Police Authority's role, aims and objectives.
- ALL Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are unsuccessful in helping the Police Authority to work in partnership with other organisations involved in crime and disorder issues.
- 67% of Divisional Commanders or their representatives consider that PACs are fairly successful in holding the local Divisional Commander to account on the performance of their particular areas.

## **Results – CDRP Managers**

Questionnaires were sent all 14 CDRP managers for their views on the current effectiveness of Police Authority Community Meetings.

By 1<sup>st</sup> December 2007, responses had been received from 8 CDRPs. The final return represents a response rate of 57.14%.

### **Headline Results**

Only two of the respondents considered the current format of the PACs to be an effective way of gaining local information relating to CDRPs.

The remaining 6 CDRPs cited too many officials and the same few members of the public as the reason they consider them to be an ineffective way of gaining local information relating to CDRPs.

Respondents considered the following to have been useful consultation exercises:

- (i) The use of the Authority's interactive voting equipment at the Divisional Meetings to consult on Policing objectives and resources.
- (ii) The use of Face to Face meetings with victims of crime/anti-social behaviour to discuss their experience, whether the issue was dealt with satisfactorily, how the service can improved and lessons learned.
- (iii) The use of regular questions relating to community safety posted on website for people to respond to.

There was a mixed response from CDRPs as to whether participating in PACs, enhanced their obligation of engaging with communities on a regular basis. Some considered that there was a benefit whilst some simply saw them as a tick box.

## **Results – Lancashire Police Authority Staff**

Questionnaires were sent all Lancashire Police Authority staff during October.

By 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007, 9 completed questionnaires had been returned. The final return represents a response rate of 75%. However, some the staff felt that they were unable to complete all the questions as they were not involved in all aspects of the Police Authority Community Meeting process.

### **Headline Results**

- 44% of respondents considered that Police Authority Community Meetings are a good way of engaging with the public.
- 50% of respondents considered that Police Authority Community Meetings hold the Divisional Commander to account.
- 86% of respondents read 'Dialogue' prior to attending Police Authority Community Meetings.

**Thinking about a typical PAC cycle, staff were asked to indicate how much of their time was spent in the preparation, attendance and dealing with subsequent actions from PAC meetings.**

- Collectively staff indicated that they spent approximately 45 hours on the preparation of Police Authority Community Meetings.
- Collectively staff indicated that they spent approximately 103 hours attending Police Authority Community meetings (this included travelling time and also incurred mileage and overtime)
- Collectively staff indicated that they spent approximately 75 hours dealing with subsequent actions (minutes etc) from Police Authority Community Meetings.

**Staff were asked to look at a list of broad aims relating to the Police Authority Community Meetings and asked to indicate how successful or unsuccessful they think PACs were at achieving those activities.**

- 88% of respondents considered that PACs were unsuccessful at reaching a broad and representative sample of the public of Lancashire.
- 88% of respondents considered that PACs were unsuccessful at identifying public priorities to influence our Annual policing plan. The remaining 12% indicated they were unsure.

- 50% of respondents considered that the PACs were successful in identifying public priorities for immediate action/and or divisional plans.
- 76% of respondents considered that the PACs were successful in providing the public with information on policing.
- 78% of respondents considered that the PACs were successful in developing partnerships with the public.
- 63% of respondents considered that the PACs were successful in obtaining rapid police action on public concerns
- 100% of respondents considered that the PACs were successful in obtaining information from the police

Additional comments were also made that there was a need to take a look at other ways in attracting more people to attend in order for PACs to be a more effective way of gaining local information. It was agreed that PACs were successful in providing the means to allow local people to raise private issues with officers after the meeting. There was also a sense of feeling that the Authority had limited success in informing the public of the Police Authority's decisions, policies, plans and activities as well as not adequately conveying a clear understanding of the Authority's role, aims and objectives. This may in some way be due to the public perception that PACs are police meetings rather than Police Authority meetings.

**Staff were asked to look at a list of specific activities and asked to indicate how successful or unsuccessful they think PACs were at achieving those activities.**

- 75% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in ensuring that the public has access to policing performance information at a local level.
- 12% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in challenging and influencing police culture and performance.
- 88% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in helping the Constabulary/Police Authority understand community issues and concerns about policing.
- 50% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in helping set policing objectives based on feedback from local residents and monitoring police performance against those targets.
- 50% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in enabling the Police Authority to give the public the information needed to assess police performance and ensure that community concerns are raised on their behalf.

- 100% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in allowing local people have the opportunity to raise local concerns and to question senior police officers.
- 26% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in engaging with people from a good cross section of the community.
- 78% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in enabling the Police Authority to inform the public of the Police Authority's decisions, policies, plans and activities.
- 50% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in promoting a clear understanding of the Police Authority's role, aims and objectives.
- 38% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in helping the Police Authority to work in partnership with other organisations involved in crime and disorder issues.
- 63% of respondents consider that PACs are successful in holding the local Divisional Commander to account on the performance of their particular areas.

Additional comments included the need for PAC meetings to be linked to the PACT process and that PACs may be used as focus groups to discuss and consider particular issues. There was also a suggestion that PAC meetings should in some way be linked to LSP/LAA meetings. It is fair to say that PAC meetings only attract a small number of the public and tend to co-inside with other local meetings. However, despite the poor attendance respondents still felt that PACs were fairly successful in holding the local Divisional Commander to account. This may be due to the fact that PAC meetings are probably the only meeting where Divisional Commanders appear to local people in an open forum.

**Staff were asked what they consider their role to be at Police Authority Community Meetings.**

- 33% of respondents considered that their role was to represent the Secretary (Chief Executive).
- 56% of respondents considered that their role was to take a note of the meeting.
- 33% of respondents considered that their role was to actively encourage those present to ask questions and participate in the discussion.
- 22% of respondents considered that their role was to network with other agencies.

- 78% of respondents considered that their role was to be an ambassador for the Authority.
- 67% of respondents considered that their role was to understand the concerns of the public.
- 56% of respondents considered that their role was to interact with the public both before the meeting and after.
- 22% of respondents considered that their role was also to undertake the role of the publicity officer for the PAC and to provide assistance and support to the Chair and Vice-Chairman as appropriate.(Other)

**The staff were asked to indicate from a list what other ways do they think the Authority SHOULD use keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.**

89% of respondents considered **Local radio** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

78% of respondents considered **Posters** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

67% of respondents considered **Leaflets** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

67% of respondents considered **Local road shows** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

67% of respondents considered **Billboards** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

56% of respondents considered **Video Booths** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

56% of respondents considered **touch screen information kiosks** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

78% of respondents considered **e-mail** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

33% of respondents considered **text messaging** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

67% of respondents considered **community tv networks** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

89% of respondents considered **local newsletter** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

89% of respondents considered **countywide newsletter** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

22% of respondents considered **the LPA website** to be a suitable way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

**The staff were asked to indicate from a list what they considered NOT to be a cost effective way for the Authority to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.**

11% of respondents considered **Leaflets** not to be a cost effective way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

22% of respondents considered **Billboards** not to be a cost effective way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

11% of respondents considered **Video Booths** not to be a cost effective way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

22% of respondents considered **touch screen information kiosks** not to be a cost effective way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

11% of respondents considered **text messaging** not to be a cost effective way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

11% of respondents considered **community tv networks** not to be a cost effective way to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

One can argue therefore that staff considered the use of local radio, posters, local road shows, e-mail, local newsletter, countywide newsletter to be a fully cost effective way for the authority to keep the public informed about the ways in which they can be involved in making decisions about policing.

## **Findings – Parish Councils**

Letters were sent out to all 212 Parish Councils in Lancashire.

By 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007, 35 completed questionnaires had been returned. The final return represents a response rate of 16.50%.

16 Parish Councils indicated that a representative had attended a PAC meeting.

There was a mixed response to whether Parish Council's considered the current format of the PACs to be an effective way of gaining local information with low attendance again being a contributing factor that needed to be addressed. On one hand some Parish Council's found them to be effective whilst others considered the use of Parish Council meetings with a police representative present or Area Forums a more effective format.

Parish Council's referred to local parish meetings and parish surgeries with a police representative as an effective means of consultation.

## **Findings – Partnerships Forum**

In order for the Authority to enhance its reporting mechanism that allows it to identify public priorities across the force area and prioritise the identified issues for further action the Partnerships Forum at their meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2007 was asked for its views on the future role of the Partnerships Forum within the Authority's decision making and planning processes.

The Forum considered that the Partnerships Forum in its present format was pretty successful although there was room for improvement. It was suggested that there was a need to invite representatives from PACT meetings to link in PAC and PACT. However, there was a concern that broadening the constitution too much would render the discussions irrelevant. In this regard, it was suggested that it was more appropriate to open up the membership of PACs to the YOTs and Probation Service. However, as a caveat, there was concern that there was already considerable duplication of meetings at a local level and caution was needed to avoid increasing duplication further.