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Public Consultation on Police Front Counter Services

CUMBRIA CONSTABULARY
MAY 2012

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Police Authority (an independent governing body that holds the Constabulary to account) have a responsibility to provide you with a value for money policing service. We take this responsibility very seriously.

In the current environment of significant cuts to funding, the Constabulary has worked hard to find savings that have the minimum impact on visible frontline policing. Recent work has included restructuring teams, collaborating with other forces and agencies, and reviewing the way we do things - all with the aim of reducing costs and increasing efficiency.

In an effort to continue to meet the financial challenges; Cumbria Constabulary is reviewing the provision of police front counter services throughout the county. The review has shown that although front counters provide a quality service, they are expensive to run and significant savings could be made by changing the service.

We are therefore considering the following proposals for future delivery of front counter services:

1. Police front counter services at five main premises only (Barrow, Kendal, Workington, Whitehaven and Durrhill in Carlisle) with reduced hours of opening, or
2. Police front counter services at five main premises as above and part time opening at a further five locations (Ulverston, Windermere, Cockermouth, Brampton and Penrith).
3. Using 3rd party providers to provide access to police services to support either of the above options.
4. Making better use of existing resources (e.g. mobile police station, vandal proof phones at police premises) to enable contact with policing services.

As part of the review, we have launched this public consultation exercise as we want to hear your views on the options. The findings of this consultation will be considered in any decision that will be made about police front counter services. No decisions have been made and any changes will take place with the approval of the Constabulary's most senior officers and members of Cumbria Police Authority.

To have your say and influence the future of local policing in your area, please take ten minutes to complete the questions in this consultation document; your views are important to us and will help us improve our services to better meet your needs.

You can post the completed questionnaire back to us or fill it in online at www.cumbria.police.uk. The closing date for completed questionnaires is 31st May 2012.

Stuart Hyde
Chief Constable

Ray Cole
Chairman, Cumbria Police Authority

WHY WE ARE LOOKING AT CHANGING

As a result of Government budget cuts, Cumbria Constabulary must save £18.7 million by 2015, and a further £1.6m by 2016, which is equivalent to a 20 per cent fall in income.

The priority for Cumbria Constabulary is to protect the community, investigate crime and prosecute criminals. To do this, we must find ways of saving money that have the least impact on frontline policing. Our challenge is to continue providing an excellent policing service to the people of Cumbria on a reduced budget, so we are making some difficult choices.

To achieve this, we are running a programme of reviews aimed at streamlining our support functions, by identifying ways of being more innovative and creative and by using new technology.

These have included a review of the Constabulary's administrative teams, Communications Centre, Crime Management Units and the Constabulary's fleet and travel costs.

Good progress is being made on achieving our budget savings. We have to-date made £9million of savings, with £3.5million in the process of being delivered and a further £2.5million targeted for delivery in 2012/13. However, we still have a further £5.3million to identify.

During our last annual consultation we asked the public about contacting the police and received the following feedback:

- People's preferred method for contacting us in non-emergency situation is telephone (58%), followed by a place with face-to-face contact (29%).
- 29% of people think that greater use of electronic methods of contact should be encouraged.
- Nearly half said they would be prepared to use email instead of phoning if there was a guaranteed 24 hour response and 40% would be happy with email updates if they had reported a crime as a victim or witness.
- 58% of people said that they prefer to use an appointment system if it were necessary to send someone to an incident or crime and 63% said that if they were offered an appointment, they would be happy to go to the police rather than the police go to their home or office.

We have reduced the number of police premises our officers deploy from which has reduced the footfall at those police premises. We therefore need to reduce our staff accordingly to ensure we continue to provide a value for money policing service.

That is why we have decided to review police front counter services with the aim of making significant savings from the £1m we currently spend on the service.

ABOUT THE REVIEW

The review considers a range of different information. This includes the make up of local communities, the different pieces of law that require a person to attend a police premises, the cost of providing the service in comparison to other forces and how many people actually use our front counter services (footfall data).

The review is also exploring the different ways in which the public can contact the police and access services. These include telephone, online and face-to-face methods, which can also involve visiting front counters in police premises and making appointments.

The aim of this review is to ensure that the organisation continues to provide a reliable and accessible front counter service which reflects the police estate and operates at a reduced cost whilst meeting public demand.

Our Communities

Cumbria's population is ageing at a faster rate than nationally. This is due to a decline in the number of young people and a growth in the number of older adults. The county's ethnic diversity is increasing.

How the public access police services has changed

Due to changes in technology and the make up of our communities, the public are changing how they access policing services. The most popular form of contact is telephone and when needing to speak to an officer in person most people preferred to use an appointment system. Improvements in technology (web, phone, twitter, email) means that you can readily access information without having to call at your local police premises. In the same way police officers can readily access information, such as driving documents, which reduces the need to require persons to produce these documents at a local police premises.

Recent footfall data shows a marked decline in the number of people who visit our police premises.

In a 2010 value for money (VFM) report that compares Cumbria's expenditure with seven other similar forces, we were the second highest in the amount of money we spend on staff (call takers and front counter) to deal with enquiries from the public and slightly above the national average.

At the moment we spend approximately £1m per year on providing front counter staff at police premises. This roughly equates to 30 front line police officers.

Premises	No Days Open	Average Daily Footfall
Cockermouth	5	14
Egremont	5	10
Keswick	5	13
Maryport	5	16
Millom	5	9
Whitehaven	7	46
Wigton	5	11
Workington	7	62
Barrow	7	77
Dalton	3	4
Kendal	7	29
Ulverston	6	32
Windermere	7	15
Appleby	5	14
Brampton	5	17
Durranhill, Carlisle	7	74
Penrith	7	27
Civic Centre	5	31

PROPOSALS 1 AND 2 IN DETAIL

We are proposing several changes to our service. More detail about each proposal is provided below and we are asking for your views.

Proposal 1—Police front counter services at five main premises only (Barrow, Kendal, Workington, Whitehaven and Durranshill in Carlisle) with reduced hours of opening

There are currently 17 police premises across the county that provide a front counter service.

Proposal 1 is to have front counter staff at five main premises: Barrow, Kendal, Workington, Whitehaven and at Durranshill in Carlisle. These premises have been selected for one or more of the following reasons:

- There is a custody facility and persons answer bail at the premises
- Police officers deploy from these premises
- The building is an area headquarters
- The premises currently deals with a high number of visitors (high footfall)

The hours of opening would also be changed to reflect the demand for service. This would mean Barrow, Workington and Durranshill in Carlisle being open 7 days a week for a maximum of 12 hours per day and Whitehaven and Kendal being open 6 days a week for a maximum of 8 hrs per day.

In addition this proposal could potentially be supported by using 3rd party providers of front counter services (proposal 3) and improving use of existing resources (proposal 4) to enable access to police services in communities where there would no longer be police front counter services at police premises.

Proposal 2—Police front counter services at five main premises as above and part time opening at a further five locations (Ulverston, Windermere, Cockermouth, Brampton and Penrith).

Proposal 2 is to have front counter staff at the five main premises as detailed in proposal 1 above AND to have part time opening at a further 5 locations.

Front counter staff at these additional five locations would provide other administrative roles in the police premises including support for officers.

The opening times for these five locations would be for a four hour period 5 days per week.

In addition this proposal could potentially be supported by using 3rd party providers of front counter services (proposal 3) and improving use of existing resources (proposal 4) to enable access to police services in communities where there would no longer be police front counter services on the police premises.

Proposal 3 - Using 3rd party providers to support either of the above options

PROPOSALS 3 AND 4 IN DETAIL

The Constabulary is considering using 3rd party service providers to maintain face to face access to policing services. This means another public service agency would provide a service on our behalf at their premises. The agency staff would be appropriately trained and be able to deal with a wide variety of queries for example checking documents, lost and found property and providing information on policing matters.

An example is in Carlisle town centre where Carlisle City Council is currently piloting providing provision of police front counter services by their staff at the Civic Centre.

The advantage of this option is a local service is provided at reduced cost (based on demand).

Proposal 4 - Making better use of existing resources (e.g. mobile police station, vandal proof phones at police premises) to enable contact with policing services.

The Constabulary currently owns a mobile police station that could be used to provide front counter services in the towns where front counter services are removed. One example could be to use the vehicle on a town's market day.

Another proposal is to introduce vandal proof phones at police premises to enable 24/7 contact with policing services. This would mean that should you attend a police premises and find that it is closed, you would be able to use the phone to make a call directly to someone who will assist you with your query. These phones are relatively inexpensive and easy to install.

The Constabulary is also improving its website to make it easier to report a crime, request a visit from a police officer or asking any other question.

These options are of minimal cost as they rely predominantly on the use of existing resources.

