

PRESS RELEASE



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PUBLIC HAS SAY ON POLICING

Survey results have delivered a clear message that people want to maintain the current high standards of policing in Hertfordshire, have a stronger focus on tackling anti-social behaviour and other neighbourhood concerns, and would pay more in council tax to make that possible.

Faced with significant shortfalls in Government grants (see Editors Notes), Hertfordshire Police Authority conducted the on-line survey to find out people's view on policing priorities and how much people would be prepared to pay to provide the levels of policing needed to tackle them.

Of the 1,800 people who responded to the survey, 78% said they would pay more than the cost of inflation rise (1.5% - 4p a week for a Band D property) to protect police services in the county.

Stuart Nagler, Chair of Hertfordshire Police Authority, said: "We have all become used to receiving a good standard of policing in Hertfordshire over the past few years and it is clear that the public want this to continue. In the past, we have used our reserves to help bridge the gap in Government funding but this is not a viable option for the future and the Authority now faces major financial difficulties.

"The results of the survey are a real vote of confidence in our police service and for that we would like to thank the people of Hertfordshire. In return, we promise to continue to provide the best possible police service.

"We will be developing both our Policing Plan and the budget over the next few weeks and will consider very carefully the feedback we have received from the public, both through the survey and from other consultation. However, at the same time, we must bear in mind that the current recession is not only affecting the Police Authority but also our Council Tax payers, and limit the burden we place on them.

Results from the survey showed that the 999 response is still the most important policing priority for the public (97%), followed closely by neighbourhood policing (91%). Suggested 'new' priorities of anti-social and anti-social motoring also received strong support – 87% said that local anti-social behaviour was a high priority, together with tackling speeding that impacts on local people (71%).

"Anti-social behaviour and anti-social motoring emerged as a priority from an analysis of the 200,000 non-emergency calls made to the police over the past year. Rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour is the largest single reason why the public ring the police, and, in addition, a considerable number of calls are about all types of inconsiderate motoring, whether it be parking on zig zag lines, speeding near schools or in residential areas or the illegal use of mobile phones whilst driving," Stuart added. "Though less serious than burglary, violent assault and other crimes, anti-social behaviour and inconsiderate motoring impact significantly on the quality of life of far more people in Hertfordshire and should, therefore, be recognised by the police as a priority.

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“However, that priority must be shared with our partners and with local communities – the police alone will not be able to resolve anti-social behaviour and anti-social motoring but can provide the driving force to tackle the issues.”

There was also strong support (87%) from the survey for maintaining protective services as a priority. These include major crime, terrorism, serious and organised crime, critical incidents and policing our major roads.

“This result is a reflection of the understanding that the public has of the need for police to not only look at local policing but to address the bigger picture, tackling crimes that can have a far wider impact on our county,” commented Stuart.

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Notes to Editors:

- The Police Authority will agree its Policing Plan priorities and the 2010/2011 budget on TUESDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2010 at 2.30pm in County Hall, Hertford
- The results of the survey were reported to the Policy and Planning Committee on Friday 22 January 2010 and will go to Resources Committee on Monday 8 February 2010.
- In 2009/10, Hertfordshire Police Authority had £3.7m of its Government grant withheld because of a ‘floors and ceilings’ adjustment to protect other police authorities from significant reductions in their grants. That shortfall will increase to £4.1m next year, with the real possibility of this getting worse in future years.
- Council Tax payers in Hertfordshire pay, on average, 12% less for policing than people living in other shire areas. For example a Band D council tax payer in Hertfordshire currently pays £142.82 a year for policing but the equivalent Band D Council Tax payer in Surrey pays £51 more than that.

Hertfordshire Police Authority is made up of 17 local people comprising a mixture of councillors and independent members. It is responsible for:

- Managing all police property
- Setting the budget for the police force, including raising local taxes for policing
- Scrutinising and managing local police performance
- Setting the strategic direction for policing locally, deciding local priorities for policing and setting the Constabulary challenging targets to drive performance higher
- Consulting and engaging with local communities to find out what they want the local police to tackle
- Appointing (and, if necessary, dismissing) the Chief Constable and senior police officers

For further information, photographs or interviews please contact Sally Patient, Hertfordshire Police Authority, on 01992 555624 (mobile 07954 421331) or email sally.patient.hpa@herts.pnn.police.uk