



NORFOLK POLICE AUTHORITY

*Ensuring an Efficient and Effective Police Service*

# Communications Strategy 2010/11



## Norfolk Police Authority's Communications Strategy 2010/11

### **Introduction**

Independent of Norfolk Constabulary, with its membership made up of local people from different walks of life, Norfolk Police Authority provides a community voice on policing. Amongst its responsibilities, it sets the police budget, agrees policing targets, monitors performance, and appoints the Chief Constable and the Chief Officer Team. In order to meet these responsibilities, the Authority engages with Norfolk's communities, local groups, organisations and businesses, and partner agencies, using their views and experiences to inform the decisions its Members make.

Clear and effective communication is vital for the Authority to raise awareness of its role and responsibilities, encourage community and partner input into decision-making, and evidence how that input is making a difference to the policing service received by the people who live in, work in and visit our county.

The aim of Norfolk Police Authority's Communications Strategy is to support and enhance the way the Authority communicates with its audiences. It is about making the most of existing communications activity, and introducing new opportunities for communicating our key messages.

The Authority has, until now, not had a formal Communications Strategy, albeit it regularly communicates with a wide range of external audiences. This Strategy seeks to provide a strategic framework for communication across the Authority which is led by its vision and principles, supports achievement of its Corporate Plan objectives, and is aligned with its key accountable activities. The Communications Strategy shares some actions with the Authority's Single Equality Scheme, which steers its approach to meeting its equality and diversity responsibilities, and also with the Community Engagement Strategy, which guides the Authority in its engagement with partners and local communities.

### **Communication Challenges**

In July 2010, the Coalition Government published its White Paper *Policing in the 21st Century: reconnecting police and the people*, which outlined proposals for the replacement of police authorities by directly-elected police and crime commissioners. Whilst the outcome of the consultation on the proposals is (at the time this Strategy is being drafted) still unknown, it is widely expected that police authorities will cease to exist in their current form as of May 2012.

One of the key communications challenges recognised by police authorities is the low level of public awareness of their existence. Ordinarily activity to increase awareness of brand Norfolk Police Authority would be prominent within its communications strategy however, bearing in mind the uncertain future and the current financial position faced across the public sector, it must now be considered whether such promotion would be a prudent use of resources.

Aside from the question marks around the future of policing governance, the key responsibilities of the Authority remain at present and, whilst raising awareness of NPA's identity may no longer be top priority, communicating its role and responsibilities continues to be of great importance in supporting the Authority's vision and principles. By raising awareness of police authority business amongst communities, partners and local and national decision-makers, the Authority seeks to increase interest in its work, encouraging more public involvement to inform its decision-making processes and joint-working to improve efficiency and effectiveness. At a time of severe budget cuts, it is also important for the Authority to ensure effective dialogue with communities and partners over any changes to the strategic approach to policing in Norfolk.

## **Aim**

The aim of Norfolk Police Authority's Communications Strategy 2010/11 is to deliver high standards of communication and information provision which support the achievement of Norfolk Police Authority's vision and principles.

### Norfolk Police Authority's Vision

To provide the best police service for the County, meeting the needs of our communities, within the available budget.

### Norfolk Police Authority's Principles

- To understand and articulate the policing needs of our communities and, through this, shape the style of local policing;
- To both support and challenge the Norfolk Constabulary;
- To demonstrate the value the Police Authority adds to the continuous improvement process;
- To promote equality, diversity and Human Rights;
- To work in partnership to improve efficiency and effectiveness;
- To engage with our communities, key partners and the Norfolk Constabulary to identify our priorities and improve performance;
- To manage resources efficiently and effectively;
- To ensure that a professional, skilled and flexible Senior Management Team within Norfolk Constabulary and the Chief Executive's Office is maintained.

## **Objectives**

Beneath the strategic aim sits a set of objectives, the achievement of which this Strategy seeks to encourage:

- Clear and consistent communication of key messages;
- Raised awareness of the Authority's role and responsibilities;
- Promotion of the Authority's work, including decisions and their impact on policing;
- Involved, informed and reassured communities, support for consultation and engagement opportunities and communication of outcomes to internal and external stakeholders;
- Two-way communication processes facilitating effective information exchange;
- Pro-active provision of information relevant to the needs of external partners;
- Closer links with the Constabulary's corporate communications team to align activity.

## **Communications Principles**

In order to meet the objectives set out above, the Authority's communications must be:

- Open, honest and accountable;
- In language which is tailored to the audience;
- Accessible to all and cognisant of the need to reach all communities;
- Timely, and pro-active as well as reactive;
- Designed to provide reassurance and build public confidence in policing;
- A two-way process of giving and receiving information;
- In partnership, where appropriate;
- Offering value for money.

## **Statutory Communications**

Norfolk Police Authority's approach to external communication will, to some extent, be guided by its statutory responsibilities. A number of processes will require application of this Strategy, including:

- The requirement for a Local Policing Plan (Police Act 1996);
- Production of a Local Policing Summary distributed to all households and providing information on policing priorities and performance (Serious Organised Crime Act 2005/ Police Act 1996);
- Promoting the Authority's business plan ;
- Producing an Annual Report of Authority business (Police Act 1996);
- The Council Tax precept and budget setting process, including production of the Council Tax leaflet (Local Government Finance Act 1992);
- Engagement and consultation events, ensuring a range of routes available to the public for communicating their views with the Authority (Police Act 1996);
- Communicating information on Stop and Search processes and individuals' rights

- (Home Office guidance);
- Police Authority meetings;
  - Partnership working arrangements (Crime and Disorder Act 1998).

## **Audiences and Stakeholders**

### For whom has this Strategy been produced?

This Strategy is intended to inform and guide Norfolk Police Authority in its communication with communities and partners.

### Who is responsible for this Strategy?

The Chief Executive's staff team is responsible for implementing and driving the Strategy, ensuring that its principles are applied and objectives met. The team also has responsibility for identifying key issues to feed into communication planning, and opportunities for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority's communications approach.

The Members of the Authority have a key role in communicating with different audiences. Members are sources of information about the role and responsibilities of the Authority, and key developments in the policing service. They also actively engage in the communication process by facilitating two-way processes of information exchange. Through engaging with local people, Members are able to collect community views to communicate with the wider Authority and partners to inform decisions and processes. They also feed the views of the Authority, along with information on key policing issues, into partnership structures.

The Authority's Citizen Focus Committee holds the responsibility for monitoring the development of the Strategy, as well as progress made against the activities highlighted within the accompanying action plan.

### Who are the Authority's 'audience' in relation to communications?

The people with whom the Authority communicates regularly can be broadly categorised under six headings:

- Communities: Norfolk's population as a whole, diverse groups.
- Consultees: The 'interested' public, volunteers.
- Community representatives: Community and voluntary groups, local and specialist support organisations, parish councils.
- Constabulary officers and staff
- Opinion-formers: Partner organisations, local media.
- Influencers: Local political groups, MPs, APA, ACPO, HMIC, Central Government.

The Authority recognises that different audience groups will have varying needs, and in order for its communications to be effective, they must be produced with specific target audiences in mind. Success will not result from a 'one size fits all' approach.

## **Audiences - Key Considerations**

### Communities

There is emphasis at a national and local level on the need for increased police authority contact with the public, including targeted communication with diverse and new and emerging communities, and those parts of the community who find it more challenging to access or influence policing services.

It is acknowledged that communities have a low level of interest in police authority business, and minimal understanding of how that business affects them. This means that, in communicating with the public, it is important to concentrate on information which is relevant to that audience, ie. that which has a direct impact on them. In terms of the Authority's business, this may include the setting of the Council Tax precept to fund the policing services they receive, or strategic priorities set to meet community concerns such as reducing levels of anti-social behaviour.

The diversity of communities must be acknowledged and, with that, the range of needs they have in accessing information. Websites and e-mail are useful tools for providing information and eliciting feedback, but reliance on e-communications can exclude sections of the community unable or unwilling to use the internet. Similarly, limiting provision of information to printed materials can create exclusion for those who have difficulty reading or understanding text. The Authority is committed to ensuring that its information and services are accessible to all, and this commitment is supported by its Single Equality Scheme. In communicating with communities, use of a range of methods must be considered, along with the opportunity given for individuals or groups to request information in alternative formats.

### Consultees

There are a number of individuals who work alongside the Authority, sharing their advice, knowledge and experiences to influence decision-making. The themes of communication with this group are often recurring, such as impacts of decisions and processes on the wider community, and this makes consistency of messages vital. Communicating with consultees to elicit views and feedback can provide a barometer of public views, but the limitations of such an audience must be recognised so that they are not considered as representing the public as a whole. These views can be used to steer activity to engage with particular audiences on specific issues – such activity is guided by the Authority's Community Engagement Strategy.

### Community representatives

Whether self-appointed community interest groups or influential local organisations, there are a great number of community representatives in Norfolk. Regular and relevant communication with these representatives can help increase their knowledge and awareness of the Authority's work and opportunities to get involved. By ensuring they are well-informed, wider dissemination of relevant information to wider communities by these representatives on behalf of the Authority can be encouraged. Community representatives are also ideally positioned with their experience and knowledge of communities to support two-way communication with communities to encourage public involvement in decision-making processes, ensuring their needs are considered in the Authority's work.

### Constabulary officers and staff

By providing Constabulary officers and staff with clear, timely information, keeping them involved in the Authority's discussions, informed of its decisions, and up-to-date on local and national developments, it can be ensured that this knowledge and understanding contribute to effective performance of Constabulary roles. With a limited interest in police authority business, accessibility of messages will be improved through the utilisation of Norfolk Constabulary's established internal communication methods.

### Opinion-formers and Influencers

A number of organisations communicate messages on behalf of the Authority or provide a contact point from which communities can gather information on public services. Wider perceptions of the Authority can be greatly influenced by these agencies and the media, and negative messages could be communicated if opinion-formers are not engaged with appropriately. In addition, it must be considered that policy decisions made by partner agencies have the potential to impact on the work of the Authority, and vice versa, so effective two-way communications are important in ensuring such impacts are identified and considered.

When making decisions about policing, whether related to policing direction, priorities and targets, or the setting of the budget and council tax precept, effective communication and engagement with audiences with high levels of influence is of great importance. Often having more sway than opinion-formers, the understanding and passage of decisions will be aided by those in an influential position having a sound understanding of the context within which those decisions are taken.

Having high interest in the work of police authorities and constabularies, and significant levels of influence on local and national policing developments as well as the views and perceptions of other audience groups, a stakeholder analysis highlights Opinion-Formers and Influencers as priority audiences for timely, accurate and appropriately detailed communications. Not being typical 'public' audiences, the content of communications with

these audiences can be higher in complexity, allowing enough detail to be included to fulfil the specific needs of this group, whilst also being appropriate for interpretation and wider dissemination by these groups to other audiences.

## **Key Messages**

### Norfolk Police Authority: Ensuring an efficient and effective police service

The Authority's strap-line is 'Ensuring an efficient and effective police service' and is the NPA's key message, explaining the role of the organisation. The strap-line is most commonly accompanied by the NPA logo to represent the Authority brand in all written communications, as well as on the website. Additional key messages associated with the Authority's strap-line include:

- NPA is an independent body made up of local people who oversee the work of their local Constabulary.
- NPA agrees the police budget for the year.
- NPA appoints the Chief Constable and Chief Officer team.
- NPA sets the plan for policing in the county.
- NPA oversees the handling of complaints against the police
- NPA consults with communities, providing a transparent link between the police and the public.
- NPA reports back to communities on policing developments and recent achievements.

Individual key messages may be used to support communication relating to distinct aspects of the Authority's role and specific responsibilities. These include:

### Norfolk Police Authority: Investing in your Police

- NPA agrees the police budget for the year.
- The police budget is made up of Government grant and funds raised through local Council Tax.
- NPA decides how much local people pay for policing through their Council Tax.
- NPA holds an annual budget consultation meeting to enable the public to have a say on police spending.
- Policing is not immune to Government funding cuts, and NPA must respond to demands for savings within its budgets.
- Significant reductions in the police budget are expected as a result of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review to address the public sector funding deficit. NPA oversees budget reduction activity, monitoring the impact of service delivery changes on communities.

### Norfolk Police Authority: Policing your Police

- NPA works independently, on behalf of local people, to hold the Chief Constable to account for policing in the county.
- NPA writes the policing plan, setting the Constabulary objectives for the year.
- NPA monitors the performance of the Constabulary to ensure the service being delivered is one which meets the needs of all communities.
- The Government has set out proposals to replace police authorities with a single Police and Crime Commissioner, elected by local people to hold the police to account. Specific details are still to be agreed by the Government, and until such a time as plans for the transition from police authorities to Commissioners are known, work continues as usual for Authority Members.

### Norfolk Police Authority: A Community Voice on your Police

- NPA is made up of locally-elected councillors and appointed independent members of the public – local people working on behalf of local people to ensure policing decisions taken meet the needs of the community.
- NPA consults extensively with locally-elected representatives, communities and business before setting the budget and policing priorities for the county.
- There are a number of ways in which the public can get involved with Norfolk Police Authority, including joining one of its advisory panels, or becoming a Custody Visitor.

## **Communications Mechanisms**

The Authority currently uses a range of different tools to communicate with its audiences, including:

- Planning documents, such as annual publication of a Local Policing Plan and Corporate Plan;
- Annual progress updates, including the Authority's Annual Report and the Local Policing Summary;
- Agenda, reports and minutes of Authority meetings;
- Updates on recent developments in the form of articles in Norfolk Constabulary's magazine Upbeat and the Norfolk Association of Local Council's newsletter Norfolk Link, and the Parliamentary Brief;
- Press releases, publications produced for promotional or recruitment purposes;
- The Authority's website;
- Face-to-face contact in the form of consultation exercises, focus groups, regular meetings and targeted engagement.

The following action plan sets out how the Authority proposes to improve the way these tools are used or introduce new methods to communicate more effectively with specific audiences.

## Norfolk Police Authority Communications Strategy Action Plan 2010/11

Action	Desired Outcome	Owner	Timescale	Links to:
1. Assess the efficacy of the Authority's budget consultation process in line with the current financial situation, considering key messages on finance-related decisions	Increased public awareness of the impact of funding cuts on policing, resulting in informed expectations	NPA Assistant Chief Exec/ Chair of Citizen Focus Committee	December 2010	Community Engagement Strategy (Action 25)
2. Agree and maintain a process for regular Authority input into the internal communications of Norfolk Constabulary (TEAMbrief)	Improved communication with Constabulary officers and staff, raised awareness of the Authority role, and support (where appropriate) in relation to key policing developments	NPA Chief Executive/ NPA Chairman	November 2010	
3. Establish a working group to explore the benefits of the Local Policing Summary	An informed decision as to whether to continue to produce a Summary should the legal duty be removed as anticipated	NPA Assistant Chief Exec/ Chair of Citizen Focus Committee	April 2011	
4. Undertake a review and refresh of the Authority's website	A website with improved usability and accessibility, and the capacity for two-way information exchange between the Authority and website visitors	NPA Assistant Chief Exec/ Chair of Citizen Focus Committee.	December 2010	Community Engagement Strategy (Action 26) Single Equality Scheme (Action 26)

<p>5. Explore means of improving accessibility to information within Committee agenda, such as post-meeting e-summaries (accessible on NPA website)</p>	<p>Improved awareness and accessibility for the public and partners to the information received and key decisions taken by the Authority's Members</p>	<p>NPA Assistant Chief Exec/ Chair of Citizen Focus Committee</p>	<p>March 2011</p>	
<p>6. Develop a 'Virtual Community' of people for regular and ongoing consultation on relevant issues, promoting the opportunity as appropriate and exploring how the NPA website can contribute to the workings of the Community</p>	<p>A channel for two-way communication on key policing issues, with consultee input feeding into NPA decision-making</p>	<p>NPA Assistant Chief Exec/ Chair of Citizen Focus Committee</p>	<p>December 2010</p>	<p>Community Engagement Strategy (<i>Action 18</i>)</p>
<p>7. Agree transitional messages and appropriate means of communication with the public and partners in line with development in police accountability reform</p>	<p>Improved external awareness of the changes to the police authority role</p>	<p>NPA Chief Executive/ NPA Chairman</p>	<p>April 2011</p>	
<p>8. Support and maintain a process for information-sharing in relation to Members' involvement in partnership meetings</p>	<p>Improved understanding of and cohesion between the work of the Authority and partnership meetings</p>	<p>NPA Assistant Chief Exec/ Chair of Citizen Focus Committee</p>	<p>April 2011</p>	
<p>9. Consider the benefit of implementing an annual media engagement event and media protocol for NPA Members</p>	<p>Improved relations and awareness of the Authority role and responsibilities across all media fields</p>	<p>NPA Chief Executive/ Chair of Citizen Focus Committee</p>	<p>April 2011</p>	

<p>10. Ensure engagement and consultation events are appropriately supported through the availability of display and information materials as a managed resource</p>	<p>Pro-active provision of information relevant to the audience</p>	<p>NPA Assistant Chief Exec/ Chair of Citizen Focus Committee</p>	<p>December 2010</p>	
<p>11. Provide regular updates on key policing developments and decisions to the Members of Norfolk County Council and other key influencers and opinion-formers</p>	<p>Increased awareness of strategic policing issues within the council's membership</p>	<p>NPA Chief Executive/ NPA Chairman</p>	<p>December 2010</p>	

