

CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of plans to undertake a programme of consultation with the local business community.

BACKGROUND

The Federation of Small Businesses View

2. A report published by the Federation of Small Businesses in the summer of 2004 revealed that over half of all small businesses in the country had suffered at least one crime during the previous twelve months. A small business is defined as one employing fewer than 250 people.
3. The report also showed that businesses in the Yorkshire and Humber suffered the highest levels of graffiti, vehicle theft, vehicle damage, burglary and together with London and the South East, the highest level of credit card fraud.
4. Businesses in the Yorkshire and Humberside area also reported, alongside those in the North West, the highest levels of robbery.

The Chamber of Commerce View

5. The statistics above are as a result of internal research by interested organisations, the real picture of how crime is affecting small businesses can never be accurately portrayed as the Home Office, despite call from the Chamber of Commerce, have never agreed to a permanent category for the recording of crimes against small businesses.
6. The Chamber argue that the issue of comprehensive police data on business crime is fundamental, and, that requiring all police forces to record crimes against business as a separate statistic will provide the police with a more accurate picture of the problem in their area, forcing them to address the issue properly.

INFORMATION

7. The Home Office has yet to establish a category for business crime and business crime will not be included as a local indicator in the forthcoming policing plan. However, those crimes that affect businesses such as criminal damage, theft

of/from vehicles and assault are contained within the local and statutory performance indicators

8. In order to gain an appreciation of the level of business crime in the Humberside Police Force area a questionnaire has been produced, attached at Appendix A, which can be circulated to all members of the local Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses in order to give a baseline assessment of the issues in the area.
9. There will be some costs attached to this exercise. The Hull and Humber Chamber of Commerce will charge approximately £220 to distribute the questionnaire to all of their Members (this is Member rate as the Police Authority is a Member). The Federation of Small Businesses will charge £120 for distribution to all Members on the North Bank and £100 on the South Bank. Ultimately, the questionnaire will reach approximately 3,700 small businesses in the Humberside Police area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. It is recommended that Members:
 - i. Approve the use of the questionnaire (or suggest any amendments) attached at Appendix A, in a programme of consultation with small businesses across the Humberside Police Force area.
 - ii. Agree to meeting the costs involved in circulation and distribution of the questionnaire to each of the business organisations mailing/membership lists.
 - iii. Receive updates from any consultation with the local business community as and when appropriate.
 - iv. Receive progress reports from Humberside Police on actions taken as a result of consultation with local businesses.

JOHN BATES
Director of Performance and Resources

Contact Officer: Victoria Wise Telephone: (01482) 307234

Background Documents: Federation of Small Businesses Research
National Chamber of Commerce Press Release

APPENDIX A

Consultation Questionnaire for Local Businesses

Section 1 - Please tick the appropriate boxes below



HUMBERSIDE
POLICE AUTHORITY

Is your business based in:	
North East Lincolnshire	
North Lincolnshire	
East Riding of Yorkshire	
Hull	

Has your business been the victim of crime in past two years?	
Once	
2 – 5 times	
5 – 10 times	
More than 10 times	
Never	
Don't know	

What type of crime was committed against your business?*	
Theft	
Robbery	
Shoplifting	
Burglary	
Violence against staff	
Fraud	
Other, please state	
Can you put a monetary value on the cost of the crime?	

*Please tick as many as are appropriate

Did you report the offence(s) to the police?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	
Cant remember	

Was the matter dealt with to your satisfaction by the police?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	
Cant remember	

If 'no' please state why:

Was an offender brought to justice for the offence(s) against your company?	
	Yes
	No
	Don't know
	Cant remember

Was the offender known to you?	
	Yes
	No
	Don't know
If 'Yes' please state in what capacity	

Section 2 – Value for Money?

Bearing in mind the amount of Business Rates you pay do you feel that you receive value for money from your local police?	
	Yes
	No
	Don't know
	No opinion

Please use the space below to tell us anything else about local policing and the relationship with your business

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire, please return to:

Victoria Wise, Humberside Police Authority, Freepost NAT 12110, Hull, HU1 1BR