Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan 2021-2024 – Consultation outcomes

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   This report is a summary of the results obtained from the analysis of the public and stakeholder consultation undertaken to seek the views on the Commissioner's draft three-year draft Police & Crime, and Fire & Rescue plans.

2.   Recommendation

2.1   That the Panel consider the outcomes of the consultation process on both plans, note the Commissioner's amendments as a result prior to publication and make comment as appropriate.

3.   Background

3.1   A programme of public and stakeholder consultation took place between 26 October and 23 November, seeking views on the Staffordshire Commissioner's proposed Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan 2021-2024.   A range of methods were used to encourage participation, resulting in responses from 1,260 people from Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

4.   Conclusions

4.1   A detailed breakdown of the results is included in the consultation outcome report, which is attached. The report also details how the feedback will be incorporated into the final draft.

Consultation Outcome Report

Police and Crime Plan / Fire & Rescue Plan 2021 - 2024

Introduction

Both the Police & Crime Plan and the Fire & Rescue Plan are high-level plans which sit as overarching strategies that set out the Commissioner's vision for community safety in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent over the next three years.

A suite of more detailed co-ordinated delivery plans will sit under these plans. These include but are not limited to operational delivery plans from Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire & Rescue, locality plans from local councils and the Commissioner's commissioning strategy. These will be responsive to the Police & Crime and Fire & Rescue plans and will be developed following the consultation process and finalisation of the plans.

How we did the consultation

We used a range of methods to promote both consultations including:

- **Social media** – Multiple social media posts were issued from the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office (SCO), Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue and partners
- **Media** – Press releases to inform local media of the importance of the consultations
- **Stakeholders** – Emails from the Commissioner requesting key partners' involvement
- **Smart Alert** – Multiple messages issued to 13,962 people via Staffordshire Smart Alert
- **Internal** – Multiple internal messages sent to police and fire staff to encourage participation
- **SCO Newsletter Subscribers** – Multiple messages issued via the SCO newsletter subscriber list of 795 people
- **Facebook community groups** – Direct engagement with local communities via relevant local Facebook groups. As the SCO business page, we joined multiple local community groups to encourage participation in the consultations. These groups had a combined total of 58,434 people.
- **Facebook adverts** – Adverts on Facebook to target both those living in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, and more specifically, those who have an interest in topics related to policing and fire & rescue. These adverts resulted in 805 link clicks and was displayed on 53,488 timelines.
- **Nextdoor app** – The Nextdoor app is a hyperlocal social networking service for neighbourhoods. Unlike other social media platforms, when joining the site, you are automatically connected to your entire network. The Staffordshire network currently has over 118,000 people registered. We utilised this platform to share messages promoting the consultations to everyone in the Staffordshire network.

- **E-school bag** – A message was sent out via the County Council 'e-school bag' to encourage involvement from young people. This is sent to all students and parents in Staffordshire.

Who we targeted
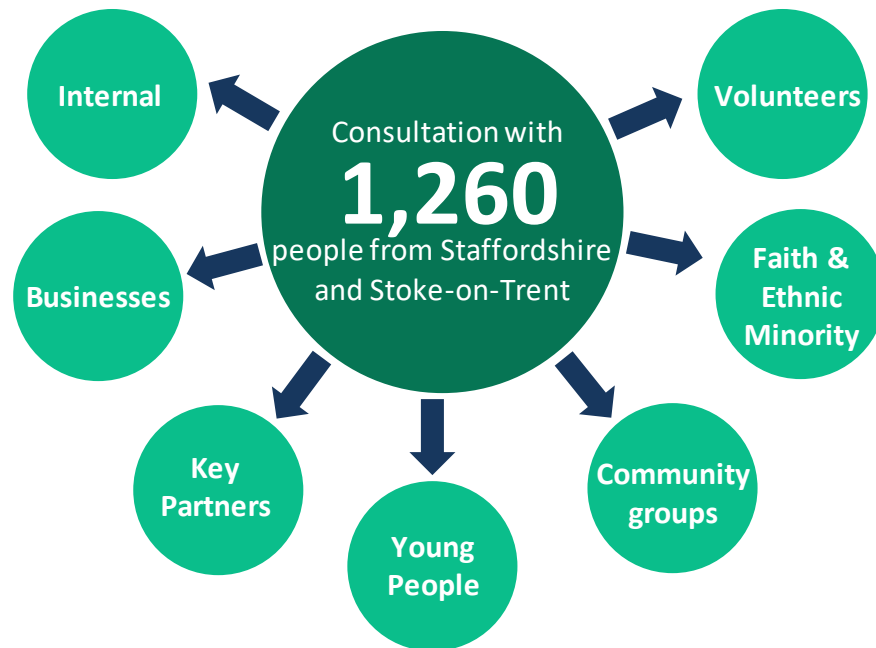
Consultation invites were adapted for different groups focusing on principles, priorities and/or selected commitments within the draft plans. Both multiple choice and free text questions were used to help quantify and explain opinion.

The above methods were used to contact community groups and stakeholders including:

- Officers and staff within Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire & Rescue
- The Police, Fire and Crime Panel
- Partner agencies such as NHS, Magistrates, Prisons, Ministry of Defence, Environment Agency, community safety partnerships and the voluntary sector
- Young people via schools, universities, the Staffordshire Youth Commission, Staffordshire Police Cadets, the Staffordshire Space programme and Prince's Trust
- MPs, District and Borough Councillors, Parish Councillors, Council Leaders and Chief Executives
- Business networks including Chambers of Commerce, the Staffordshire LEP, PABCIS and direct communication with local businesses including Amazon and Water Plus
- Volunteers from the SCO including the Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel, Force and Fire volunteers, Community Speed Watch, Support Staffordshire and SCVYS
- Those funded by the Proceeds of Crime Act in the last two years and those commissioned by the SCO
- Local community groups including the Women's Institute, Staffordshire Young Farmers, local scout and girl guiding groups, Air Cadets and Soroptimists

- Faith and ethnic minority community groups including the Burton Caribbean Association, Stafford Muslim Centre, the Social Inclusion for Asylum Seekers and Refugees charity and the Staffordshire Police Equality and Diversity unit
- Staff Associations / Trade Unions
- Local media

Consultation Results

Police and Crime Plan

93% think 'A local and responsive service' is very important

92% think the priority to 'prevent harm and protect people' is very important

75% think the priority to 'support victims and witnesses' is very important

81% think the priority to 'reduce offending and reoffending' is very important

86% think 'A more effective criminal justice system' is very important

Fire and Rescue Plan

84% think 'A flexible and responsive service' is very important

90% think the priority to 'protect people and places' is very important

84% think the priority to help people most at risk stay safe' is very important

64% think ' A Fire and Rescue service for tomorrow' is very important

The consultations generated responses from 1,260 people from Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Of these, 160 responses were from police and fire staff.

Despite extensive efforts to promote the consultations, the total is less than previous draft strategy consultations. This is due to a number of factors including General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) restrictions being more stringent in recent years. GDPR regulations also had a negative impact on the SCO newsletter subscriber list, which saw a list of 8,000+ reduce to 795. A further obstacle was that the Citizen Panel is no longer in existence. The

Citizen Panel and responses from victims of crime in previous years accounted for a significant proportion of the total number of responses received.

Research shows this total number of responses was in line with other consultations across the country, with the average number being around 1,230, and individual totals ranging from 500 to around 2,000.
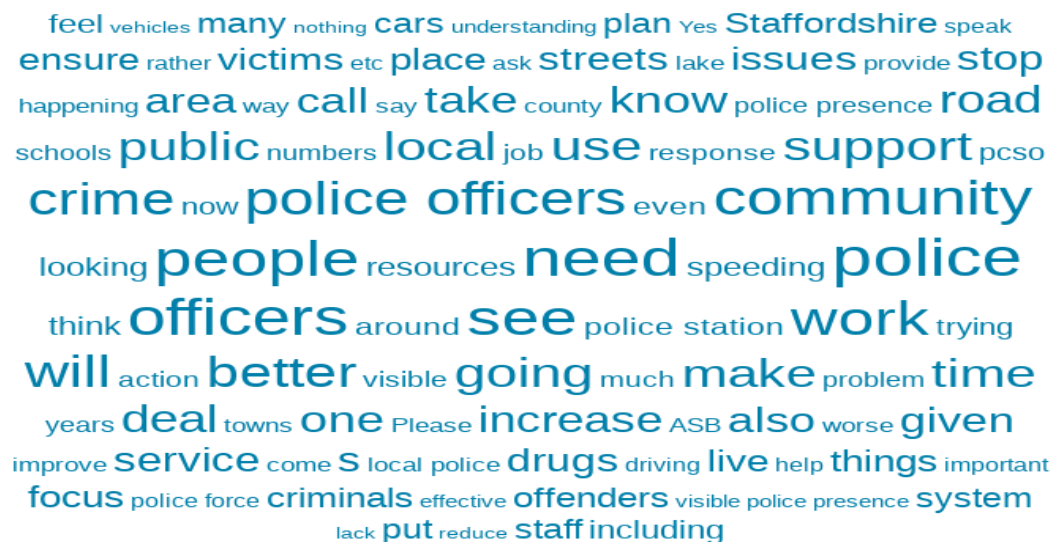
Responses to consultations cannot be combined to give a single representative sample of opinion. However, consistent responses provide a strong indication of likely opinion and can usefully inform development of the plans.

This should be seen as a first step in public consultation and engagement throughout the lifetime of the plans to ensure they continue to genuinely represent the needs and expectations of the communities they are designed to serve.

The following is a summary of results obtained from the free text question which asked for any further comments.

Detailed Themes – Police & Crime Plan

Over 594 respondents provide comments in the free text box which asked "is there anything else you would like to see included in the Police and Crime Plan?". Despite the phrasing of the question, many of the issues raised are already included in the plan. Some of the terms used indicate that a significant number are from members of the force, but those responses are consistent with the other responses received.

General feedback

- Many respondents felt that the questionnaire led them to agree with everything and not prioritise.

- Some felt that to deliver against all priorities would not be possible with the resources available.
- Replace 'police speak' with plain language, e.g. acquisitive crime.

Priority: A local and responsive service

The vast majority (324 of the 594) of free text comments refer to local policing, visibility, call handling and response. The common themes are:

- More visibility, street patrols.
- More presence in local communities, consistent officers, local knowledge, proactive and reactive.
- Accessible stations people can visit, police posts in villages.
- Take action on ASB and low-level crime, clamp down early, stronger approach on offenders.
- Improve response times.
- More attention to road safety, more traffic patrols.
- Focus on town centres & the night time economy/Focus on rural areas.
- Cut 101 waiting times, enable direct contact with local police teams.
- Provide public with more information.

Priority: Prevent harm and protect people

Over 30 responses are linked to this priority. There are fewer common themes here due to the low number of comments, but they are:

- Support for work in schools to divert young people from offending.
- More support for domestic abuse victims.
- Roads policing to cut casualties.

Priority: Support victims and witnesses

Only 10 comments are directly related to this priority, although there is naturally some overlap with the 'effective and efficient CJS' priority. Those that have responded clearly feel this is an area for improvement. One response details an individual's negative experience as a victim and an invitation to contact them to follow up in more detail.

Priority: Reduce offending and reoffending

There were around 30 responses that directly related to this priority. There is a clear divide between those who support work to tackle the underlying causes of offending and reoffending and those who advocate a more enforcement-based approach.

Priority: A more effective criminal justice system

There were more than 20 responses that relate to this priority, Common themes are:

- Need for tougher sentences, increased fines.
- Need to improve cooperation between police and CPS.
- Insufficient penalties imposed by courts for low level offending.

Additional themes

- Around 30 responses concerned enablers such as technology and training:
  - New systems are complex and time consuming
  - Bureaucracy needs to be tackled
  - Wellbeing, particularly mental health, is a priority
  - Practical skills and experience are more valued in new officers than a degree
- 20 responses are linked to partnership working and the role of the police:
  - We're the 24/7 service of last resort
  - The police can't solve everything; other agencies need to be held to account
  - Within this, mental health-related incidents are a concern
- Many of the responses seem to be internal and show that we have some work to do in improving understanding of the 'and crime' part of the Commissioner's role.
- Around 20 comments relate to the 'open and transparent' aspect of our approach:
  - Tackle racial discrimination and sexual harassment
  - Take hate crime seriously
  - Need for effective vetting
  - We need clear plans setting out the detail of what we will do, and report progress

Detailed Themes – Fire & Rescue Plan

Over 112 respondents provided comments in the free text box which asked "is there anything else you would like to see included in the Fire & Rescue Plan?". Some of the terms used and knowledge demonstrated indicate that a significant number are from members of the Fire & Rescue Service.

General feedback

- The plan is comprehensive and covers what the service should be doing already.

- Some respondents felt that the questionnaire led them to agree with everything and not prioritise. This is something we need to bear in mind as changes to the operating model develop.

Priority: A flexible and responsive service

35 of the 112 responses focus on response. The common themes are:

- More firefighters.
- Improve response times.
- Concern over new stations unstaffed at night.
- Concern over cover levels for major incidents.
- Improve the on-call duty system to improve staff retention.
- Can FRS support the police and ambulance service in managing their demand?

Priority: Protect people and places

Given the number of replies which seem to be internal, it is perhaps surprising that only seven reference this topical and growing area of the service's work.

Priority: Help people most at risk stay safe

25 of the 112 free text comments relate to prevention work. Common themes are:

- The prevention work the service does is highly valued but there's a perception that it has reduced.
- The service needs to engage more with communities to ensure successful initiatives.
- It can do more to tackle underlying issues such as health inequalities.
- More work with schools.
- Being closer to the police is perceived by some as moving away from other partnerships.

**Priority: A fire and rescue service for tomorrow**

One aspect of this priority has stimulated 14 negative free text comments, mainly on police-fire collaboration. It is assumed that the vast majority of these are internal and the main focus is on accommodation sharing and the perceived impact on community rooms. Two comments were received which relate to our intention to improve organisational diversity.
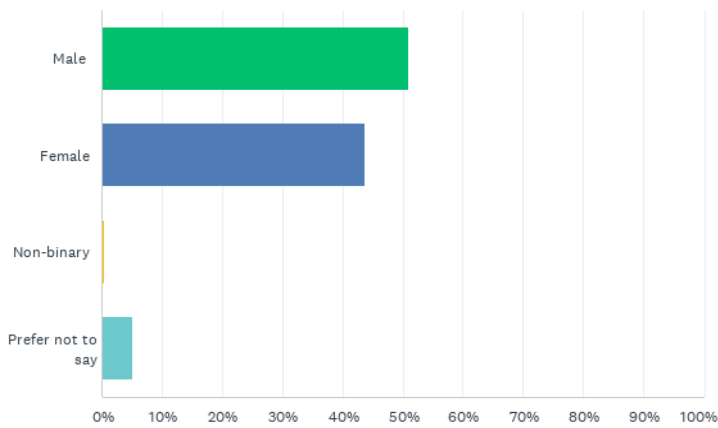
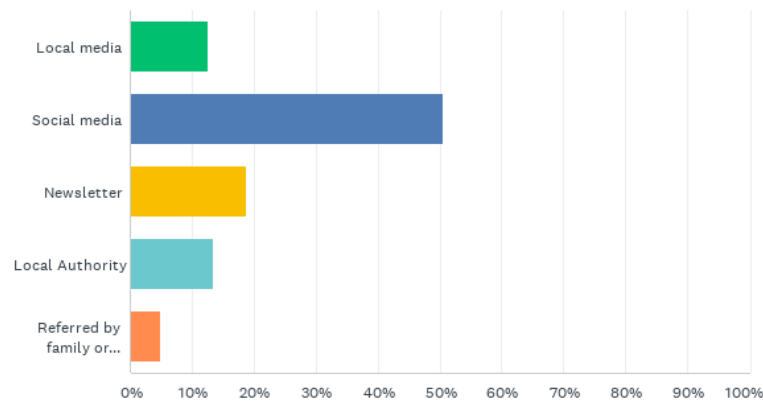# Survey Demographics – Police and Crime Plan

Q8 What is your age?
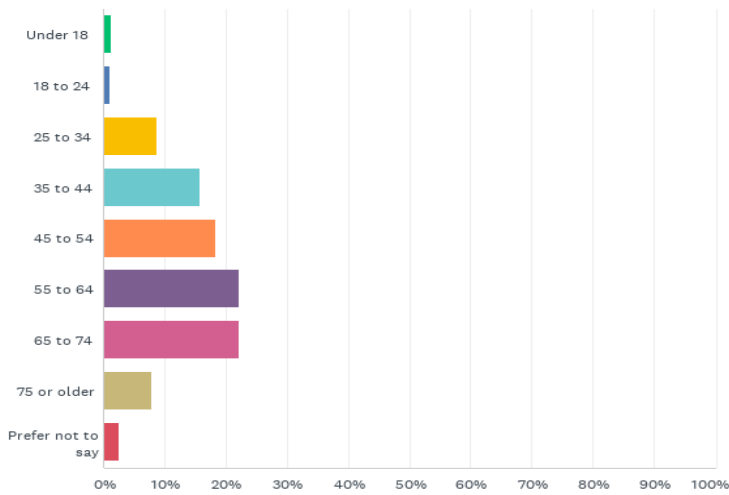
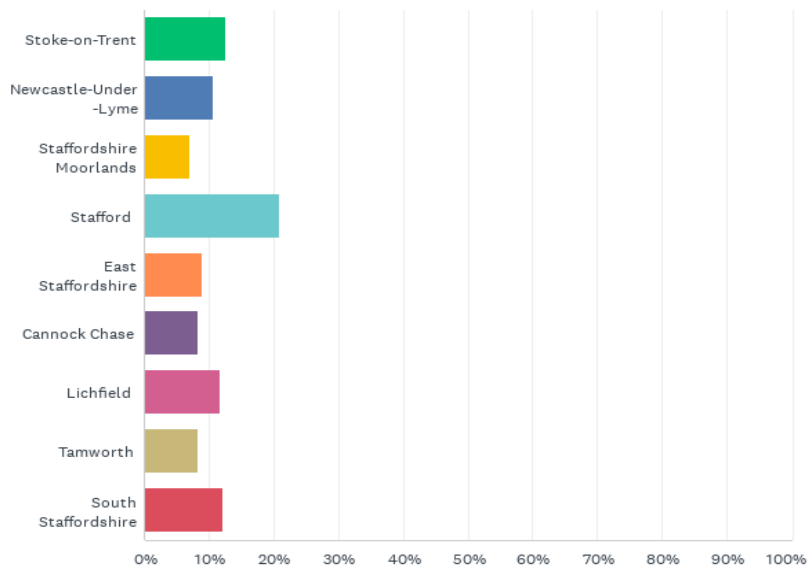## Q9 What is your ethnic origin?
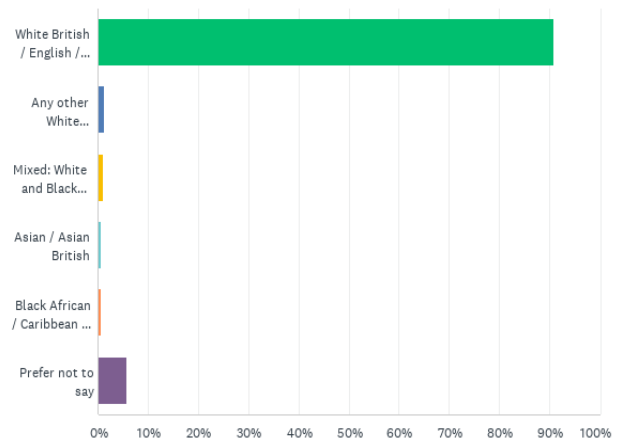
Q10 Which gender identity do you identify as?

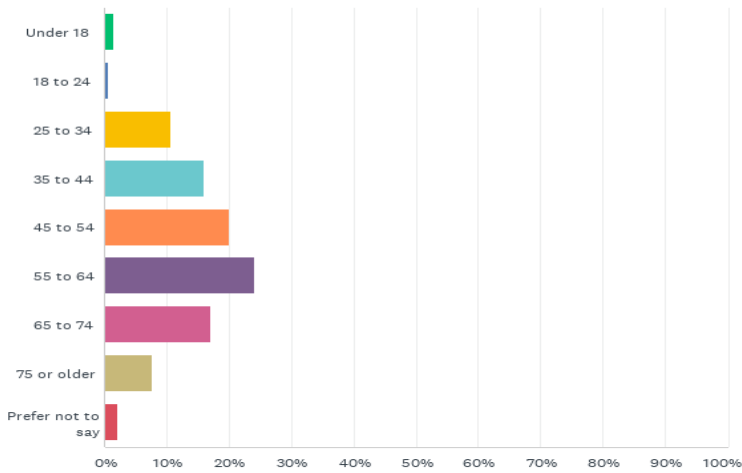## Q11 Where did you hear about this consultation?

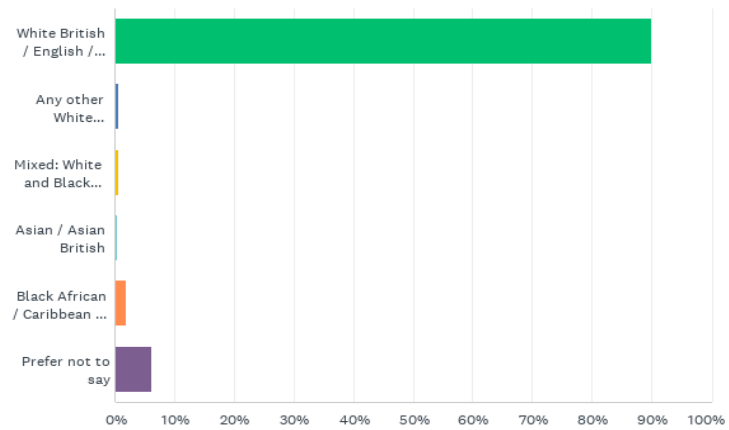## Q12 Which area of Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent do you live in?

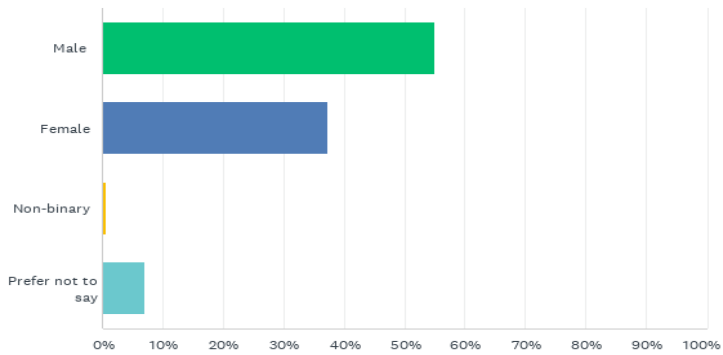# Survey Demographics – Fire & Rescue Plan
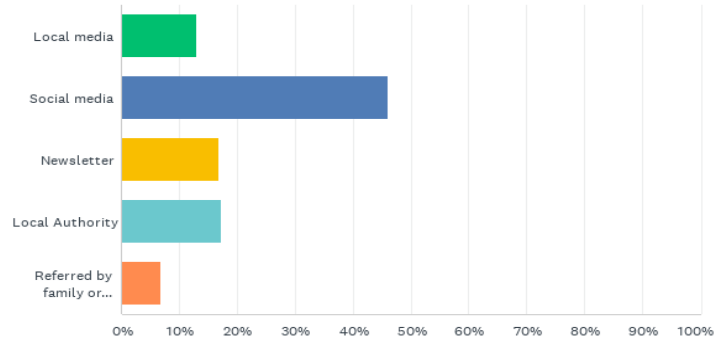
Q7 What is your age?

Q8 What is your ethnic origin?

Q9 Which gender identity do you identify as?

Q10 Where did you hear about this consultation?

Q11 Which area of Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent do you live in?