



# Public Counter Service Review

## *Consultation Evaluation*

# Public Counter Review - Consultation Evaluation

## Background

Change has been a constant within Scottish Policing over recent years and with the move to Police Scotland there is an opportunity to ensure greater consistency, and in some areas enhanced service provision across the country. The proposal for Public Counter Service Provision was intended to deliver a more effective and efficient service whilst maintaining operational policing in the heart of communities, in a manner that is sustainable for the future.

This proposal provided an opportunity to ensure the right people with the right skills are available at the right time and in the right places to serve communities that reflects the way they now live their lives. The proposal also resulted in an opportunity for Police Scotland to make financial savings.

214 police stations provided a counter presence across Scotland. Each was reviewed in terms of public demand and internal interdependency functions, in consultation with respective divisional management teams.

Police Scotland proposed that station opening times were rationalised into five categories of opening hours. It was further proposed that 61 stations would have no staffed counter provision.

Key dates in the review process are highlighted below:

25 June 13	Elected representatives, Council Chief Execs informed by letter of intention to review
	Business case submitted to CC and HRC
	Following approval, senior management teams briefed with outline proposals
19 September 2013	The consultation process officially commenced after proposals were presented at the JNCC meeting
1 October 2013	Group consultations commenced when proposals presented to staff at first seminar in Stirling and invitation to submit counter proposals
1 October 2013	Public consultation commenced with letters to all elected members (MP, MSP and local councillors in Scotland) and to all community councils
14 October 2013	Final staff group consultation meeting
27 October 2013	Deadline for staff to submit preference sheets followed by matching in process by HR
28 October 2013	Start of "Matching In" process
31 October 2013	Official end date of public consultation period
2 December 2013	Start of 1-2-1 meetings with staff
4 December 2013	Update on proposals presented to the SPA Board at full board meeting at Kilmarnock
15 December 2013	Public consultation closed

## **Staff Group Consultation Meetings**

Eight meetings were held across the country offering all staff the opportunity to attend in order to be briefed on the proposed changes to public counter opening hours. Of the 466 staff members affected, 258 attended. A DVD containing the presentation was made available to staff who were unable to attend at the group meetings. They also received by email, a copy of the PowerPoint slides used in the presentations.

## **Internal Consultation**

### Responses/Concerns

Criticism was raised over the manner in which staff were personally informed of the proposals. Many stated they would have preferred to have been told in person. The decision was made to announce proposals to media, on Police Scotland website and internal Intranet simultaneously on commencement of the first group consultation meeting. The rationale being that this would be the most effective method of getting the announcement out to the greatest number of staff at the same time without being disadvantageous to any individual.

## **Public Consultation**

The public consultation period was announced as running for 4 weeks. There was criticism that this period was too short and did not meet recognised minimum consultation period of 6 weeks for public bodies according to Scottish Government guidelines. The 4 week consultation period was justified due to the tight timescales the review was working to in order to maximise financial savings. The timescales were queried at a Justice Sub-committee meeting at which it was agreed that consultation responses would continue to be considered for a further 4 to 6 weeks whilst work was ongoing taking the period we would consider comments to mid December 2013.

Comment was made over the contact methods promoted in order to submit observations and concerns. It was felt too much emphasis was placed on contact by electronic means with no postal address published.

Notwithstanding the promotion of electronic contact, some 20 letters were received either at police headquarters or at the review team office at Pitt St, Glasgow as well as direct to Local Policing Commanders.

A total of 176 items of correspondence were received from key stakeholders (i.e. councillors, community councils, local authorities, MPs, MSPs) as of 27 January 2014. In addition, 117 items of correspondence were received largely from members of the public, with a small number of concerns and queries being raised by partner agencies/departments or parliamentary researchers. Twelve positive comments were received from councils/community councils.

## **NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

A total of 6 petitions were received from elected representatives:

### **West Lothian, Save Our Stations - Neil Findlay MSP**

- 89 West Calder Resident Surveys<sup>1</sup>
- 75 signatures on Save Our Stations petition sheets.
- 153 generic "Save our Stations" emails received at review team mailbox

### **Portobello - Kezia Dugdale MSP**

- 188 Portobello Resident Surveys<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Both these surveys were identical in content with only station identity changed

### **Wishaw - John Pentland MSP**

- 103 supporters on the Change.org website. (During the previous review John Pentland MSP submitted a petition regarding Wishaw with 1380 signatures on 14/09/2012)

### **Tranent - Ian Gray MSP / Fiona O'Donnell MP**

- 271 signatures received

### **Biggar - David Mundell MP**

- 130 signatures received

### **Airdrie and Shotts - Pamela Nash MP**

- 886 signature petition from members of the public relating to Airdrie
- 269 signature petition from members of the public relating to Shotts
- Additional 100 online "signatures" in relation to both stations

It was noted that where counter hours were decreasing or where service was removed the majority of wording used in the surveys and on petition documents gave the impression that the public would have no access to officers in the station and would have to travel to another station with a staffed counter to be seen. This may have unduly influenced some responses.

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

A breakdown of the correspondence categories is shown below:

Source	Totals
CEO	6
Councillor	39
Community Council	53
Council	7
Member of Parliament	15
Member of Scottish Parliament	54
Joint MSP/MP	2
Other Representative Group	5
Parliamentary Research	3
Partner	6
Member of the Public	108
EEN Campaign	911
Petition Signatures	2264
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3473</b>

### Summary of Concerns and How We Responded

The main subjects raised during consultation correspondence and the general way in which we answered the concern were as follows:

- **Concern over removal of 24 hour / 7 day counter provision** – we answered this by highlighting that officers were still working from these stations, in the community and available to deal with matters that the public report to the police.
- **General concern over reduction or removal of counter provision** – we highlighted the downward trend in public attendance at counters, reminding correspondents that in the absence of a staffed counter, police would be available to deal with callers to stations. We highlighted the alternative methods the public can use to contact the police.
- **Data used was too old or collected over too short a period to have meaningful use** – we clarified the purpose and use of the data, explaining that given the tight timescales, carrying out a full data survey across Scotland was not practicable given that in most areas, data already existed. We explained that we consulted with divisional command teams who could add context to the data to enable often difficult decisions to be made.

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

- **Breakdown of community relations and communication between public and police** – *we informed correspondents of alternative methods currently in use by which the police communicate with the public such as: attending community council and neighbourhood watch meetings, holding open surgeries and involvement with community and youth groups.*
- **Admin functions being carried out by police officers and not staff** – *we highlighted that, the way in which we work as organisation has changed significantly with advances in IT and officers will continue to be supported by police staff in a variety of functions and locations, in a way which is sustainable going forward.*
- **A view that “closing” a public counter meant removal of police officers from that area** – *we said that withdrawing staffed counter provision at some public counters across the country did not mean we would reduce the policing footprint within the communities we serve. Officers will continue to be based at and work from their current locations taking ownership of and dealing with local issues. Community Police Officers will work in the ward areas as they currently do, supported by Response and other officers to provide a service which is matched to demand and focused on keeping people safe.*
- **Fear of increased crime / lack of ability to report crime** – *we stressed that from previous experience there is no evidence to show that crime would increase with the removal or reduction of counter provision and highlighted that crime can still be reported at stations to police officers or by alternative means or processes such a 101 or by the use of a Managed Appointment System (diary car).*
- **Inconvenience for public having to travel considerable distances to an open station** – *we said that as the majority of counter enquiries of a non urgent nature no one would be expected to travel large distances to obtain police service; local officers will be available by arrangement or appointment if necessary to deal with any issues.*

## **Positive Comments**

The review received positive comments from Councils, Community Councils and individuals from across Scotland and a selection are reproduced below:

*“In Kirkcaldy we note that the counter will be available 7 days per week for 24 hours each day. This meets our expectations and we welcome it. We are sorry to see the reduced service in other locations and hope all avenues will be explored to keep public anxiety to a minimum.” - Fife*

*“[The] Community Council are happy to see the number of hours specified for Stornoway police station, and also pleased to see the suggestion that the police would be taking on the duties of traffic wardens and will be on the streets in Stornoway to enforce the Road Traffic Acts.” – Highland & Islands*

*“I have had the chance to consider the proposals and fully support the direction of travel being taken by Police Scotland in this respect. ... The model appears to be focused on delivering a streamline and accessible service focused on meeting customer need - very much in line with our own approach to customer service within the organisation.” – Argyll & West Dunbartonshire*

*“Looking at the evidence you present, and understanding that you wish to provide a high quality service while, as far as possible, reducing outlay, we feel that the decisions you have made seem sensible ones.” – The Lothians & Scottish Borders*

**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

**Counter Proposals**

There were 38 counter proposal submissions for 33 locations in respect of the following stations:

Division	Counter Proposal Subject	Nature of Counter Proposal
G	Cathcart	To retain status quo
G	Maryhill	Alternative CAT B shift pattern & post
N	Stromness	Retain 0.5 post for shared service
Q	Carlisle, Biggar and Lesmahagow	Peripatetic proposal for 3 stations
U	Irvine, Saltcoats	Alternative CAT of offices & increase 3 posts
J	Musselburgh	Alternative CAT C shift pattern
P	Fife	222 shift pattern to be retained
B	Banchory	To be CAT C not CAT D
N	Mallaig	To be full time provision not 0.5 post
L	Dumbarton	To be CAT C not CAT D
N	Cumbernauld	To be CAT B not CAT C
Q	Kilsyth	To retain status quo
A	Aberdeen (Queen Street)	To retain 15 instead of 10 staff (& include productions)
A	Aberdeen (Queen Street)	Alternative CAT A shift pattern
A	Aberdeen (Queen Street)	Alternative CAT A hours plus 1FTE CAT D post
B	Stonehaven	Alternative CAT B shift pattern
B	Stonehaven	Alternative CAT B shift pattern
C	Larbert	To be CAT D - but retain 2 staff
V	Annan	Alternative CAT C pattern & hours
A	Bucksburn	To be CAT D not E
B	Forres	To be CAT C (B in summer) not CAT D
C	Bannockburn	To be CAT D not E
E	Leith	Alternative hours
E	Leith	Alternative CAT B pattern & hours
C	Falkirk	Additional CAT D staff member
J	Linlithgow	To be CAT D not E
E	South Queensferry	To be CAT D not E
N	Stornoway	To retain status quo
J	Tranent and Haddington	Both to be CAT D not C and E
D	Longhaugh	To be CAT D not E
L	Helensburgh	To be CAT B not CAT C
D	Crieff and Auchterarder	Peripatetic proposal for 2 stations
C	Tullibody	To be CAT D not E
J	Hawick	Alternative CAT B shift pattern
J	Hawick	To be CAT C not CAT B
J	Bonnyrigg	To be CAT D not E
All	Police Scotland	Nationwide peripatetic cover
D	Multiple Stations	To be CAT D not E

Category	A	B	C	D	E
Hours	24/7	0700-midnight 7 days per week	0800-1800hrs 7 days per week	0900-1700hrs Monday to Friday	Shared service or No full time / No provision



## **Counter Proposal Assessment Criteria**

The review team applied a set of criteria during the assessment of all counter proposals to decide upon their viability. These criteria were closely aligned to the key business change programme principles:

- Keeping People Safe
- Cost Reduction
- Best Value
- Culture Change,

and the end benefits of business change:

- Better Targeted Local Policing
- Improved Access to Policing Services
- Improved Quality of Service Across Scotland
- More Sustainable Service Proving Value for Money.

The following criteria were considered and led to the counter proposals being accepted or declined:

- Objective Rationale

Counter proposals were reviewed to identify if there was a focus on the author's own personal circumstances in a specific role rather than being a counter proposal for the restructured station opening hours. Personal circumstances would be discussed at the preference and matching in process throughout the consultation phase where flexible working plans could be considered.

- Resourcing Viability

Counter proposals were submitted by a number of staff who composed alternative shift patterns. These were reviewed in terms of finance, compliance with the working week and working time regulations, and assessed in terms of compatibility with the standardised station opening hours.

- Financial Viability

In the face of challenging financial decisions which have to be made the counter proposals were assessed in order to identify whether any additional expenditure proposed would be appropriate according to public demand.

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

- Knowledge of Local Influencing Factors

The review team utilised the professional knowledge of local command teams to provide further context surrounding the justifications behind counter proposals. This approach allowed the counter proposals to be comprehensively considered at a local level in fairness to the authors.

- Public Interest

A review of public opinion and comment was carried out by the review team in order to further evidence the counter proposals.

- Service Delivery/Nationwide Resilience

The creation of the single police service allowed the review team to look outwith the legacy force borders and consider the geographic location of alternative stations which will provide an appropriate level of service to the public.

- Future Development of Service

Within a number of areas the review and consultation processes highlighted a viable potential for future shared services where the police could be co-located within a multi-partner facility.

- Efficiency

Counter proposals which cited a range of demands placed on the public counter as a justification required the review team to consult with other departments. Where alternative arrangements or processes were necessary, these matters were assessed by alternate workstreams.

## Approved Counter Proposals

As a result of applying the criteria, the following 9 counter proposals were approved:

Station	Original Proposal	Approved Counter Proposal
Stromness (N Division)	No counter service provision	Shared service provision with police staff member 50% of the time.
Banchory (B Division)	Monday to Friday 0900-1700hrs	Seven days per week 0800-1800hrs
Dumbarton (L Division)	Monday to Friday 0900-1700hrs	Seven days per week 0800-1800hrs
South Queensferry (E Division)	No counter service provision	Monday to Friday 0900-1700hrs
Linlithgow (J Division)	No counter service provision	Monday to Friday 0900-1700hrs
Fife 24hr Stations (P Division)	To move to Cat A corporate shift pattern	To retain their VSA 222 shift pattern to align with proposed opening hours
Tranent	No counter service provision	Monday to Friday, 0900-1700hrs
Haddington (J Division)	Seven days per week 0800- 1800hrs	Monday to Friday, 0900-1700hrs
Mallaig (N Division)	No full time provision, 0.5 FTE post	Monday to Friday 0900-1700hrs
Aberdeen (A Division)	To move to Cat A corporate shift pattern	Minor alteration to shift start/finish times

## Conclusion

The review and consultation process was carried out in a manner that was designed to provide a clear understanding of the proposals being made and an opportunity to make comment on them. Where possible, we ensured that we could meet the needs of staff; mitigate or reduce changes to ensure staff were not disadvantaged. This was all done within a six week consultation period.

It was unfortunate that due to procedures in place, until the business case was fully approved little could be said to staff about the proposals. This led to concern and uncertainty among staff and speculation by media outlets.

The consultation with staff and the public was fully considered, with a personal response made to each letter or contact received. Many of these letters challenged the proposals made but offered no suggestion or alternative. As such the majority of these have not been considered as counter proposals but have received a full reply.

The consultation has allowed changes to be made in some areas where, at a small additional cost, the service has been enhanced and the community more effectively served.

The learning points for this review and consultation have been shared with other Project Teams and the National Business Change Department.