

REPORT FROM COUNCILLOR MALCOLM DOHERTY CHAIR OF LANCASHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

POLICING IN BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

The Police Authority is pleased to provide a report for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council with regard to Police performance in the Borough. The partnership approach in Blackburn with Darwen to tackling community safety issues is very strong and there are effective working relationships between the Local Authority and the Police. These are seen both at neighbourhood level in individual areas and in the relationships between the Divisional Commander and Senior officers within the Council.

CRIME

Blackburn with Darwen lies within the Lancashire Constabulary Eastern Division. Reduction and detection of crime is the foremost priority for the division and detailed performance information is available for an aggregated total of all crimes as well as individual crime categories such as burglary.

Crime in the borough has reduced consistently in recent years and the size of the reduction together with the number of detected crimes puts the town in a very strong position when comparisons are made with crime performance in other areas both within Lancashire and nationally.

As articulated in the last update, crime in the borough has shown a downward trend for over 7 years and still shows signs of reducing even further.

The most recent reporting quarter (October 2010 – December 2010) shows some significant achievements:

- All crime has reduced by 0.8% which is 22 less victims of crime over the 3 months
- Violent crime has reduced by 8.3% which is 66 less victims over the 3 months
- Criminal damage has reduced by 18.6% which is 126 less victims over the 3 months

These reductions for the third quarter are reflected for the year to date (April 2010 to December 2010) for which all crime is down 1.6% and 37.9% of that crime has been detected. This performance puts the borough in a strong position when compared to similar areas. The main performance challenges in relation to crime reduction have been around acquisitive offences such as burglary and vehicle crime – which often experience increases when economic circumstances deteriorate.

Although showing some increases in acquisitive crime, when compared to its most similar groups (the Home Office compares police forces against a 'family' of their most similar peers comprising police divisions from across England and Wales) the Division still stands out as one of the top performing areas consistently in the top 3 of a group of 16. This is again also set against a context of significant year on year reductions in this area of crime over the past seven years. Likewise, in terms of bringing offenders to justice the Division is the top performing area amongst its 16 peer groups. This is also reflected across most other areas of crime.

CONFIDENCE & SATISFACTION

Levels of public confidence in the police and the satisfaction of people who interact with police are important measures of the quality of policing service Lancashire Constabulary provides. Eastern Division has a particularly proud record and public confidence in policing in Blackburn with Darwen has recently moved from being among the best, to the very best in the county. Chart 1 below shows how confident the public are in different policing areas across the force.

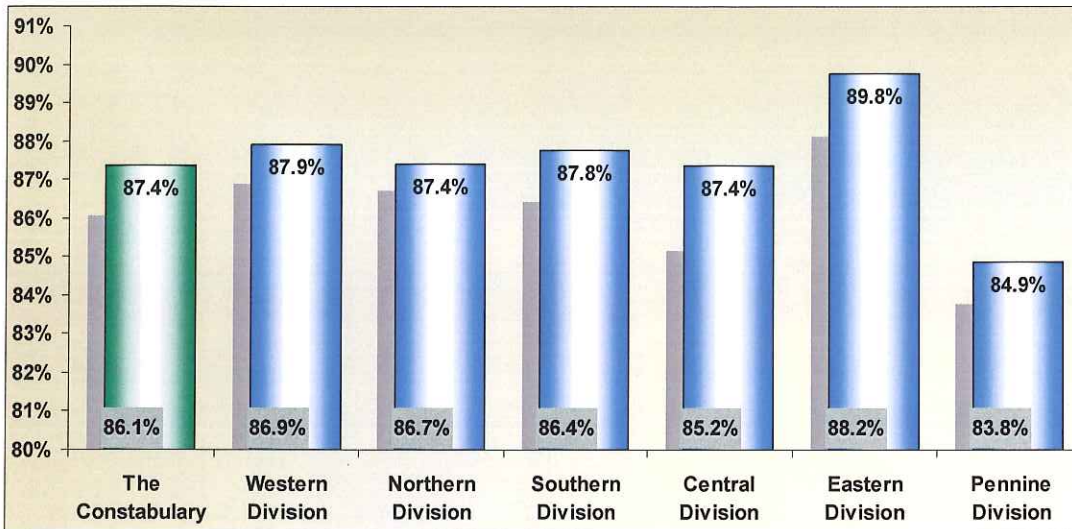


Chart 1: Public Confidence in Lancashire Constabulary by policing area

When confidence is measured at a local authority district level, Blackburn with Darwen is ranked 1st for confidence in the police:

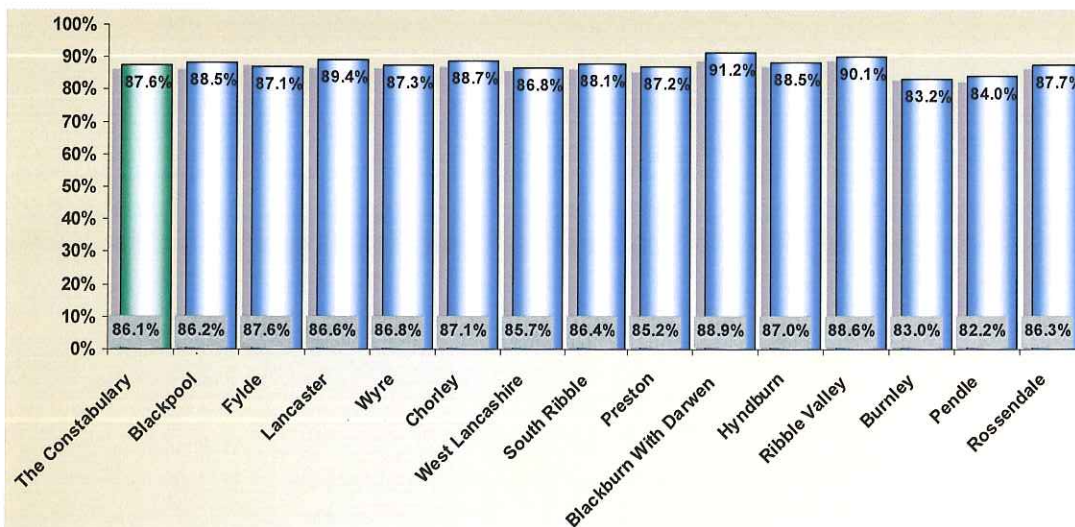


Chart 2: Public Confidence in Lancashire Constabulary by districts

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The borough continues to show strong performance in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Eastern Division recognises the damaging impact ASB can have on neighbourhoods and police have been at the forefront of implanting minimum standards for dealing with reports of ASB. The previous report included a chart showing a downward trend line for ASB over the last 3 years in Eastern Division. The following chart shows ASB performance in the borough of Blackburn with Darwen this year compared to last year. The chart demonstrates reductions every single month and a continuing downward trend:

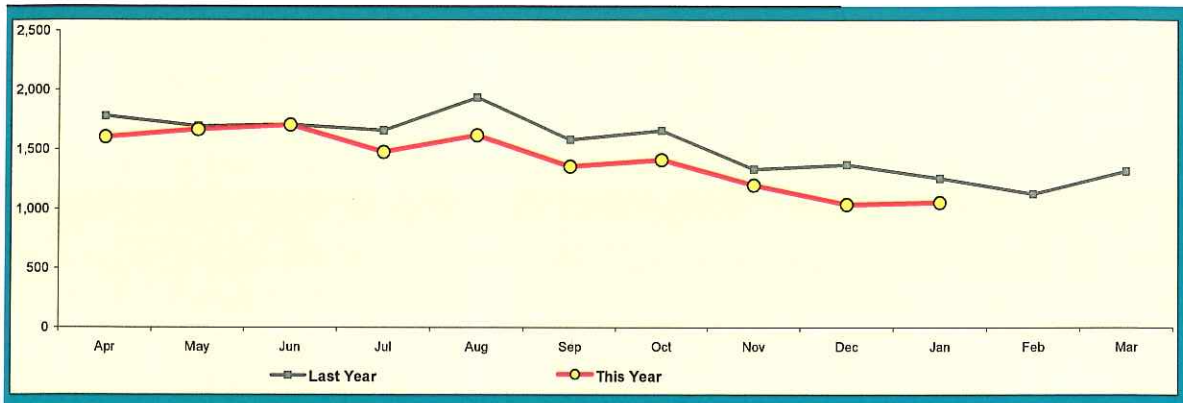


Chart 3: ASB levels this year (2010/11) compared to last year (2009/10)

The investment made by police in Eastern Division tackling Anti-Social Behaviour is reflected in very high levels of confidence among the public that the police and partners are dealing effectively with the issue.

When a recent survey asked the question “Do you agree or disagree that the police and local council are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area?” The results for the Eastern Division area were an impressive endorsement of joined up working as chart 4 below shows:

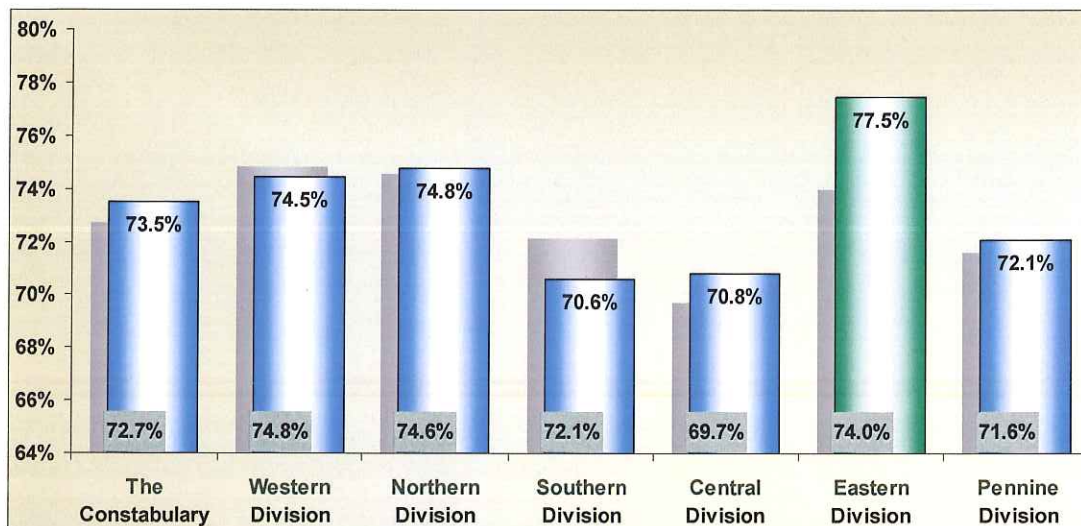


Chart 4: Public confidence that police and the local council are dealing with ASB and Crime

Satisfaction in policing services is measured for 3 main groups of crime; burglary violent crime, and road collisions. Eastern Division has recently seen the largest increases in public satisfaction in the force.

OTHER POLICING ISSUES

In addition to the issues above, Blackburn with Darwen also continues to deal with other significant issues such as Premiership football matches and other large events. On the 1st December the division lead the successful policing operation for the Homecoming Parade of the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

There will be challenges to come for policing in Blackburn with Darwen, the most significant being to maintain outstanding performance and levels of service while dealing with contracting budgets and consequential reductions in resources. This does also however provide us with the opportunity to scrutinise every area of our business and ensure that efficiencies are maximised and we provide real value for money in respect of the service we provide. We are confident that even with the financial challenges we face over the next four years we will maintain our ambition to consistently be a key part of the best performing force in the country.

Crime tends to be closely correlated to wider social factors – particularly recession and economic hardship. Eastern Division will have to manage difficult choices about what areas of work to prioritise and it will do this by using the experience of its staff and by working with partners in the borough including not just other organisations, but communities themselves.

Although crime and calls for service have been reducing, the consequences of reduced budgets and resulting reductions in officer numbers together with increased demands in respect of protecting vulnerable people are all challenges that the division will embrace.

Cllr Malcolm T Doherty