

1. CONSULTATION

2. If the Authority decides to support the progression of the full and voluntary merger option the consultation arrangements will need to be determined.
3. Included below is the advice that has been given by a well known and respected research organisation, Ipsos MORI. They have suggested that a mixed methodology would be appropriate given the complexities of the option. The key elements of this advice are summarised below:

4. Phase 1 Qualitative Phase

- The purpose of this phase is to develop an understanding of the key issues for residents to identify the key pieces of information required for an informed response
- There are two methods considered within the proposal:

i) Deliberative workshops (Preferred Option)

- A half day (3 hour) workshop involving approximately 30 residents involving a mixture of open and prompted discussions and information sessions, in the form of presentations, exercises etc.
- The research proposal suggests that 3 workshops are run, given the relative size of the two counties as follows:

Bedfordshire

- One workshop of 30 residents to have a broad demographic representation of the whole county in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, work-status, socio-economic group and district/area.

Hertfordshire

- Two workshops of 30 residents each to have a broad demographic representation, as above, one to be held in the North of the county and one in the South.
- The cost of the workshops equates to approximately £422 per attendee, £38k across the two counties, fully inclusive, and the Police Authorities will try to reduce these costs where possible.

ii) Discussion/Focus Groups

- This would be an alternative to the deliberative workshops. This would entail a series of 90 minute discussion groups involving 8 to 10 residents in each group to discuss and inform.

Bedfordshire

- Three focus groups reflecting the 3 unitary authority areas in the county.

Hertfordshire

- Five focus groups, one per two districts

5. The cost of the focus groups equates to approximately £333 per attendee, £24k across the two counties, fully inclusive, and the Police Authorities will try to reduce these costs where possible.
6. Both qualitative approaches would recruit participants that have not been conditioned by previous consultation, such as Citizens Panels etc and are fresh to the subject matter. Both approaches would recommend that the evidence provided to attendees is delivered by a 'neutral' professional rather than someone with a policing background (as the Police are amongst the most trusted of professions).
7. However the researchers report highlights that the focus groups would have greater time constraints and therefore less opportunity to provide information to participants throughout the session enabling balanced and thorough debate.
8. The primary benefit of the focus groups is their ability to focus/target recruitment on specific audiences, whether focused on localised areas or specific ethnic groups or sub-groups.
9. Findings from this phase will be presented to the Police Authorities to enable them to scrutinise and quality assure these. Recommendations made from the qualitative phase will feed into the design of the next Quantitative Phase.

10. Phase 2 Quantitative Phase

11. The purpose of this phase is to accurately measure the level and nature of opposition or support for the proposal to voluntarily merge.
12. There are three methods considered within the proposal:

i) Telephone Surveys (Preferred Option)

- These surveys would enable a broad representation of the population in each county to be achieved and would involve ensuring key evidence, identified through the qualitative phase, is presented to participants and balanced questions posed.
- A sample size of 500 interviews per Authority is deemed sufficient to provide a confidence level of just under 96% against interviewing the entire adult population. However, the sample size could readily be increased to 1,000. The surveys could be conducted over a two week period.

ii) Face to Face Surveys

- These surveys are more difficult to set up, in ensuring representative samples, and therefore more expensive. They are not regarded as particularly cost-effective for shorter surveys and do not offer the same degree of flexibility (language variations etc) therefore have not been recommended for this proposal.

iii) Online Surveys

- These surveys are both cost and time effective however they would not meet the standards of the Police Authorities to engage with a representative sample of participants from each county.

- 13 If members support the preferred option then the costs of undertaken telephone survey of 500 residents in each county is £24k. These costs would rise to £37k if the sample size was doubled.
- 14 The outcomes from these two phases would provide the Police Authorities with a strong understanding on the balance of opinion on the proposals put to residents across the two counties to inform the decision of the Police Authorities to approve or oppose a voluntary merger, at the end of the calendar year (November/December 2010).
- 15 The costs of this consultation could be covered by the Home Office Exploration of Voluntary Merger grant awarded to Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.