



Decision Note – Public Perception Surveys

REQUEST FOR DECISION BY THE STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

	Policing:	Crime:	Fire & Rescue:
This decision relates to:	✓		

APPROVAL (for completion by Staffordshire Commissioner only)

Rationale for approval

This decision supports the following commitment in my Police and Crime Plan:

- *Work with the force to develop innovative approaches to engaging with neighbourhoods and communities with shared interests to help shape priorities and services and keep them informed of what the force are doing.*
- *Improve digital and traditional links with people, particularly seldom heard groups and young people, to understand their views, gather evidence on crime, ASB, drugs and alcohol, road safety issues, and keep them informed about what is being done to tackle them.*

STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

Signature 

Date 22/12/2025

Date decision required by: 31 December 2025

If an urgent approval is required, please state reasons:




For completion by Staffordshire Commissioner's Office only:-

Decision Number: SCP/D/202526/008

Date Received: 22 December 2025

	Yes	No
Has the required decision been considered under the guidance of the Staffordshire Commissioner's Decision-Making Policy?	X	
Has the required decision been deemed to be a Key Decision as defined within the Staffordshire Commissioner's Decision-Making Policy?	X	
Who is empowered to make the required decision? Staffordshire Commissioner		

Title	Public Perception Surveys
Summary: This paper provides an overview of options to re-tender for the third party provided public perceptions survey in early 2026 following the testing of different methodologies in August 2025. Option 1: Extend the current contract with SMSR for one year Option 2: Direct award of the contract to Zencity for two years whilst scoping proof of concept for Salesforce Feedback Management tool via Agent force Option 3: Carry out all public perception surveying via VisaV (Smart Alert)	
Recommendation: It is recommended that the Commissioner approves Option 2.	
Chief Executive I hereby approve the recommendation for consideration.	
Signature	 Date 22/12/2025



REPORT AND ADVICE TO THE STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

1. Introduction and background

SCO, in partnership with Staffordshire Police, currently run a twice-yearly public perceptions survey which measures public confidence levels across the force local policing teams (LPTs) and the force as a whole.

The current provider of the survey is market research agency, SMSR, who run the survey via telephone with a target of achieving 1,600 surveys across nine authority areas amongst a diverse range of respondents across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The results of this survey are analysed and collated by SMSR and are usually presented two months after data collection – meaning they are often ‘out of date’ as the public confidence picture is constantly evolving. SMSR’s analysis provides comparison data with seven other forces who also use their services, allowing us to assess our public confidence scores against similar sized forces and the Crime Survey of England and Wales.

The contract with SMSR to provide the surveys is due for renewal in February 2026 and ahead of this, we tested three different methodologies to coincide with the August 2025 survey. The main aim of the demo was to understand which type of surveying and sample size can provide the force with the most accurate and timely public perception information in order to inform service delivery.

The results from the demo and the next steps are detailed within this paper.

2. Issues for consideration

Test surveys were carried out with Zensity, Salesforce and VisaV during August, running concurrently with the SMSR survey. The surveys used the same question set as the SMSR survey but pushed the survey to different audiences whilst also allowing us to test different analytic reporting methods. The merits of these approaches are detailed in the COT paper. This process elicited three options:

Option 1: Extend the current contract with SMSR for one year

This option is not recommended due to the methodology of telephone surveys being quite archaic and only hitting a certain demographic. There is also a huge lag from the survey taking place to receiving the full results (sometimes three months) meaning we never get an accurate picture of public confidence. The organisation provides similar services to seven other forces which enables direct comparisons to be made, however, this ability to benchmark is also available through the Crime Survey of England Wales. Whilst SMSR provide survey results in spreadsheet form with supporting presentations, there is some re-keying required to incorporate them into the force’s PowerBI performance dashboards.

The annual cost for this option would be approx. £52,000 to extend the contract for a further year. To date, the cost has been split equally between SCO and the force.

Option 2 (Recommended): Direct award of contract to Zensity for two years whilst scoping proof of concept for Salesforce Feedback Management tool via Agent force.



Zencity's Blockwise survey solution uses digital push advert notifications via mobile apps to send public perception surveys to different geographical areas and demographics. It constantly pushes these out to local communities to achieve the most up-to-date public confidence measures. Its aim is to achieve a diverse range of respondents, with the solution also translating the survey questions into a diverse range of languages. Blockwise is predominately used in the US law enforcement industry although it was previously adopted by the Met and British Transport Police in the UK.

Three service levels are available:

Option	Core	Bespoke	Advanced Engagement
Annual Cost	£55,000	£80,000	£114,000
Survey Frequency	Quarterly	Bi-Monthly	Monthly
Dashboard & Analytics Suite	✓	✓	✓
Trend monitoring, comparative reporting, incident-linked analysis	✓	✓	✓
Programme Management and optimisation support		✓	✓
Dedicated Strategic Advisor & Monthly Presentations			✓
Onsite support to present and maximise value in force			✓

Procuring the Advanced Engagement option for two years provides an independent viewpoint of public confidence and would allow us to instantly assess the impact of local operations and national policing events on public confidence. Zencity would run monthly surveys, increasing the frequency of surveying by six times compared to the current twice-yearly surveys. The monthly surveys would also include organic social media analysis of sentiment and key topics of interest.

Zencity would work with SCO and the force to redesign the question set so it is more engaging and informative of current issues we want to measure. The results are accessed via a digital dashboard that also integrates with Power BI and our existing performance framework and therefore would not require additional analytic resource.

The further additionality of the Advance Engagement option is around the presentation of results to organisational stakeholders and the ongoing support and advice provided. This is important to ensure survey findings become embedded in the performance management framework and public confidence becomes a more prominent element in holding the service to account.

Zencity would provide training for all commanders, heads of department and the performance and corporate communications and engagement teams on how to use the dashboard and there is an unlimited number of licenses available.



Commercial Services have led the procurement process and a compliant framework, G Cloud, will be used.

In addition to the above, discussions have taken place with Salesforce about demoing their Feedback Management tool when the Agentforce AI tool is launched in the control room in early 2026. This obtains real-time feedback from engaged known citizens as soon as they make contact with the service. It sends service users a text or an email with a series of short 'how are we doing' questions, enabling feedback to be acted on instantly. It can also be used in conjunction with complaints/compliments procedures and be used to give individual officers or staff feedback on their role.

If Agentforce was adopted more widely the annual costs is estimated at approx £45,000. Zencity's solution and the Salesforce feedback management tool would provide a balance of feedback from both engaged and unknown citizens.

The cost for the Zencity Advanced Engagement survey would be £114,000 excl VAT per annum. This represents an additional annual cost of £62,000 compared to Option 1.

The Salesforce Agentforce tool will be developed as a proof of concept and will be subject to a separate business case if benefits are demonstrated.

Option 3: Carry out all public perception surveying via VisaV (Smart Alert)

VisaV's surveying method targets engaged known citizens only as surveys are only sent to those who have signed up to receive news about Staffordshire Police via Smart Alert. Although the Smart Alert database is extensive (27,000) and growing every day, it is not yet developed enough to be used as a singular public perception feedback solution. The users of Smart Alert also tend to be of a much older age group which means it is not conducive in obtaining feedback from different demographics. As it is not an independent survey, the results are also skewed as they are from known citizens only.

The reporting / analytic tool provided with VisaV's surveying capability is also not as developed as those of Zencity and SMSR and would require considerable internal resource to analyse which the force does not currently have. This would create a lag from the survey data to reporting accurate results.

However, VisaV survey does have a place in hosting quarterly LPT priority surveys and other pulse / thematic surveys we run. **The added benefit of this is that it uses the Smart Alert system already used by LPTs and as it is included in existing licences there is no additional cost.**

3. What other options have been considered?

All viable options are set out above. To rely solely on the Crime Survey of England and Wales would not provide data with sufficient granularity to understand the perceptions of the various communities across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent which is vital to operational policing delivery and improving public confidence.

4. Consultation and Engagement undertaken

Caroline Tozer, Head of Corporate Comms and Engagement
Rachel Smith – Commercial



Report Implications

5. Monitoring Officer comments:

Robust business case and options appraisal undertaken, underpinning recommended option, option 2.
Compliant procurement route identified.

Signature

Date 22/12/2025

6. Section 151 Officer comments:

The Commissioner has agreed to fund the full cost of the contract with Zencity (£228,000 over two years) from the SCO General Fund Reserve.

Signature

Date 22/12/2025



	Yes	No
Has legal advice (outside of that provided by the Monitoring Officer) been sought on the content of this report?	✓	
7. Legal Comments: Advice has been sought from the Commercial Team to ensure we are following procurement guidelines.		
8. Risks - please give the details of any operational or strategic risks that are affected by this decision (add risk reference number and title below) n/a		
9. Equality Comments – please attach the completed EIA No issues identified through EIA		
10. Background/supporting paper Report to Chief Officer Team (COT) Meeting 28 November 2025 Zencity Mutual Plan		
Please answer the following questions	Yes	No
11. Public access to information?	✓	
12. Does this decision involve the processing of personal data? (If yes please attach a completed Data Impact Assessment)		✓
13. Is the publication of this form to be deferred? (If yes approx. how long?)		✓
14. Does this form contain commercial or operationally sensitive information which is to be redacted? (If yes, please provide details with the submission of this note)		✓

15. ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Author	Ralph Butler, Director of Performance & Engagement
Signed	<i>RTButler</i>
Date	25 November 2025