

Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services
11th September

Report of the Chief Executive

Review of Partners and Communities Together (P.A.C.T.) meetings.

Purpose of Report

1. To inform select committee of the outcome of the review of P.A.C.T. meetings carried out on behalf of safe and sound, Dudley's community safety partnership.
2. The review steering group was chaired by Ch. Superintendent Peter Monroe, and included members from Community Renewal, the Community Safety Team, the Primary Care Trust (PCT), Dosti as well as other police officers. Their report, in its original format is reproduced below.

Background

3. In 1998, the Government introduced the Crime and Disorder Act (CDA), which placed a statutory obligation on the Police and the local authority to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder within their areas. Contained within the Act under Section 17, both parties were encouraged to exchange information/ intelligence for this purpose.

At that time, the Government also introduced 'Sector' policing to forces across the country. This was centred on dedicated teams of officers having ownership for geographical areas where individual officers had responsibility for certain roads within their area (e.g. micro – beats). Building upon this, 'Neighbourhood Policing' was introduced in 2004, following the Governments white paper, 'Building Communities and Beating Crime'.

In 2004, neighbourhood policing was introduced within West Midlands Police across most OCU's and by 2006, every OCU in the force had dedicated neighbourhood teams set up to deal with local community issues and priorities. The ethos of these teams was that that they would be identifiable, accessible and responsive to localised issues. In order to achieve this, teams would be required to effectively engage with their communities and partners to identify issues and priorities, thus allowing the community to have influence over the decision making process. From this, PACT meetings were established, whereby the police and their partners would work together in resolving local issues, hence their name 'Partners and Communities Together'. The Government mandated that the communities themselves would have a key role in identifying the geographical boundaries of the areas they believed comprised their communities.

4. The Government's National Community Safety Plan (2008-11), sets out how the police and local authorities should work with local partners and residents to make people safer. The plan links into the government's crime strategy and public service agreements. The plan focuses on four key areas, two of which are directly linked to neighbourhood policing and partnership working:
- Improving flexibility so local partners can concentrate on local priorities
 - Increasing community confidence in the safety of their neighbourhoods
 - Addressing the threat to communities from violent extremists
 - Tackling more serious violence

In her foreword for the Community Safety Plan, the Home Secretary Jacqui Smith M.P. said:

"...Improving community safety is something to which a wide variety of organisations and agencies can and must contribute towards. Real gains in tackling crime are achieved through partnership activity, by strengthening community activity, so that people are empowered and engaged and involved in solving problems. Neighbourhood policing is about more than the police alone in meeting the needs of local communities"

The Community Safety Plan and the Crime Strategy Plan talk about how local partnerships must have mechanisms in place for engaging the wider community, in enabling them to feel empowered to influence public body priorities, but also to hold them to account. It also refers to closer links with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP's) and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) whereby community safety challenges and proposed solutions are presented to the wider community, with more transparent decision making processes in place around resource and funding allocations.

In Louise Casey's report to the Government on 'Engaging Communities in fighting crime' (June 2008), one of the proposals she recommends in achieving this, is through the use of PACT meetings. She refers to PACT meetings as 'Partners and Communities Working Together', where a range of stakeholders for an area come together to meet with the community to identify problems and seek solutions.

In Sir Ronnie Flanagan's report on the 'Review of Policing' (2007), one of his recommendations around community safety is:

"Community safety and quality of life issues must be addressed through the development of strong relationships of joint working with local partners...neighbourhood policing is about access, influence, interventions and answers"

In the Government's Green Paper, published this July, titled 'From the Neighbourhood to the National: policing our communities together', references are again made to the Police and local authority working together in addressing local priorities. It reinforces the need for CDRP's and LSP's to work in partnership in setting local priorities, with strong joined up community engagement, with local authority involvement at neighbourhood policing meetings, building on the success of PACT meetings. It refers to communities adopting a neighbourhood management approach to problem solving and goes on to suggest meetings should take place monthly. Community safety is an ever expanding area and it is quite clear the PACT style meetings are the way forward for engaging communities through joint partnership working and current police and local authority targets reflect this.

5. Current Structure of PACT Meetings within the Dudley Borough:-

Pact meetings have been running across the Dudley borough since 2005, having initially been set up on the J1. The focus of these meetings is to address issues of local concern through a joint problem solving, partnership approach.

There are currently 32 police neighbourhoods across the Dudley borough and 31 PACT meetings taking place. The J1's meetings are predominantly held monthly and at alternate times allowing for both day and evening meetings. The vast majority are well attended and chaired by non police representatives and stakeholders from all relevant agencies pertinent to the area attend to problem solve issues. The meeting dates for the year are set in advance and advertised through the police marketing officer and the minutes are circulated to a wider audience both internally and externally.

In contrast, the meetings on the J2 OCU are held quarterly and all are held in the evening. The vast majority are chaired by the police and the meetings are not set in advance and are advertised through the PCSO's. The minutes are not widely circulated and where priority neighbourhood exist, these meetings are attended by the neighbourhood renewal managers. However, there are no other agencies that attend these meetings and any partnership working is carried out outside of the meetings.

Following this review of the PACT meetings, it was evident that there were inconsistencies in how they were delivered across the borough. Some of the inconsistencies could be explained through the fact that the J1 were the pioneers of the meetings and as they have more priority neighbourhoods in comparison to the J2, there is likely to be more representation from partner agencies.

However, despite these inconsistencies, there is some consistency around the priorities identified at the meetings (e.g. ASB, speeding and parking issues). The other consistency centres around attendees, whereby the average age of a person attending a PACT meeting is 40 years or over and the vast majority being of white European background. Although some youth PACT forums have been set up across the borough, it is too early to assess their effectiveness or consider merging them with existing PACT forums. Where there are areas that have a high BME population, there is some representation at the meetings, but again this is in small numbers.

From the priorities that are raised, some outcomes are achieved, albeit not totally resolved and often they address the symptoms as opposed to the root causes. It

would appear that the only priorities from the PACT meetings that are fed back to the JAG meetings are those from priority neighbourhoods. This, therefore, distorts the strategic view of what issues need to be tackled as a priority requiring both resources and funding.

6. The review findings:-

- The vast majority of PACT meetings do not fall in line with Joint Activity Group (J.A.G.) meetings and, therefore, any priorities raised can be retrospective and do not provide a strategic overview of problems/ issues across the borough.
- Due to the limited links to JAG, there is very little intelligence being fed into the council or police tasking process and opportunities to engage the appropriate agencies to respond to the issues are missed.

In its current format, JAG focuses on the PSA 23 target (see footnote at end of report) as well as the six stretch targets and soon to be new generation L.A.A. targets. However, if all of the PACT priorities were fed into this forum in a timely manner, with their limited resources, JAG would not realistically have the capacity to deal with all issues.

- Some priorities raised are low level and specific to a very small group of individuals as opposed to the community at large. In reality, such priorities would conflict with both crime and council statistics.
- There are little or no links to a ward regeneration plan and, in fact, it is questionable as to whether the wider community has an awareness or understanding of such plans.
- Due to the fact that the meetings on J2 are perceived to be the police meetings, they are seen as a forum to discuss individual crime incidents, as opposed to collective community issues.
- Whilst the meetings on J2 are seen as police led, some members of the community as well as stakeholders from both the statutory and voluntary sector feel excluded by their very nature, as they do not feel they have a valid contribution.
- A mapping/ scoping exercise of all current types of meetings held across the borough involving both statutory and voluntary sector, identified that a number of forums already exist where issues of health, housing, the environment, the elderly etc. are currently being addressed. However, representatives at these meetings do not attend either PACT or Area Committee meetings, and therefore opportunities to engage the wider community are being missed.
- Due to the nature of the meetings, there is very little evidence of enabling communities to capacity build and although crime statistics show reductions in total recorded crime across the borough, there is a gap in the perception of the fear of crime and ASB.
- Although Area Committees have a distinct role in terms of addressing service delivery issues with a ward, allocating resources effectively and addressing planning applications, they are also responsible for addressing the key issues contained within a ward regeneration plan. However, as the PACT meetings have little correlation to the latter, there, again, appears to be very limited links to the committees. Area Committees do not link into JAG meetings and some work is being done in isolation as opposed to jointly.
- Elected members are unable to attend all PACT meetings due to the number of meetings, times of some meetings clash with other Council meetings and further problems arise from the lack of co-terminus boundaries. Some felt that although

the meetings were themselves good examples of engaging with the community, the issues raised were not fully addressed and ongoing.

7. The steering group chair wrote to every elected member about the relationship of the P.A.C.T., J.A.G. and Area Committee meetings and, it is fair to say, received a very limited response.
8. The review report above and the proposals which arose from it, were debated at the safe and sound board meeting on Monday 18th August, where it was resolved that a further paper, taking into account the views of various board members, would be considered at the next board meeting in November. The board resolved not to adopt any of the steering groups' proposals at that point, until further work had been carried out. There was general agreement that the practical difficulties regarding boundaries, particularly in relation to service providers, needed to be overcome in order to make our partnership working more effective and streamlined in the future.

Finance

9. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage.

Law

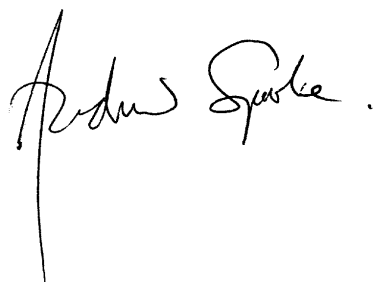
10. There are no legal implications arising from this report at this stage.

Equality Impact

11. This report is in accordance with the council's equality and diversity policy.

Recommendation

12. It is recommended that the committee note the information contained in this report.
13. That a further report be brought before the committee following the considerations and actions decided at the safe and sound November board meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Sparke', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Andrew Sparke
Chief Executive

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Footnote:

(This PSA is broken down into four priority actions, each reflecting the direction of the Crime Strategy:

1. Reduce the most serious violence, including tackling serious sexual offences and domestic violence
2. Continue to make progress on serious acquisitive crime through a focus on the issues of greatest priority in each locality and the most harmful offenders – particularly drug-misusing offenders
3. Tackle the crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour issues of greatest importance in each locality, increasing public confidence in the local agencies involved in dealing with these issues
4. Reduce re-offending through the improved management of offenders.)