



Prosperity Policy Panel

Date: 10th January 2007
Open Report

Report of: Rachel Booton, Scrutiny/ Committee Officer

PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) SCRUTINY REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF BRIEFING PAPER

- 1.1 The aim of the briefing paper is to provide details of the PACT scrutiny review and to make recommendations to the Cabinet.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 North Worcestershire was selected as the West Mercia pilot for the implementation of the National Local Policing Programme, which aims to ensure that every Wyre Forest community will have a Local Policing Team. A key component of the Local Policing Programme included developing improved levels of community engagement and consultation and as a part of this, the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) process was implemented across Wyre Forest. The aim of PACT is for local communities to hold community safety partners to account and to improve performance.
- 2.2 PACT was for "here and now" issues and was not intended to be a strategic process.

3. PACT SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The aim of the PACT scrutiny review was to find out more information about how PACT was run across the District and to find suitable ways to improve the current PACT processes.
- 3.2 The PACT scrutiny exercise was carried out by all Members of the Prosperity Policy Panel. It had originally been set up by the Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel but did not commence until 12th July 2006 under the newly established Prosperity Policy Panel.
- 3.3 The Panel considered the following evidence:
- Report from Chief Inspector Baker
 - Meeting with PACT Panel Chairmen

- Meeting with Chairmen of Tenant Consultative Committees and other local community groups
- Meeting with the Head of Community Leadership, Worcestershire County Council
- Meeting with Inspectors P Davies and K Williamson regarding South Worcestershire PACTs
- Questionnaires to the public attending PACT meetings
- Questionnaire in the Kidderminster Shuttle to members of the public
- Questionnaire to Councillors
- Questionnaire to Stakeholders

4. **ISSUES**

4.1 From the various sources of evidence, the following issues were raised:

5. **PACT PROTOCOL**

5.1 It was noted that many of the Partners involved in PACT did not have a clear understanding of what was expected of the various partners and who the partners were. This issue was highlighted in the questionnaire to stakeholders where many responses confirmed that they were unaware of who other partners were and what the roles of the partners were.

5.2 There had been no clear democratic process in the election of PACT Chairmen and there was a very loose structure to the organisation of PACTs with PACT meetings working in different ways.

5.3 ***RECOMMENDATION***

The PACT policy be reviewed to include a protocol for PACT Panels explaining:

- a. The purpose and process of the Panel, including a list of who the partners in PACT are;***
- b. How the members of the Panel, including the Chairman are appointed and how often this membership should be reviewed. It is suggested that Panel selection should be based upon what the individual can bring to the process;***
- c. The roles and responsibilities of Panel members;***
- d. How often Panel meetings will take place in order to provide a more consistent frequency;***
- e. The circumstances under which a person can be told to leave a meeting.***

- f. PACT, whilst involving partners, is a police led initiative and as such funding must be led from the police*

6. COUNCILLOR INVOLVEMENT

6.1 Regarding the invitation to Councillors to be involved in PACT Panels, there had been issues with inconsistency. Some Councillors had been invited to sit on a PACT Panel in their ward but not all and when inviting Councillors, the Police or Chairmen had not always been aware of political sensitivity.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. Councillors automatically be invited to become members of the PACT panel affecting their Ward or Division.*
- b. While the merits of independent Chairmanship are recognised as being an element of good community leadership, Councillors be eligible for Chairmanship of PACT Panels if necessary.*

7. CONSISTENT POLICE CONTACT AT MEETINGS

7.1 Originally, PACT meetings were attended by the same Police Officers and/or Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) at each meeting. However, in some wards, Police Officers were on sick leave and at some meetings, there was no police presence at all. There was concern that a lack of police presence at PACT meetings could lead to the public being disillusioned by PACT. It was accepted that the public do not regard a PCSO as an acceptable substitute for a Police Officer.

7.2 RECOMMENDATION:

Ensure that there is always a police officer and, if possible, Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) available to attend PACT meetings and where possible, keep the same Police Officer and PCSO to ensure consistency at meetings.

8. CHAIRMAN'S SUPPORT

8.1 It was felt that PACT panel chairmen require support. It was suggested that PACT chairmen should receive briefing material and training. It would also be useful for them to meet other PACT Chairmen across the District to share ideas and information.

It was also noted that as there was no formal administration of PACT meetings, there were no channels of communication between the Chairmen and the partner organisations.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. The Divisional Police Commander for the Wyre Forest District hold a six monthly meeting with PACT Chairmen to review*

progress and share best practice and learning between the Panels. Where appropriate, other partner agencies be invited to attend.

b. Training for the Chairmen of panels be available to support them with their role.

c. PACT Panel membership and contact details be issued to partner organisations to enable communication channels to be developed where appropriate.

d. Where good practice exists, this be shared across PACTs in Worcestershire eg. Via the Community Policing Board.

9. ADMINISTRATION AT MEETINGS

9.1 It was noted that at some PACT meetings, minutes and action lists were circulated but at others, there was little or no administrative support available.

9.2 There was also concern that it could be difficult to see progress made with regard to PACT priorities and the involvement and achievements of Members. It was felt that, as well as chairmen, Members should also receive support in their roles as Community Leaders.

9.2 RECOMMENDATION:

a. There be consistent administrative support for all PACT meetings across the District.

b. An annual report be presented to Cabinet by the PACT Panel Chairmen (with administrative support) charting progress of priorities agreed at PACT meetings and highlighting Council involvement and outcomes achieved.

c. Consideration be given to a Fitness Check that helps build community leadership capacity to support Members in representing and championing a range of communities and to respond to local issues.

10. PUBLICITY AND MEDIA STRATEGY

10.1 One of the most important issues raised during the PACT scrutiny was the publicity of PACT meetings. Some PACT meetings had received excellent publicity through Councillors' newsletters and had been well-attended; others received publicity through the distribution of leaflets by PCSOs. On some occasions, however, leaflets had been delivered outside the correct ward and therefore, there had been poor attendance.

10.2 Members discussed the use of posters and advertisements in the local newspaper, but were all aware of the cost implications. The issue of holding PACT meetings on the same day every couple of months was considered, as this would help people to remember the dates, but many felt

that people would still need reminding closer to the time. Members suggested providing a budget for the publicity of each PACT meeting.

- 10.3 Councillors were also concerned about the negative publicity from articles written in local newspapers after journalists had attended meetings. Often, issues raised at PACT meetings had been misreported. It was questioned whether there could be a media strategy put in place.

10.4 RECOMMENDATION:

- a. Consideration be given to establishing a modest Community Leadership Fund for specific grants to Ward areas to enable the reduction of crime, disorder and quality of life issues to be promoted.*
- b. A Media Strategy be developed to provide a robust framework on all communication matters including pre-publicity of PACT meetings.*

11. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

- 11.1 Due to Members' commitments, it was suggested that PACT meetings be held after 7.30pm so that they would not clash with Council committee meetings.

- 11.2 There was concern that PACT meetings were having an impact on officer time as officers had frequently been asked to attend meetings. This concern had also been highlighted in questionnaires sent to other organisations. and therefore PACT was having an impact on officer time.

11.2 RECOMMENDATION:

- a. To ensure better Councillor attendance at PACT meetings, it is suggested that meetings be held later than 7 pm to avoid clashes with other Council meetings.*
- b. Due to capacity implications, Council Officers will not routinely attend PACT meetings. However if there is a specific issue which requires specialist officer input, this can be provided subject to the agreement of the appropriate Head of Service.*
- c. The frequency of meetings be decided by individual PACT Panels but should allow sufficient time between meetings for issues to be addressed.*

12. BOUNDARY ISSUES

- 12.1 It was highlighted that Police Officers and PCSOs need to be aware of ward boundaries so that the publicity attracts the right people for the ward. There was some concern over demarcation between wards, but it was thought that perhaps County Councillors who have wider areas to cover could address cross border issues.

13. REACHING ALL PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY

- 13.1 Members frequently discussed how to attract minority groups and young people to PACT meetings. South Worcestershire Police have recognised that holding a meeting is not the sole way to engage with the community, as many people are unable or unwilling to attend meetings due to the time or location or through fear of speaking out in front of people. The PACT process in South Worcestershire is more than a meeting structure. It involves surgeries where issues can be reported to the Panel, PCSOs carry out on-street surveys and they have carried out postcard consultations. Issues raised through the various different formats are then brought back to the panel. This helps to reach minority groups and is more representative of society than only holding meetings.
- 13.2 Members listened to the views of Shane Roberts, a Wyre Forest Member of the Worcestershire Youth Cabinet to consider ways in which more young people could be involved in the PACT process. He expressed his disappointment at adults pre-judging young people and thinking that they all behave in the same way. He had not yet attended a PACT meeting as he had been unaware of dates and times. It would therefore be advisable to invite Youth Cabinet Members to take part in PACT meetings so that they can represent young people in the District.

13.3 *RECOMMENDATION:*

- a. Consideration be given to using other methods to reach parts of the community who would not want to attend a meeting, such as on-street surveys etc.***
- b. Youth Cabinet Members be invited to attend their local PACT meetings and their attendance be facilitated so that they can represent young people at the meetings and put forward their views.***

14. WORKING TOGETHER WITH EXISTING COMMUNITY GROUPS

- 14.1 Members heard views from representatives of Tenant Consultative Committees (TCCs) and other local Community Groups regarding PACT meetings and the impact that they had had on local Community Group meetings.
- 14.2 It was noted that PACT was different from urban safety groups such as Community Action Newtown and the Offmore and Comberton Action Group and therefore had not impacted on those meetings. However, there had been an impact on some TCC meetings.
- 14.3 The Community Housing Group had sent their response to the Council's PACT questionnaire saying that the impact on TCCs was a concern as it was a statutory requirement by the Housing Corporation to make contact with tenants and this was done through TCC meetings. It was felt that PACT

and TCCs could still co-exist and that there was potential for TCCs and PACTs to work closely together.

- 14.4 The impact of PACT on other County Council consultation processes was also noted and it was felt that it was inappropriate for sector specific PACT meetings (e.g. the Disability PACT) to be held. Rather, Policing issues should be raised at the County Council Disability and Older Peoples Fora.

14.5 RECOMMENDATION

- a. The Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership be a formal partner in PACT and provide an efficient and effective delivery arm for those matters of a community safety nature.*
- b. Dialogue with existing community groups dealing with community safety / quality of life issues be undertaken by the local Policing team on a regular basis to avoid duplication or clashes with meetings.*
- c. With the exception of schools, sector specific PACT meetings should be abandoned in favour of Police and Councillor attendance at County Council Disabled and Older People's Fora.*

CONCLUSION

Following a thorough scrutiny of PACT, the Prosperity Policy Panel wishes to make the following recommendations in order to maximise effective PACT partnership working, community engagement and accountability for the future development and growth of PACT within the Wyre Forest District.

RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet:

1. Due to capacity implications, Council Officers will not routinely attend PACT meetings. However if there is a specific issue which requires specialist officer input, this can be provided subject to the agreement of the appropriate Head of Service.
2. Consideration be given to establishing a modest Community Leadership Fund for specific grants to Ward areas to enable the reduction of crime, disorder and quality of life issues to be promoted.
3. An annual report be presented to Cabinet by the PACT Panel Chairmen (with administrative support) charting progress of priorities agreed at PACT meetings and highlighting Council involvement and outcomes achieved.
4. Consideration be given to a Fitness Check that helps build community leadership capacity to support Members in representing and championing a range of communities and to respond to local issues.
5. **The Cabinet make the following recommendations to West Mercia Police Constabulary:**

- a) The PACT policy be reviewed to include a protocol for PACT Panels explaining:
 - The purpose and process of the Panel, including a list of who the partners in PACT are;
 - How the members of the Panel, including the Chairman are appointed and how often this membership should be reviewed. It is suggested that Panel selection should be based upon what the individual can bring to the process;
 - The roles and responsibilities of Panel members;
 - How often Panel meetings will take place in order to provide a more consistent frequency;
 - The circumstances under which a person can be told to leave a meeting.
- PACT, whilst involving partners, is a police led initiative and as such funding must be led from the police
- b) Councillors automatically be invited to become members of the PACT panel affecting their Ward or Division.
- c) While the merits of independent Chairmanship are recognised as being an element of good community leadership, Councillors be eligible for Chairmanship of PACT Panels if necessary.
- d) Ensure that there is always a police officer and, if possible, Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) available to attend PACT meetings and where possible, keep the same Police Officer and PCSO to ensure consistency at meetings.
- e) The Divisional Police Commander for the Wyre Forest District hold a six monthly meeting with PACT Chairmen to review progress and share best practice and learning between the Panels. Where appropriate, other partner agencies be invited to attend.
- f) Training for the Chairmen of panels be available to support them with their role.
- g) PACT Panel membership and contact details be issued to partner organisations to enable communication channels to be developed where appropriate.
- h) Where good practice exists, this be shared across PACTs in Worcestershire eg. Via the Community Policing Board.
- i) There be consistent administrative support for all PACT meetings across the District.
- j) A Media Strategy be developed to provide a robust framework on all communication matters including pre-publicity of PACT meetings.

- k) To ensure better Councillor attendance at PACT meetings, it is suggested that meetings be held later than 7pm to avoid clashes with other Council meetings.
- l) The frequency of meetings be decided by individual PACT Panels but should allow sufficient time between meetings for issues to be addressed.
- m) Consideration be given to other forms of reaching parts of the community who would not want to attend a meeting, such as on-street surveys etc.
- n) Youth Cabinet Members be invited to attend their local PACT meetings and their attendance be facilitated so that they can represent young people at the meetings and put forward their views.
- o) The Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership be a formal partner in PACT and provide an efficient and effective delivery arm for those matters of a community safety nature.
- p) Dialogue with existing community groups dealing with community safety / quality of life issues be undertaken by the local Policing team on a regular basis to avoid duplication or clashes with meetings.
- q) With the exception of schools, sector specific PACT meetings should be abandoned in favour of Police and Councillor attendance at County Council Disabled and Older People's Fora.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes of the Prosperity Policy Panel meetings held on:

- ◆ 12th July 2006
- ◆ 6th September 2006
- ◆ 13th September 2006
- ◆ 24th October 2006
- ◆ 6th December 2006
- ◆ Questionnaire responses from the public attending PACT meetings
- ◆ Questionnaire responses from Kidderminster Shuttle readers
- ◆ Questionnaire responses from Councillors
- ◆ Questionnaire responses from Stakeholders

CONSULTEES

Alison Braithwaite, Strategy, Partnerships and Communications Manager

Officer Contact Details:

Rachel Booton
Scrutiny/ Committee Officer

Cabinet 25/01/07

Tel: 01562 732736

Rachel.booton@wyreforestdc.gov.uk