

CABINET

30 NOVEMBER 2010

THE EFFECTIVENESS AND FUTURE OF PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACTs) IN MEDWAY

Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mike O'Brien, Community Safety and Enforcement
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Summary

This report requests Cabinet to consider the recommendations of the review, undertaken by a task group of the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee, into the effectiveness and future of Partners and Communities Together (PACTs) in Medway.

Please note that copies of the Review document have been circulated separately to Cabinet Members, Group Rooms and are also available at the Chatham Contact Point and on the Council's website via <http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=2107&Ver=4>

Further copies are also available from the Cabinet Office. Please contact 01634 332509/332008 for further details.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The council, the Local Strategic Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) have agreed a range of priorities and performance measures against which progress on community engagement and community safety is measured. These are set out in the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy, which is the overarching strategy for Medway, the Council Plan and the Local Area Agreement and the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2009 – 2012 produced and delivered by the CSP.
- 1.2 In each of these documents there is a commitment to the development of the work of PACTs to enable the police and partners to listen and respond to

resident's concerns and in particular involve residents in tackling local crime and anti-social behaviour concerns.

- 1.3 Since the launch of this review, the Local Area Agreement (LAA) has been abolished. However, NI 4 (percentage of people who feel they can influence decision making in their locality) remains a local priority and the task group supports the action under NI 4 to produce PACT data on a quarterly basis.

2. Background

- 2.1 There is no legal obligation on the Police or other members of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to set up and support PACTs. However, the Louise Casey review, "Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime" published in 2008, established the top ten policing approaches that the public want to see. These included continuity in the local policing team and good engagement with the community to identify priorities for action and to give feedback on action and outcomes on cases of greatest community concern.
- 2.2 To meet these expectations the police service agreed to a commitment to "arrange regular public meetings to agree your priorities giving you a chance to meet your local team with other members of your community."
- 2.3 In January 2010 the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a Task Group to undertake a review of the impact and future of PACTs (or Neighbourhood Panels as they are now known) in Medway. PACT stands for Partners and Communities Together and, in practice, provides an opportunity for local people to come together to tell their local policing team, local authority and other partner agencies about the issues causing concern within their neighbourhood and to identify those to be dealt with as a priority. PACTs have evolved as part of the national neighbourhood policing initiative.
- 2.4 At the point of selecting this topic for in-depth review the Committee understood there to be between 20 and 30 active PACT Groups in Medway at any one time.
- 2.5 Councillors expressed an interest in examining:
- the impact and effectiveness of PACTs in comparison to areas without them
 - the issues being raised by PACTs, and the difficulty of the same issues being raised at meetings over time.
 - whether each PACT's priorities were being achieved with long-term benefits to those neighbourhoods and
 - the extent to which information about the activities of, and outcomes from PACTS was being recorded, analysed and acted on.
- 2.6 Around the same time as launching this review the Committee was designated as the Councils crime and disorder committee under the Police and Justice Act

2006 with a new power to review and scrutinise the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the partners who comprise it (insofar as their activities relate to the partnership itself). This is relevant because the majority of PACTs in Medway were initially set up to deal with crime and disorder issues, which the partners who make up the CSP are collectively seeking to tackle together

through the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2009-2012. The responsible authorities represented on the Community Safety Partnership are now under an obligation to respond to reports from the Committee and to have regard to associated recommendations.

3. Key findings

3.1 The following summarises the main findings of the review under each heading of the terms of reference agreed for the review:

3.2 Provision of PACTS in Medway and best practice within Medway and/or elsewhere

3.2.1 Overall the task group believe PACTs are a good way of bringing residents together to develop priorities and action plans at neighbourhood level alongside other opportunities for community engagement currently on offer. The Task Group has been impressed by the commitment and energy shown by residents who are taking part in the active PACTs across Medway.

3.2.2 The Task Group has made several recommendations relating to the capture of information about PACTs, the analysis and reporting of this information and the guidelines available to residents wishing to set up panels.

3.2.3 In addition it has been established that PACT chairmen would welcome a facilitated opportunity to meet and network and that more could be done to mentor and support new chairmen.

3.3 The difficulty of the same issues being raised at meetings over time and whether each scheme's priorities are being achieved and maintained and if not, why not.

3.3.1 Although there is no documented overview of the issues and outcomes arising from PACTs, the Task Group's investigations have established a general consensus that they are a useful mechanism to target and address a particular problem. They may then go on to develop a wider role but it seems sensible to periodically review the purpose and effectiveness of PACTs to validate the case for ongoing support to be provided by police and other agencies.

3.3.2 The Task Group is firmly of the view that feedback should be provided to the whole community in a PACT area about priorities, action and outcomes generated by PACTs and not just to those who attend the panel meetings. This would assist all residents to understand why some problems prove to be particularly intractable and what has been done to resolve some problems.

- 3.3.3 The Task Group recommends that analysis of the effectiveness of PACTs should be taking place with regular reports to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.
- 3.4 The benefits and disadvantages of PACT schemes and engagement of partners in the process, especially when compared to areas not covered by a scheme and whether they really benefit the communities involved.
- 3.4.1 Again the Task Group had some difficulty in reaching a considered view on this because of the absence of any comparative information or analysis of the effectiveness of PACTs locally.
- 3.4.2 However the Task Group believes PACTs should continue alongside other types of community engagement in order to give people different opportunities to attend whatever type of forum suits them best. There may be a case for differing formats for PACT meetings.
- 3.4.3 The Task Group is recommending the development of some guidance and a protocol for PACTs to assist residents and partners to understand their purpose and to establish some the basic operational standards.
- 3.4.4 The task group also recognises that PACTs may not be the way that some groups (for example, young people) wish to have a voice and that it is important to continue to offer a range of engagement options.
- 3.5 Do PACTS provide value for money and assist with delivery of LAA indicator NI 4 (%of people who feel they can influence decision-making in their locality)?
- 3.5.1 Since the launch of this review the Local Area Agreement (LAA) has been abolished and the Place Survey for 2010 cancelled. However, NI4 remains a local priority and the Task Group supports the action under NI4 seeking to produce PACT data on a quarterly basis.
- 3.5.2 The Task Group wishes to emphasise the importance of periodically reviewing the activities of each PACT to validate the case for ongoing support from the police and other agencies.
- 3.5.3 PACTs should also be reaching out to under-represented groups and encouraging their participation. In particular the Task Group supports the suggestion of encouraging involvement by young people in PACT meetings or the establishment of separate PACTs specifically for young people.
- 3.6 Possible future work activities for PACT schemes.
- 3.6.1 The Task Group recommends ongoing and strengthened support for PACTS alongside development of some guidelines and a protocol covering best practice in operational arrangements with an express expectation they will work to include a wide cross-section of local residents.

4. Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 16 November 2010

- 4.1 The Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 16 November 2010 and considered the task group's conclusions and recommendations.
- 4.2 The committee reviewed the map and list of PACTs produced by the task group, and expressed the view that there were further PACTs in Medway that should be included. The Chairman of the Task Group responded that this was a finding of the review – that there was no definitive list of PACTs in Medway and because the police, public and councilors all referred to them differently, it had been extremely difficult to gather the information.
- 4.3 Members were enthusiastic about asking the Community Safety Partnership to progress the idea of Youth PACTs and thought this was an excellent way forward. Some Members also asked about how to form a PACT, as their ward did not have one. Officers responded that PACTs were formed when a local issue became such that the police and/or council wanted to liaise with the local community and agree ways to deal with it. Each ward would not necessarily have a PACT unless there were issues that required one to be formed.
- 4.4 The committee agreed the recommendations as set out in the review document.

5. Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.1 As this review does not relate to a change to a council policy nor does it contain proposals to change a service provided by the council, there is no requirement to complete a Diversity Impact Assessment Form.
- 5.2 However, during the review Members were mindful of the need for PACTs to enable full community engagement and paragraph 7 of the draft review document recommends a referral to the council's Equalities and Cohesion Group and other recommendations about full public inclusion.

6. Proposals

- 6.1 It is proposed that the attached draft review document is referred to the Kent Police Authority and the Community Safety Partnership for consideration.

7. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Some residents may not have an opportunity to shape policing and other local priorities because they do not know about, or do not want to attend PACT meetings.	In some cases the views of a small minority of vocal residents, or people with a specific cause, may prevail at PACT meetings with little or no opportunity for input by the wider community.	The Task Group acknowledges that people want a range of different opportunities and methods for community engagement and recommends measures to support PACTs to encourage wide and representative participation.
Community not receiving or understanding feedback from PACT meetings	It is important that the whole community should have access to information about the activities of their local PACT.	The Task Group recommends that the CSP should support PACTs to publicise meetings, priorities agreed and progress on achieving outcomes.
Varying formats for PACT meetings without regard to best practice guidance	Many PACTs rely on their Chairmen or members to produce and distribute posters and information and meeting formats vary widely.	The Task Group is recommending the production of a protocol and guidance to support PACTs to operate in line with best practice and basic operational standards.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications for the council within the review document.

9. Legal implications

9.1 The Police and Justice Act 2006 introduced a new power to every local authority requiring them to have a designated crime and disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee with power to make recommendations regarding the functioning of their local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (in Medway this is the Community Safety Partnership) and the partners who comprise it (insofar as their activities relate to the partnership itself). The Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee became the council's 'crime and disorder committee' from 30 April 2009.

- 9.2 The responsible authorities represented on the Community Safety Partnership are now under an obligation to respond to reports from the committee and to have regard to associated recommendations.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 The Cabinet is asked to support the recommendations below and agree to refer the review document, incorporating these recommendations, to the Community Safety Partnership and the Kent Police Authority for consideration:

1. That the CSP should be asked to accelerate action to establish a database of PACTs, the areas they cover and contact details for each should be produced and published ward by ward;
2. A protocol and guidance for PACTs in Medway should be produced by the CSP in consultation with PACT chairmen, to include a clear statement of purpose, basic operational standards and advice on how to access support and resources;
3. A toolkit should be developed by the CSP to assist PACT Chairman and neighbourhood teams to run meetings, record priorities, actions and outcomes;
4. The protocol for PACTs should include a requirement that Councillors are automatically invited to become members of any PACT within their ward and provided with sufficient notice of meetings;
5. Consideration should be given to facilitating contact between PACT Chairmen by establishing a Medway-wide Forum to enable them to share experience and best practice and to coordinate priorities across wards;
6. As part of its annual scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be provided by the CSP with an update on PACTs, including the priorities, actions and outcomes from them on a ward by ward basis with some evaluation of effectiveness;
7. That the CSP should develop some analysis and comparative information to assist in evaluating the impact of PACTs and other forms of public engagement on the incidence of crime and anti social behaviour ward by ward with a view to providing this information in the quarterly news ward profile information provided to Councillors;

8. That the CSP should recommend the Police to continue to fund support for PACTs and extend this to the development of evaluation and analysis of their effectiveness in line with commitment made in the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Community Safety Plan;
9. That the Equalities and Cohesion Group should be asked to support the CSP in developing guidance to encourage and achieve participation by the widest cross section of people;
10. In addition to ongoing publication of PACT data there should be an opportunity for local residents to periodically provide feedback on the operation of their local PACT and, in particular, the extent to which they feel able to influence decision-making at meetings;
11. That the CSP should encourage and support each PACT to hold an 'open meeting' (with no issues pre-arranged for discussion) specifically to involve local young people and neighbours of different ages and/or ethnic background in order to gain a real understanding of the issues and priorities for those groups;
12. That the CSP should be asked to progress the idea of Youth PACTs with membership invited from every secondary school, and the Youth Parliament;
13. The CSP is recommended to invite all partners to review their community engagement strategies and the groups and organisations they support to eliminate duplication and maximise the use of, and support for, PACTs where possible and appropriate;
14. That the CSP should be invited to consider launching a Medway annual PACT recognition award scheme to help raise the public profile of PACTs, particularly in the local press;
15. That the CSP Media Officer should be asked to develop some guidelines and offer practical support to PACTs with production and publication of advertising material for meetings.

11. Suggested reasons for decision

- 11.1 The review identified that overall PACTs work well and are a good way of bringing residents together to develop priorities and action plans at neighbourhood level alongside other opportunities for community engagement currently on offer. However, the purpose of the recommendations are designed to progress the areas that could benefit from improvement or development to PACTs, to allow meaningful analysis of the priorities and outcomes of each PACT and to facilitate contact between PACT Chairmen to establish best practice in Medway.

Background papers

Police and Justice Act 2006

Community Safety Partnership Plan 2009 – 2012

Medway Sustainable Community Strategy

Council Plan 2010 - 2013

Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime (June 2008)

Policing in the 21st Century: reconnecting police and the people

The Coalition: our programme for government

NI 4 Action Plan (% of people who feel they can influence decision-making in their locality)

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