

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 October 2006.

Present:

Councillor	John Appleton
"	David Booth
"	Gordon Collett
"	Richard Chattaway (Chair)
"	Michael Doody
"	John Haynes
"	Barry Longden
"	Mike Perry
"	Dave Shilton
"	Heather Timms
"	John Wells (Vice Chair)

Officers:

Monica Fogarty, Head of Change Management, Performance and Development Directorate.

Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.

Peter Hunter, Area Manager, Partnership and Communities, Performance and Development Directorate.

Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer, Community Protection Directorate.

Kate Nash, Community Safety Manager, Community Protection Directorate.

Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

Also Present: CS David Whitehouse and CI Tim Bailey

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

None

(2) Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as follows –

The following Members declared personal interests arising by virtue of them serving as district/borough councillors as listed below:

Stratford-on Avon District Council – Councillors Gordon Collett and John Appleton

Warwick District Council - Councillors Michael Doody and Dave Shilton

2. Public Questions

Chris Edgerton expressed concern about the lack of Police enforcement of parking around his local school entrance gates and the obstruction caused by vehicles being parked on the pavement and asked what the Police were doing to address this problem.

CS David Whitehouse in reply to Mr. Edgerton acknowledged that this was a local, persistent, problem that could be addressed by working with the school and parents but longer-term measures including a review of parking restrictions around the school. In terms of Police priorities this problem was not a high priority. CS Whitehouse undertook to discuss the details of Mr. Edgerton's complaint outside the meeting.

3. Safer Neighbourhoods

CS David Whitehouse referred to the presentations he had made to the Area Committees explaining the background to this Government initiative whereby Community Safety Policing would be introduced nationally by 2008. In Warwickshire it was proposed that 31 Community Safety Teams would be set up across the County by 1st November 2006. Recruitment of Community Support Police Officers (CSPO) was currently taking place with the aim that the teams would be up to a full complement of 124 (from 63) by April 2008 with the possibility of this number increasing to 187 CPSOs.

He then addressed the Committee on "Community engagement", which was the next stage of the Safer Neighbourhoods Policing Programme, the aim of which was to build communities where people were actively involved in developing their community. This would involve communities and public organisations working together to bring about change by identifying and meeting the communities' needs (presentation material attached). The five recommended community engagement methods were –

- PACT (Partners & Communities Together) Meetings
- Surgeries
- Environmental Visual Audits
- Face to face surveys/interviews
- Consultation postcards

CS Whitehouse added that individual districts could tailor their PACT surgeries to existing structures e.g. Rugby DC had 5 electoral divisional panels, North Warwickshire had 4 Area Forums, Stratford 4 Area Committees. Nuneaton and Bedworth had 8 policing teams and were looking to pilot the scheme in the Stockingford and Whitestone areas.

Monica Fogarty presented the proposals for locality working (presentation material attached) and highlighted –

- Drivers for Locality Working – which included addressing the perception of the County Council being a remote organisation.
- Progress so far – Customer Service and Access, locality pilots, shaping of local forums and mapping (addressing the anomalies in some areas where there was an overlap of Ward/Divisions and policing areas).
- What was happening next – identifying and resolving the anomalies where the map does not fit; looking at other models of community engagement and working with partners on the governance of locality working.
- Issues – What model of community engagement works best? One size would not fit all; the role of society and the ‘Call for Action’ (Community Groups being able to call the Police to account).

During discussion Members expressed concern about Neighbourhood Policing not solving or addressing problems, which were of long standing and currently existed in their communities. Other Members said that Community Police teams had already been successful in their areas and welcomed the initiative. Members’ concerns included –

- The Area Committees’ comments that PACTs would not work, overloaded Members with additional work, raised expectations in the community that could not be fulfilled and lack of clarity about how the priorities agreed at PACT meetings would be delivered.
- The need for PCSOs to be supported by Police Officers. Members commented that PCSOs currently did an excellent job.
- If Neighbourhood Police Teams were identifying local priorities what would happen to cross boundary burglaries?
- That November was too soon for the launch of Neighbourhood Policing Teams and PACTs.
- The need to address the public’s perception about the lack of Police response to emergency calls and the need to improve communication with the Police.
- Many of the initiatives had been tried before and had not improved matters.
- The fear of crimes was still perceived to be a high priority in the community and frustration with the Police.

In reply to concerns and questions David Whitehouse expressed concern about Members' negative response and said he hoped that they would view this initiative in a positive and supportive manner. He added that –

- (1) Neighbourhood policing was a national programme promoted by the Government and would enable resources to be deployed to where there was most need;
- (2) Preliminary work on locating two pilot schemes in the north of the county was being well received;
- (3) £250k had been allocated to all areas to fund this initiative;
- (4) There was currently 1500 officers on the Police establishment and of these 105 Police Officers, 125 CPSOs and 20 sergeants would be dedicated to the Neighbourhood Policing Scheme. The remaining officers would be available to respond to the more serious crimes. Previously, abstraction of officers from Community Teams, when emergencies arose was a problem. In the future, however, if this happened there was a mechanism to scrutinise the frequency and reason why the abstractions had occurred.
- (5) He acknowledged that teams covering rural did have a greater area to cover than those in the town but said that these teams would not be used in 1st response situations.
- (6) Community Teams would improve communication and information sharing between the Police and the community. An information sharing protocol had been agreed to deal with local intelligence received by CPSOs and in some areas two weekly information bulletins had been produced. Each household would be sent a booklet informing residents all they needed to know about police work in their community with contact details for all areas. Police Officers in Community Police Teams would be employed on a 2-year tenancy.
- (7) National call standards and protocols for the Police had been agreed but there was a problem in terms of the volume of telephone calls received.

Kate Nash said that raising expectations was a difficult issue and needed to be worked at in partnership with the Police. Not all issues raised at PACT meetings would be Police issues and how these were dealt with needed to be addressed in addition to managing raised expectations.

Further discussion followed during which Members enquired about the organisation and practical management issues of PACT meetings and how the priorities would be managed. Further questions were put about how Neighbourhood Policing and PACT meetings would fit in with Local Area Agreements and on the future of Area Committees following the County Council modernisation.

In response Monica Fogarty explained that the details of how these new initiatives would operate were complex and involved some 21 organisations, and still needed to be worked out. Whatever mechanisms were established they would need to be tailored to the structures that currently existed in each area and respond to a range of priorities. ACC Andy Parker was in charge of co-ordinating the Safer Communities element of LAAs and linking in with PACT priorities. LAAs would become a vehicle for scrutinising partner organisations performance but how this would be undertaken was yet to be determined.

With regard to Area Committees Members were told that there were no plans to change Area Committees but this did not mean that in the future their role would not need to be looked at to ensure that they reflected the needs of the community. Members' views would, however, be sought if this situation arose.

In conclusion the Chair thanked CS David Whitehouse, CI Tim Bailey and Monica Fogarty for attending the meeting and he acknowledged the strength of feeling felt by Members. He commented that –

- (1) Neighbourhood Policing and LAAs were the way forward and had been funded by the Government;
- (2) PACTs would be tailored to each area and that there was a need to establish what currently worked in each area and build on existing structures;
- (3) The expertise of the County Council was fundamental to management of these initiatives particularly how to engage and co-ordinate 21 different organisations and this was where elected Members could help.
- (4) The barrier of Members' negativity needed to be broken down to enable these initiative to work.

The Committee –

- (1) Asked that the notes of this meeting should be referred to the Leaders Liaison Group and the Police;
- (2) Invited CS David Whitehouse to attend a future meeting of the Committee in 6 months time to report on progress of Neighbourhood Policing.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 4:20 p.m.

