

**PACT MEETINGS 2008****Report By: PACT Organiser****Wards Affected**

Countywide

**Purpose**

1. To provide the Committee with a position report of the newly restyled Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings.

**Financial Implications**

2. None.

**Background**

3. At the last meeting, Members requested that a position report regarding the PACT meetings be provided to the Committee. The eighth round of the new style meetings started on 3rd November, with 12 meetings running throughout the month. Since the first round of PACT meetings in November 2006, a number of changes have been made, and are outlined in this paper.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT subject to any comments which Members may wish to make, the report be noted.**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None Identified



## **PACT MEETINGS: CURRENT POSITION AS AT 25 NOVEMBER 2008**

### **History**

1. The eighth round of new-style PACT meetings started on 3 November, with 12 meetings running throughout the month of November. Since the first round of PACT meetings in November 2006, a number of changes have been made:
  - They are now called PACT meetings, rather than Community Forums;
  - Meetings are badged as Herefordshire Partnership and are managed and co-ordinated through the partnership team;
  - The number of meetings has increased from the original six to twelve over a period of time. The Working Group steering and developing the PACTs keeps this under constant review;
  - Meetings are chaired by a mix of elected members and independent volunteers from organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses and Community First. This approach has proved to be popular with those attending.
  - There is regular attendance by officers in the Environment Directorate, who try to answer questions on the night.
  - Herefordshire Partnership team members may also attend, and there is a move to make the meetings more a two-way communication mechanism, providing information on subjects such as parish planning and other issues of interest to the community

### **Current position**

2. Attendance remains around 15 to 20 people on average at each meeting. However, PACT meetings are just one element in a programme of community involvement initiatives. Others are conducted under the West Mercia Constabulary PACT initiative and some are general council consultations and involvement activities. Lately, these have increasingly, been coordinated between the Council and the PCT, due to the Council's Senior Community Involvement Officer's temporary appointment as manager of the PALS/Involving People Team of the PCT. PACT meetings also complement Town and Parish Council meetings and other community meetings. Seen in this context, PACT meetings reach an estimated 180 - 240 people every quarter who might otherwise not be reached.
3. In May 2008, Members were invited to attend a seminar to bring them up to date with current developments and to provide an opportunity for them to discuss their views and put forward ideas for making the meetings more relevant to their constituents.
4. More partners and organisations are gradually becoming involved in the PACT process, for example, representatives of Housing Associations and the Fire and Rescue Authority. We also expect that the PCT will become involved in due course (although other health forums exist).
5. More than half the issues raised at PACT meetings relate to Council Services, and most of the Council issues relate to the Environment and Culture Directorate. Most of these issues are taken back to the Environment Directorate for response at the next meeting, although often the issues have to be added to existing lists of outstanding work. Because the police generally are able to respond to questions on the night, or undertake to deal with issues personally, this can raise expectations that the Council can also respond instantly to issues raised and there is work to be done to inform communities about how the Council provides services.

6. There is clearly a role for ward Members attending the PACT meetings to explain Council policies and manage the expectations of those attending the meetings. In response to members' concerns, there is now provision for presentations at the PACT meetings, providing an opportunity to improve public perceptions and understanding.

#### The future

7. The Working Group continues to develop the meetings on the basis of experience. Issues to be addressed in the coming months are:
- Responding to Members' suggestions and developing PACT meetings in a way that encourages public engagement with their elected members, and, in particular, offering elected members the opportunity to 'commission' short, locally relevant presentations at the beginning of the PACT meetings to ensure that we can pass on information to local people;
  - Developing the system of action sheets to improve the quality of responses;
  - Targeting PACT publicity to improve effectiveness and reduce costs, including having an annual schedule of PACT meetings across the County which will enable publicity through Parish and Community newsletters
  - Exploring the possibility of running PACT meetings during the day where appropriate or in locations where a captive audience exists (e.g. in local schools at the end of the school day)

The above needs to be seen also in the context of the 'duty to involve' (Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) and the emergence of the Herefordshire Partnership Engagement Framework, which sees PACTs amongst a range of other involvement activities provided by partners within the Herefordshire Partnership.

8. Figures for attendance and an analysis of issues:

	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Average per PACT</b>
<b>Nov 06</b>	252	28
<b>Feb 07</b>	160	18
<b>May/Jun 07</b>	158	18
<b>Sept 07</b>	253	21
<b>Jan/Feb 08</b>	338	28
<b>Apr/May 08</b>	147	12
<b>Jul/Aug 08</b>	128	11
	<b>1,436</b>	<b>19</b>