

MEETING:	COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	28 JUNE 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	PACT MEETINGS - UPDATE
PORTFOLIO AREA:	Economic Development and Community Services

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Purpose

To consider progress and updates in relation to PACTs following a report received by the Committee on 12 December 2008.

Recommendation

THAT:

- (a) **the update on PACTs be noted and the intention to review the future operation and purpose of these meetings as part of agreeing an engagement framework for Herefordshire Partnership.**

Introduction and Background

1. The Community Services Scrutiny Committee received a report at its meeting on 12 December 2008 explaining how PACTs had been introduced as a replacement for Community Forums and a means of engaging the community with elected members and public sector service providers.
2. Members raised a number of concerns and issues in relation to PACT meetings, particularly around the level of involvement from West Mercia Police, the venues used, the action sheets and attendance by senior Council Officers. The Committee agreed a series of recommendations as follows:
 - (a) A key senior officer was needed within the Council and its partner organisations to focus the work of the PACTs and ensure they reported in a timely fashion.
 - (b) Consideration should be given to restructuring the content of the meetings, with greater engagement from Town and Parish Councils.
 - (c) Consideration should be given to the name of the meeting in order to make it more approachable.
3. PACTs have been a formal part of Herefordshire Partnership's structure since 2007. The terms of reference state that the purpose of PACTs is to enable an ongoing dialogue between local residents, businesses and public service providers in order to improve delivery of services across Herefordshire; ensuring that local communities and local people are able to input into the decisions that have an effect on their quality of life.
4. Administrative support for PACTs transferred from Democratic Services to the Partnership Support team in February 2010. A partnership steering group is in place which co-ordinates

the logistical arrangements for each round of meetings and ensures individual organisations are involved and supporting the process. Membership of this group comprises representatives from various Council departments (Community Safety, Democratic Services, Chief Executives, Parish Liaison), NHS Herefordshire, West Mercia Police, Amey and more recently HALC. The group is supported by Herefordshire Partnership support team.

Key Considerations

5. Herefordshire Partnership agreed earlier in 2010 that the form and function of PACTs will be reviewed as part of developing the Herefordshire Partnership engagement framework. The intention is to confirm through this framework their purpose and how they are supported. In the intervening time the schedule of meetings for 2010 will continue.
6. Work commenced on developing the engagement framework in April with the intention of concluding in December. A Local Improvement Advisor has been appointed by the partnership through the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership to assist in taking this piece of work forward. Part of their remit is to test the effectiveness of existing partnership engagement structures and also how they connect to other mechanisms.
7. Recent informal analysis of the January/February PACT meetings evidences that some of the recommendations from the Scrutiny meeting in December in relation to input from senior officers in the Council and its partners has improved. A representative from JMT attends each meeting and there is regular input from Amey, Herfordshire Housing (or other relevant registered social landlord) and the Community Protection Team. In addition, attendance by Parish Councils in a large number of areas is consistent, albeit generally from the surrounding areas of the venue.
8. Strong Police presence and the various Police organised events throughout the year badged as PACT still give the feeling to partners and the community that the meetings are not a wider partnership forum.
9. Community attendance is variable depending on current local issues – it ranged from 3-25 people at the January/February meetings (excluding Parish Councillors/Clerks). The presentations from Herefordshire Council about the 2010 budget were received very positively in all areas and generated a good level of debate and discussion.
10. Herefordshire Partnership recognises that it needs a forum in communities that works with elected members and community leaders and provides an opportunity for the wider community to hold to account public sector service providers. The current format of PACTs is not wholly satisfactory in this regard.
11. Over the remainder of 2010, the Partnership will agree how PACTs should operate in the future to ensure they meet the needs of Herefordshire Partnership, and their relationship with other engagement mechanisms is defined. Another important consideration is the central government drive around localities and the local priority to make public services more accessible.
12. Reaching the Hearts of Herefordshire is linked in to the development of the wider partnership engagement framework to ensure complementarity, avoid duplication, and make the best use of resources. The 4 pilot areas demonstrated the role of elected members as community leaders, and worked with community representatives and service providers to test ways of working differently to improve the quality of people's lives. The main difference between this approach and that of PACTs is that Hearts takes a longer term view of the area rather than picking up and dealing with one off issues.
13. Herefordshire Council is sharing the lessons learnt, good practice and successes from this initiative with Herefordshire Partnership to inform the development of the partnership engagement framework and subsequent partnership specific engagement forums.