



Lancashire
Constabulary
police and communities together

REPORT TO: STRATEGIC SCRUTINY MEETING

DATE: Tuesday 24 March 2015

AGENDA ITEM: 3

SUBJECT: Police and Communities Together (PACT)

PACT is one of the cornerstones of Neighbourhood Policing and pivotal to Lancashire Constabulary's engagement process. It allows communities to make contact with their local Neighbourhood Policing Team (NHPT) in a variety of ways.

PACT encourages people to engage with the Constabulary and truly influence what neighbourhood or local priorities should be. Going forward, the Constabulary is committed to maintaining neighbourhood policing and expanding the PACT philosophy of engagement, in order to ensure maximum accessibility for all people within our communities.

Having been established in Lancashire for many years, the Constabulary's PACT approach was reviewed in 2011, as part of a wider review of Neighbourhood Policing delivery. At that time, the recommendation was to scope a 'flexi-PACT' approach that better suited the needs of the local community. In short, it was recognised that the old, rigid PACT rules did not serve us well as our communities changed.

The aim was for PACT to become more flexible, with the emphasis being shifted towards a continual engagement process rather than simply a scheduled monthly meeting. NHPTs were empowered and enabled to determine the best forms of engagement for their own ward areas.

Throughout 2014, the three territorial divisions have reassessed their approach to PACT. NHPTs have reviewed meetings that are not well attended and are replacing them with alternative methods of engagement; this includes merger with existing community meetings where appropriate, to ensure that our local teams have meaningful communication and feedback from their communities.

In late 2014, some NHPTs commenced trials running some of their community engagement on Facebook. They quickly found that this was most successful when it was run over a wider footprint than an individual ward; this was mainly due to the fact that the Facebook pages have been set up for an area based on towns / teams so it is almost inevitable that those who would see this taking place would be from a larger area. Using Facebook, the Chorley NHPT is regularly getting around 1,500 views and 20-30 questions or comments on their meeting post.

Facebook, whilst popular, is of course a closed channel and relies on people having a Facebook account and being available at the time of the meeting to participate. The Constabulary is therefore looking at ways to have a more inclusive way of delivering online meetings, using services that combine the best of both physical and online meetings.

The Constabulary is in the process of setting up Google Hangouts to use for PACT meetings, where it can have a physical meeting that is then streamed live and can be viewed by the public, either using Google (if the person has an account), or YouTube which can be accessed without an account. The public can view the meeting live in person or via the internet, or watch a recording at a later time on YouTube.

This approach has been piloted successfully in West Midlands where they increased their participation from around 28 people at 4 physical meetings to around 1500 at these hybrid meetings. Google Hangouts can also be used as a platform for single issue events and broadcasting information, such as witness appeals.

Divisions will identify six pilot areas to try this type of meeting, which will commence in April / May 2015. They will have different footprints, some in single wards and some across larger areas, to test a number of different approaches. An evaluation will take place after three months to see if there is an appetite from both the public and officers for this type of engagement, and to determine how it is best implemented.

Following the pilots, the Constabulary will take advantage of the facility to utilise corporate and single issue broadcasting; this effectively offers the opportunity to deliver the Constabulary's messages direct to the public, without relying on traditional media.

With future changes to Neighbourhood Policing being inevitable, it should be highlighted that, though the Constabulary is not reducing the current 268 CBMs and 335 PCSOs, the changes that are proposed to immediate response will have a significant impact on the capacity of NHP staff to engage as they have done in the past. As the model of delivery evolves, the necessity to find more effective ways of engagement that are less time consuming will be key.

At this time there is no desire to discontinue PACT, however, as the CBM role evolves, the capacity to undertake the existing range of engagement activities may come under pressure. The PACT responsibility may shift towards PCSOs with a move to more digital engagement where appropriate and necessary.

The futures work, under the 'one team approach' will be listening to feedback from the current 'Local Policing Area' pathfinder projects to understand the feasibility of all engagement activity and to consider options for the future.

Background Papers

None

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