



# DEVELOPING COMMUNITY SAFETY LOCALITY WORK IN READING



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### 1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consult on a new structure that aligns the 7 Safer Community Forums (Forums) with the 13 Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGS), and in so doing rationalise the existing structure and remove a significant amount of duplication.

### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That following endorsement from the Safer Reading Campaign on the proposals laid out at 4.15-4.29 of this report, that this report is then taken to the next round of NAG / Forum meetings.
- 2.2 Following the above consultation a report will come back to the Safer Reading Campaign for approval. This will then need to be endorsed by both Thames Valley Police and Reading Borough Council through the appropriate route including Cabinet or Full Council.

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Reading has a long and well respected tradition (over twenty five years) of partnership work between the Police, the Council, other key agencies and most notably the wider community in locality based responses to crime reduction and community safety.
- 3.2 This approach has always been predicated on the clear and collective understanding that sustained improvements in community safety and crime reduction can only be achieved through a partnership approach that is well resourced, consistent, well organised and properly marketed.
- 3.3 Back in 1996, well in advance of the Crime & Disorder Act, a wide cross section of organisations (lead by the Police and the Council) took the important step of formalising the above into the Safer Reading Campaign. The public facing arm of this campaign was and is the Forums (there are currently 7 that cover the Borough).
- 3.4 In the last two years, this work has been augmented by the welcome arrival of Neighbourhood Policing. As well as providing much needed extra Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers, Neighbourhood Policing has also seen the introduction of 13 Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGS) that currently cover the Borough.
- 3.5 There is an emerging, widely held view that the time is right for the above structures to be reviewed and this report sets out a proposed way forward.

## 4. THE PROPOSAL

### A) CURRENT SITUATION

#### NAGs

- 4.1 There are currently 16 Neighbourhood Policing Areas (in 5 separate sectors - North, South, East, West and Reading Central) and out of this structure 13 NAGs were established between April 07 to April 08.

These groups aim to meet monthly, resulting in potentially 156 meetings per year.

- 4.2 Whilst the merits of such coverage and frequency were recognised from the outset, it was also felt that this huge undertaking might not be viable and would be difficult to sustain.

- 4.3 Over the past couple of years some encouraging partnership work and problem solving has been undertaken and in some, but not all areas, the NAGs have proved to be a popular and important element of locality working.

- 4.4 However, it is also recognised that the role out of the NAGs has resulted in an uneven approach across the Borough and with the ongoing prospect of servicing and maintaining up to 156 meetings per year, there needs to be the scope for developing a new approach.

- 4.5 The NAGs are serviced by the Thames Valley Police, most notably the Area Inspectors. In addition, there are two part-time support workers who provide administrative support.

The NAGs will also be able to access revenue monies of £50k agreed by the Council to support promotion and marketing. This resource will ease a number of resourcing and consistency issues (i.e. a newsletter for every NAG, rather than just a couple).

- 4.6 In terms of resourcing up to 156 meetings a year, it has proved problematic for all concerned to ensure good levels of participation at the meetings, and this is likely to be an issue into the future.

#### FORUMS

- 4.7 Established in the mid 1990s, there are currently 7 Safer Community Forums that cover the Borough.

- 4.8 These Forums have the ability to set up small 'problem solving' groups, either on a themed basis (addressing a particular crime type) or geographically (dealing with a 'hotspot' area).
- 4.9 The Forum and NAG geography is broadly aligned and there is a reasonable, but patchy degree of synergy between them. The majority of the forum attendees also attended their NAG equivalent and in some cases more than one NAG.
- 4.10 The Forums meet quarterly and have sometimes been regarded as being difficult to access and owing to the infrequency of the meeting not been sufficiently responsive to the needs of the communities covered.
- 4.11 The Safer and Stronger Communities Unit services the 7 forums. This work is undertaken by two part-time Neighbourhood Project Officers, who also project manage a number of crime reduction initiatives and have a wealth of problem solving expertise. Their main responsibility is to work alongside local people and the co-ordination of agencies in tackling issues raised through the forums or by the wider community.
- 4.12 As well as linking in with the NAGs they also feed the officer run Anti-Social Behaviour Action Groups (ASBAGS) with issues to resolve and whenever possible work alongside the local police crime reduction adviser.
- 4.13. These project officers, on behalf of the forums, also manage and spend the £80,000 capital budget that has been established to help design out crime through target hardening measures, such as lighting, gating and a range of diversion measures for young people.

## The Proposal

### b) The Proposed Option

- 4.15 That we consult with the members of the current Forums and NAGS (at their next round of meetings) on a proposed structure that combines the best of the two fora.
- 4.16 That this approach will acknowledge the long-standing nature and commitment to the Forums and align it with the more recent emphasis on Neighbourhood Policing / Management that is exemplified by the NAGS.
- 4.17 That we retain the existing areas covered by the current NAGS, with one proposed alteration being that we use the current Forum boundaries of Tilehurst / Kentwood and Norcot / Southcote to give us a total of twelve groups going forward.

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Caversham North & West    | 7. Newtown               |
| 2. Lower Caversham           | 8. Redlands & University |
| 3. Oxford Road North & South | 9. Whitley North         |
| 4. Norcot / Southcote        | 10. Whitley South        |
| 5. Tilehurst / Kentwood      | 11. Katesgrove           |
| 6. Coley                     | 12. Reading Central      |

- 4.18 That these new groups should meet once every two months and are renamed as either:

Partnerships & Communities Together (PACT)  
[Working for a Safer Reading]

or

Police & Communities Together (PACT)  
[Working for a Safer Reading]

- 4.19 That the Community Safety Team, currently located at Bowman House, moves into the Police Station and that this group of staff align with their Neighbourhood Policing counterparts to create a new 'one team' approach.
- 4.20 That the above is supported by the 2 aforementioned admin support officers (undertaking room bookings, mailings, database and website management etc.).
- 4.21 That the 2 part-time Neighbourhood project workers are increased to three from within the existing establishment and that they support four groups each. These staff will record the work of the new groups through the Community Profiling process that is currently used to record the action of the NAGS and they will also focus on the key task of managing and progress chasing action alongside local people.
- 4.22 That these groups will continue to have access to the £80k annual capital funding and the new £50k communications budget. This will assist the groups in developing the work that is currently being undertaken by the NAG Chairs (developing local directories / newsletters - learning from the Redlands / University NAG- and local websites -learning from the Newtown and Katesgrove NAGS).
- 4.23 That the twelve groups have a local resident / councillor combination in the positions of Chair and Vice Chair.
- 4.24 That combined terms of reference for the new group are produced that fuse the existing NAG constitution with that of the Safer Community Forums (see appendix A).

- 4.25 That the bi-monthly meetings have a two part agenda. One focussing on local problem solving initiatives and the other looking at the local response, which supports the Community Safety Strategy

We should encourage a more fluid attendance pattern by local people, enabling a greater number to dip in and out of the process, whilst still welcoming regular attendance by those that are able to.

- 4.26 In addition, problem-solving meetings (often on site and held during the daytime) will be encouraged to take place in between the bi-monthly meetings, as well as the popular and successful monthly Environmental Visual Audits (EVAs).
- 4.27 That the groups ensure that they are accessible through their own communication plans, which will include the use of surgeries, street briefings, public meetings and the use of the 'Mobile Police Station'.
- 4.28 That the quarterly Safer Reading Campaign meeting continues to take place and act as an 'umbrella' group that pulls representatives from the twelve groups together and provides the opportunities for conveying information on emerging trends and themes.
- 4.29 That the work in Reading Central (The Town Centre) is aligned with this new approach, so as to enable local residents to participate, whilst still taking full account of the licensed trade and the business community.

## Appendix A

### Developing Community Safety

*Police And Community Together (PACT)<sup>1</sup> Terms of Reference.*  
General

The PACT will be a geographically based, community lead partnership group, whose aim is to deliver local solutions to local problems. A Community Member will chair the group and a local Councillor will vice-chair. They will hold a 2 monthly community meeting<sup>2</sup> in the geographical area that they serve. They will:

- Monitor, review and respond to local crime levels, by means of partnership work involving local residents, the police and other agencies
- Maintain an oversight of the Community Safety Plan, and through the implementation of local initiatives make a positive contribution towards its implementation.
- Consider the impact of traffic management schemes and transport issues in respect to their impact on community safety
- Consult on major planning applications and briefs, which could have significant impact on crime and community safety
- Consult on other service issues, including borough-wide issues, that could have significant impact on crime and community safety
- Act as a voice for the local community on issues which impact on community safety such as environment, youth provision and traffic  
Specific

In addition to their general remit they will be responsible for:

- Overseeing environmental audits within their local area
- Initiating wide public consultation on local community safety issues, utilise questionnaire, public meetings, street briefings, exhibitions, road shows to identify local priorities. This is the Scan element of the SARA process (see below for explanation of SARA)
- Establish Problem Solving Groups to deal with those priorities identified above.
- By clearly defining the problem, time scales, outcomes and what success will look like, hold the problem solving groups to account at the 2 monthly meetings. This is the Assess element of SARA process.  
Problem Solving Groups

Problem solving groups will be set up to tackle the priorities identified by the PACT. A lead person will be identified for each priority; this could be an officer from the relevant service area with the main responsibility for dealing with the

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<sup>1</sup> Provisional name

<sup>2</sup> Provisional frequency of meeting

priority or alternatively a member of the local community experiencing the problem. The problem-solving group will:

- Work with and alongside, members of the community most effected by the problem to deliver interventions that will achieve the outcome and success set out by the PACT
- Throughout the process and action planning use problem solving techniques, this is to include the Assessment and Response parts of the SARA process, the problem triangle and target Enforcement, Prevention, Intelligence and Communication (EPIC)
- Provide 2 monthly reports to the PACT on performance against the outcomes set by them and explain any poor performance and barriers to achieving success.

SARA Process

The problem solving process to be used by PACT will follow the four-part SARA model.

Scan - view data from a variety of sources to identify if a problem exists.

Analyse - Take an in depth look at all the available information to define the problem in detail - who, where, what, when and how.

Respond - These are the interventions being put in place that are aimed a reducing the problem(s) to an agreed state.

Assess - Review the information after the intervention(s) to see if the desired state has been achieved. After which the Group may then need to adjust the response or review the analysis.