

**COMMITTEE:** AREA COMMITTEE BOARD

**DATE:** 24TH JUNE 2008

**SUBJECT:** HER MAJESTY'S COURTS SERVICE  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

**REPORT BY:** AREA COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

**CONTACT OFFICER:** GARY ROBERTS 01582 546985

**IMPLICATIONS:**

<b>LEGAL</b>	<b>COMMUNITY SAFETY</b>
<b>EQUALITIES</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>
<b>FINANCIAL</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS</b>
<b>STAFFING</b>	<b>OTHER</b>

**WARDS AFFECTED:** ALL

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**PURPOSE**

1. To outline for Members a brief account of background to Her Majesty's Court Service Community Engagement Project.
2. To provide Information on current developments and plans to roll out the initiative in 2008.
3. To set out the intended mechanisms for taking this forward across the Areas of Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

4. **Area Committee Board is recommended to**
  - (a) **Note the developments in the roll out of Her Majesty's Court Service Community Engagement Programme**
  - (b) **Support the involvement of Area Committees in the project.**

## **BACKGROUND**

5. Community Justice Centres which is said to have originated in the USA, the most re-known being "Red Hook". This idea (which it could be argued is already inherent in our current system) is now being actively promoted throughout the United Kingdom. The National Community Justice Programme is "driven" by the Office of Judicial Reform (OCJR) and is one of the key "Breakthrough Promises" to which the government is committed.
6. The overall programme is made up of three main strands; the first being speedy justice, which has been rolled out nationally as CJSSS, the remaining two strands are "Community Engagement" and "Problem Solving and Integrating Offenders". The former is the priority for 2008/9 with an expectation that it will be introduced by all Magistrates' Courts across the Country by December 08.

## **REPORT**

### **Community Engagement**

7. Much work is already being undertaken across the area which would fit into the category of community engagement. A key focus of The Criminal Justice Board centres around the target of improving public confidence in the criminal justice system. Open days at local courthouses supported by all the agencies and actively by the Magistrates are positive examples of this. The work of the Magistrates' Association with the "Magistrates in the Community Project" and the Court Advisory Committee publicity and recruitment campaigns are other examples of the good practice currently operating which demonstrate that the key principle has been embraced and is already evident within our working practices. From the more detailed information now being developed by the OCJR it is clear that whilst this is a start it is only the "tip of the ice berg" in terms of what will be expected by the court service.
8. The roll out of the formal project will require:-
  - A more co-ordinated and holistic approach,
  - Formal targeting of communities based on agreed national priorities,

- Evidence of listening and acting on community concerns rather than providing them with information about the criminal justice system,
- Formal training of justices and judicial guidance for those who will be actively participating in the new engagement activities,
- A formal Community Engagement Plan,
- Progress Reports to the centre.

### **Beds Essex and Hertfordshire Area Community Engagement Project Group**

9. An initial meeting of HMCS officers who might be involved in this work was established to begin to identify the issues and implications of this new initiative. As a result of this meeting a bid was put forward to the Centre for formal funding of the work and a Project Manager. As the work has a key focus on the Magistrates' Courts and the Magistrates themselves it was considered crucial that any formal project group should include support from key senior members of the legal team. It has been agreed that, the Justices' Clerks be represented and that the representative member be the Senior Reporting Officer.
10. A Project Manager has been identified and that there should also be representation at legal adviser level. The group will be responsible for the strategic direction and overview of the project but successful delivery will rely on the active involvement of many more magistrates which will have to be resourced and managed. There is one Magistrate member from each of the 3 areas and this will be reviewed once the new board meet formally.
11. The Area Committee Support Officer, with his 'Justice of the Peace hat on' has been appointed as the representative for Bedfordshire and will represent the county on both the regional and national group. It was the view of the 'Justices Issues Group' that this was a sensible appointment due to his service on the bench both in London and Luton, his many years experience in both youth and community development and currently his proactive involvement in the local democratic process across Luton.
12. At the first meeting with the Project Manager that took place on the 10th June 2008 it was decided that the following actions would be taken –
  - (a) From the Luton & South Bedfordshire Bench we would attempt to identify two Magistrates' per area committee who would attend ward forums and area committees as a means of familiarising themselves with local issues.
  - (b) The Area Committee Support Officer would facilitate an area tour of the town for the above or encompass it as part of the ward tours that are already in situ as means of familiarising justices with their areas and raising awareness of the issues that are of real concern

to the local community. This would include visits to specific 'hot spots' in the wards.

- (c) It has also been agreed that the January meeting for the South Luton Area Committee will be held at Luton & South Bedfordshire Magistrates' Court. Assigned courtrooms will be used for the ward forums and the foyer area for the area committee. Apart from being an excellent venue this will also serve as another mechanism of bringing local people closer to the court.

### **PROPOSAL/OPTION**

- 13. It is proposed that Members of the Area Committee Board note the report and support the Area Committees involvement in Her Majesty's Court Service, Community Engagement Project.
- 14. The alternative option would be to decline the invitation to be involved and instruct the Area Committee Support Officer to advise the Project Manager accordingly.

### **APPENDIX**

- 15. None

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS** **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

- 16. Community Justice – Key Principles of Community Engagement (See attached)



# Community Justice

...what's all that about then ??....

June 2008

Dave Chambers  
Community Justice National Programme Manager

## Key Principles of Community Engagement

[www.communityjustice.gov.uk](http://www.communityjustice.gov.uk)

## Key Principles

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- Community Engagement
- Judicial Case Management
- Problem Solving
- Reparation

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## Aims to deliver..... What ?

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- Court at heart of community
- Awareness of the court operation and co-ordinated support services
- Joined up problem solving approach
- Confidence in CJ system
- Embedded CE as part of CJS
- Key partnerships

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## Why do it ?

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- Impact on crime and ASB locally
- Community pay-back (Reparation)
- Understand the CJ system – transparency
- Seamless integration of CJ/CE activities eg. Neighbourhood Policing,  
CPS, Offender Mgt strategy, HMCS CE

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## Desired outcomes

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- Enable Magistrates & Judges to have increased awareness of the impact of offending behaviour on communities
- Be aware of community issues and views, and will take account of them where appropriate, eg specifying punishments that are visible to communities
- Local people will have more information on the work of the court, and the actions taken to deter and punish offenders
- Local people will be more involved in the justice system (eg as magistrates, specials, witnesses etc)

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## Tools

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- Community Impact statements
- Community reference groups
- Enhanced Magistrates in the Community programme
- Identifying lead magistrates for particular communities
- Utilise existing mechanisms - 3rd sector
- Connect to CDRP & LAA funding

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## Where are we now?

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- North Liverpool Community Justice Centre
- 11 additional pilots in E&W – live
- All HMCS court sites CE by December 2008

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## The peloton ???



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## Principles of Community Engagement....

.....á la peloton

- Travels as an integrated unit : like birds in formation
- Reduction in drag of up to 40%
- Save energy, focussed on same goal
- Maximises effort and response
- Able to handle strong head winds, or trail wind with different responses
- Riders at the front are exposed to higher loads, and will slip off the front in order to re-join further back
- The rider riding behind a rider who is changing speed must make the adjustment at a slightly faster rate (due to reaction time) to avoid collisions



**The point is .....partnerships work...**

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