

Herman Goldstein Award 2007

The Bridge Project

Details of application

Title of the project: **The Bridge Project**

Name of force/agency: **Hampshire Constabulary/Gosport Police**

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors):

Sergeant David Knowles

Email address: **david.knowles@hampshire.pnn.police.uk**

Full postal address:

The Bridge Safer Neighbourhood Police Team

Gosport Police Station

South Cross Street

Gosport

Hampshire

United Kingdom

PO12 1ES

Telephone number: Office: **08450 454545 ext 753183**

Fax number: **02392 891719**

Name of endorsing senior representatives(s) **Simon Cole**

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s)

Assistant Chief Constable – Territorial Operations (portfolio for Community Safety)

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s)

Hampshire Constabulary Police HQ

West Hill,

Romsey Road,

Winchester,

Hampshire.

SO22 5DB

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The Bridge Project

The Bridge Project is based in the Police beat area of Bridgemary which lies in the Borough of Gosport in Hampshire, England. The name of the Project was chosen for two reasons; the word “bridge” related the initiative directly to the area it sought to develop but more importantly, reflected a desire to renew the bridge between the Police and the community.

Summary of the Bridge Project

The Problem

- High incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour by young people in Bridgemary.
- Community apathy and a belief that the Police were not interested in helping.

Scanning

In 2005, scanning of information held on Police databases took place, and in addition, **a detailed survey** was conducted with 1800 Bridgemary residents, which gathered information on pertinent Policing issues.

Analysis

Crime statistics analysis confirmed the nature of the high volume of calls received by Police, with youth based crime and disorder very apparent as a source of community tension. The results of the **detailed resident survey** confirmed that Bridgemary provided a Policing challenge in perceptions, as well as in real terms. Gosport was historically Policed by response. Officers were deployed to calls but due to the distance from the Police Station, Bridgemary was relatively poorly patrolled.

Response

Due to the specific demographic and geographical issues within Bridgemary, exposed by the scanning, it was theorised that this beat would be an excellent area in which to place a team of Police Officers with a precise mission statement.

The Bridge Project team began work in October 2005. The team consisted of one Sergeant and three patrol Constables, plus one Officer who was permanently based within Bridgemary School. The initiative involved intensive high visibility **patrols**, combined with **education** and **enforcement** to improve the problem areas.

Crucially, a **youth engagement scheme**, to divert young people away from crime was used to great effect.

Assessment

At the completion of twelve months, further detailed surveys were conducted, with significant results;

- Perceptions of young people showed a dramatic upturn
- School performance improved markedly
- Public perceptions of crime and of the Police service rose impressively.

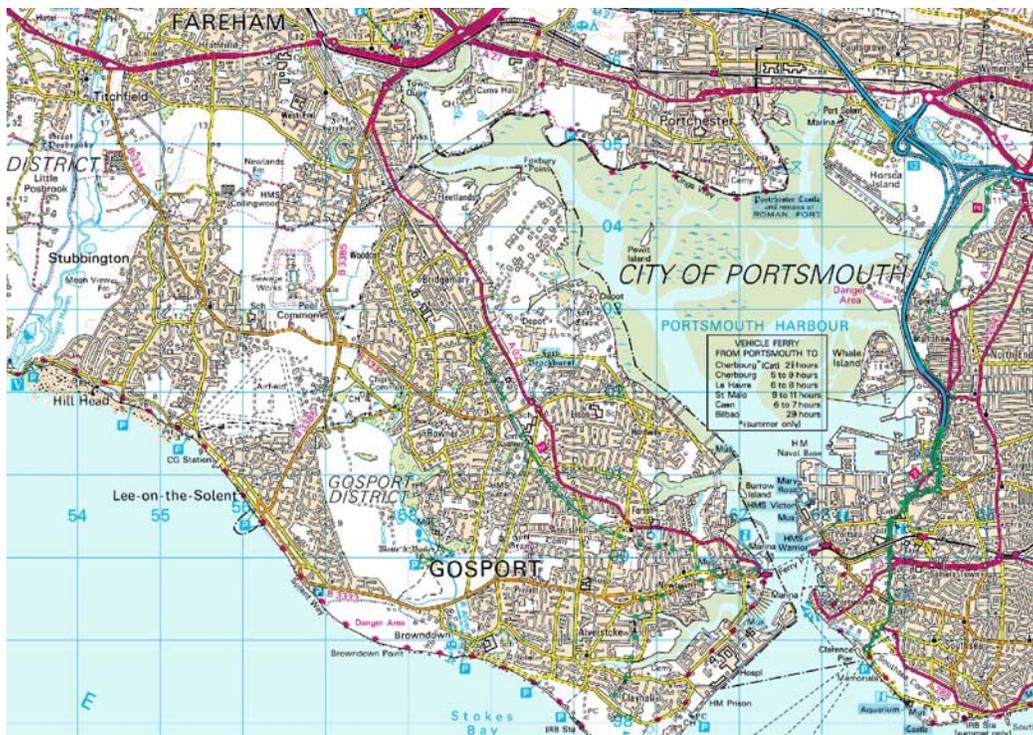
Most dramatic of all, crime statistics showed a remarkable improvement;

- A dramatic fall in burglaries, robberies and theft
- Similar reductions in criminal damage, vehicle crime and assaults
- **A fall in total crime of 28.5%**

The Bridge Project

Description of the Problem

The town of Gosport lies at the southern most point of the county of Hampshire, England. The population consists of approximately 78,000, with the main industries being related to shipping and leisure boating. The central business district of the town lies in the south east, separated from the City of Portsmouth by Portsmouth Harbour.



In October 2005, the town was divided into seven beat areas; the most distant of these is Bridgemarky, which is actually geographically closer to Fareham than to Gosport.

The main focus of Policing in 2005 was response. When a call was received by the Police, Officers on patrol in Gosport were deployed to deal. Because Bridgemary was the most distant from the Police Station, this area was the least patrolled of all Gosport's beats. This information is anecdotal as there is no hard evidence to support this; however it is a reasonable assumption that the furthest beat from the Police Station would receive the least patrol.

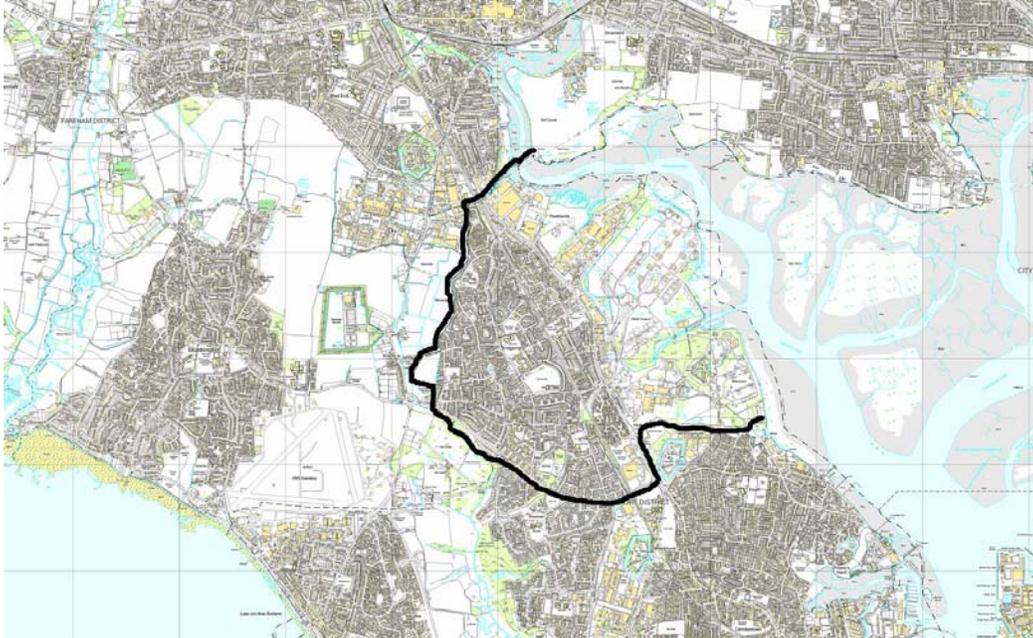
The population of Bridgemary is approximately 18,300 people. 41% of the population is under 16 years old. Yet the provision for young people in Bridgemary is severely lacking. There is a leisure centre which consists of a swimming pool and an ice rink, but these are expensive to use and it is known that these are infrequently used by the young people of Bridgemary. In 2005, there was one youth club in Bridgemary, but there were no sports clubs and no events or sports projects held within the community.

Bridgemary has several distinct neighbourhoods; each of these is served by specific pubs, shops and schools. There are nine different parades of shops within Bridgemary, each of them consisting of a convenience store, a newsagent, a fast food outlet and other local shops. Within each neighbourhood, a high proportion of housing is social accommodation; owned by the local authority and let to those on low incomes. The unemployment rate is 3.5%, which is much higher than the 1.9% average for the whole of Hampshire.

At the centre of Bridgemary lies a secondary school, catering for 11-16 year olds. The vast majority of the young people of Bridgemary attend this school. This school had

severe problems. Assaults on teachers were commonplace, and crime rates for criminal damage and theft within the school were rising. Truancy rates were extremely high, and the school was being considered for “Special Measures”, something the school management wanted to avoid.

Bridgemary Beat in 2005



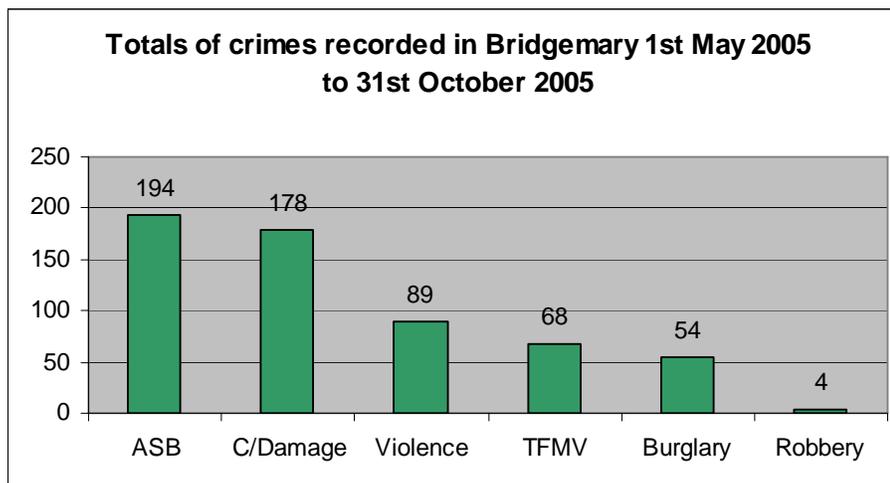
Official school statistics for the school year 2004-2005 show that there were 4171 occasions of truancy. This statistic placed the school within the worst 5% of performers in the United Kingdom.

In 2005, Bridgemary came increasingly to the forefront of Policing problems in Gosport. It is an area of high deprivation with increasingly high incidence of youth Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) in the form of large groups of youths congregating and acting in a disorderly manner. The area also suffered from graffiti, vandalism and domestic burglaries.

The Scanning Stage

Baseline statistics were scanned in order to provide a picture of the problem. The baseline period chosen was 1st May to 31st October 2005. This provided a 6 month window of information, over the summer; the period which historically was the provided the highest crime statistics.

The crime statistics for the baseline period are summarised in the diagram below. It can be seen that anti-social behaviour forms a significant part of these statistics, whilst damage and theft from motor vehicles are also important offences in the crime profile of the beat.



Key to graph above

For the purposes of this aspect of the scanning, the following definitions were followed;

- Burglary was defined as both dwelling and non dwelling
- Violence was defined as any assault of Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) or worse
- ASB included offences under the public order act as well as reports of rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour, intimidating acts and mass gatherings.

In October 2005, the Corporate Services Department of Hampshire Constabulary were commissioned to undertake a detailed survey of Bridgemary residents in numerous aspects of Policing. The questions were divided into four main sections;

- **Anti-social behaviour in the area**
- **Crime in the area**
- **Safety in the area**
- **Policing in the area**

The intention was to use the results of this survey to inform the new Neighbourhood Policing Team of the main issues considered by the residents, but also to provide a further baseline of data. The intention was that a second survey would be undertaken twelve months later.

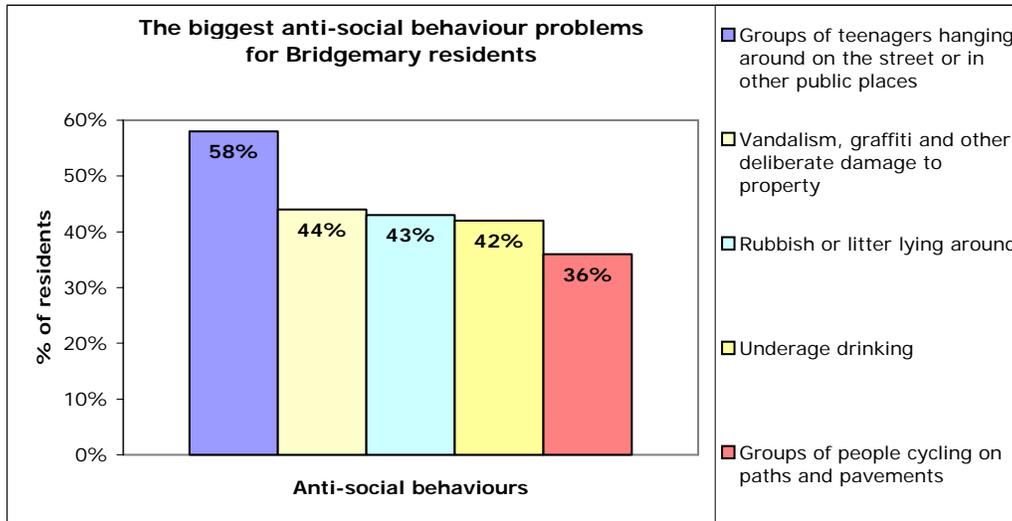
The Analysis Stage

The survey described above was sent to 3971 homes within Bridgemary, and there was a return of 1858 (47%). The survey highlighted a number of important factors;

- **Confidence in the Police was low**
- **Residents did not know who their local Police Officers were**
- **Residents believed that Police did not patrol in their area and that if they did call, then Officers would not be interested.**
- **Residents perceived that they lived in a high crime area where they were at risk of being attacked or intimidated by groups of youths.**

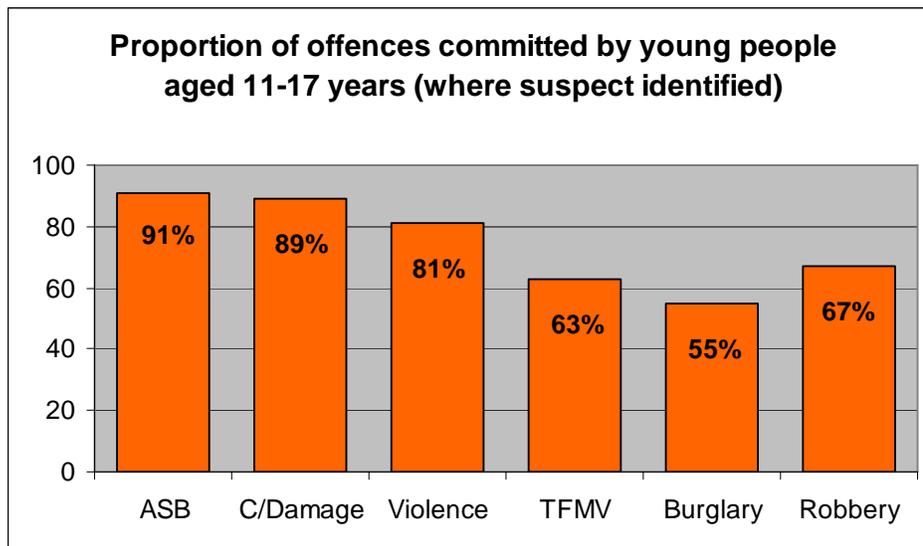
- **Residents perceived that ASB was one of the biggest factors affecting their quality of life.**

The following graph illustrates what aspects of ASB respondents felt most strongly about;



Crime Statistics analysis

During October 2005, the team Sergeant examined the baseline statistics in detail. He looked specifically at the offences where suspects were named or described. He also took a detailed view of the reported incidents which were in a very public area. In all of the reported crime areas, it was possible to assess which age group were responsible for the majority of the offences. The table below provides an image of this;



It was clear from examining these statistics that certain offences contained far more information relating to the suspects; these were the offences which were committed in the public domain – violence, damage and anti-social behaviour. The same could not be said for the dishonesty offences of robbery, burglary and theft from motor vehicle, where offenders are perhaps more cunning in hiding their identity. However what is very clear is that the main offenders in three key crimes (where the suspect was identified or described) were all aged 11-17 years.

Police Officers patrolled Bridgemarky during the scanning stage and spoke to a number of young people about this key issue. It was no surprise that all of the young people complained of feeling disconnected with their community; that nothing was provided for them, and so they were forced to find their own thrills. These generally consisted of hanging around shopping parades in large groups, smoking tobacco or cannabis, and drinking alcohol.

What was very clear from speaking to the young people was that the behaviour of these large groups of youths often degenerated;

- Group gatherings led to intimidating behaviour
- “showing off” to impress friends led to graffiti or other forms of damage
- “dares” led to theft from convenience stores
- drunkenness led to violence within the group or against another group

As a consequence, damage, littering, violence and anti-social behaviour afflicted the community in the immediate vicinity of the areas where the groups gathered. Most often these gatherings took place near one of the shopping parades within Bridgemary.

The Response Stage

In October 2005 a small team of Officers were deployed to work within Bridgemary permanently. The team consisted of one Sergeant and three patrol Constables, whilst another Constable was posted to Bridgemary School. A volunteer Special Constable who patrolled 6 hours each week completed the team. This initiative was termed The Bridge Project.

The mission statement for the Bridge Project was concise and was summed up in three bullet points;

- To reduce crime and disorder
- To reduce the fear of crime
- To improve engagement between the Police and the public.

The patrol Officers were provided with mountain cycles and Police cycling uniform, and within a few weeks obtained the use of an office within the community. This was a small office, within an industrial estate, but crucially was within Bridgemary. This

enabled the Officers to be based within the beat, rather than at the Police Station several miles away.



The Bridge Project team

The Officers patrolled, come rain or shine, from 0700 hrs through till midnight every single day. On Friday and Saturday evenings, the finish time was 0100 hrs. The Constables worked a shift pattern of 3 day shifts (0700-1700 hrs), followed by 3 late shifts (1400-0001 hrs or 1500-0100 hrs), followed by 4 rest days. This enabled each of them to work in parallel with a patrol team based at Gosport.

The shift pattern worked by the Sergeant was a mixture of day shifts and late shifts, allowing him to work with all three Constables, and also to fill in gaps in the patrol rota where this was necessary.

As a consequence, every day was patrolled by at least one Officer, with particular emphasis placed on late shifts as most incidents of ASB occurred in the evenings.

The beat of Bridgemarky was sub-divided into three “micro-beats” which were assigned to each of the Constables. This was to allow each of them to gain increased knowledge of a smaller area, and to concentrate their intelligence gathering. This enabled the Constables to gain specific knowledge of a small number of schools, shops and pubs and to become well known in a relatively small area. Officers were also instructed not to expect the public to come to them, because it was clear from the analysis stage that there was a high degree of apathy in the community. Officers were proactive in seeking out information; they knocked doors along the length of whole streets in their micro-beat, in order to ask residents about the problems affecting them. This also allowed Officers to ask pertinent questions about perceptions relating to that person’s neighbourhood.

In terms of actual deployment to incidents, Officers could deal with an incident from any of the micro-beats within Bridgemarky. Officers were not expected to deal with every incident which occurred in Bridgemarky; a deployment strategy was written by the Sergeant, which prioritised “neighbourhood” incidents. Hate crime, series crime and neighbour incidents were always the remit of Bridge Project Officers.

During the first five months of the Bridge Project, Officers spent a considerable proportion of their duty on patrol. They were deliberately visible, in fluorescent uniform, and they were particularly accessible – spending time outside shops, visiting pubs and conducting visits to schools. Wherever they went, they listened to people’s concerns. Officers made significant numbers of arrests for assaults, damage and

public order offences. They were also able to deal with neighbourhood disputes in an empathetic manner as these issues were always dealt with by the same Officers.

Responding to community intelligence which resulted from the increased public accessibility, search warrants for drugs offences were conducted on dealers, leading to the seizure of heroin, amphetamine and cannabis.

This pro-activity came in response to areas identified as public concerns in the analysis stage. The team used local press to publicise these successes when the opportunity arose.

Public Accessibility

One of the first tasks carried out by the team Sergeant was to arrange for the following methods of public accessibility and accountability;

- a weekly beat surgery conducted at the local library – an opportunity to meet one of the local Officers and to discuss concerns
- a quarterly Police panel chaired by the Police Sergeant, consisting of residents – where concerns were raised and Police were tasked to make progress
- a quarterly public meeting where the Sergeant accounted for Police activity and then faced questions from the public about their concerns

Each of these methods of reaching out to the public was advertised in local press and on public displays and they were found to be an excellent way of gauging opinion and progress.

School based Officer

One of the measures included in the response phase was to post a Police Officer permanently within Bridgemary School. The Principal was approached in advance of the school year commencing. Given the scale of the problems faced by the school, she was only too pleased to welcome an Officer onto the staff. The school also agreed to contribute to the salary of this Officer – the sum of which helped to offset the capital outlay involved in setting up the Bridge Project.

One of the Bridge Project Police Officers was then permanently based within Bridgemary School; this Officer used the SARA method within this specific micro-beat, by scanning school and Police data on incidents, then analysing and responding appropriately.

Realising that many incidents arose through newly arrived students, the Officer created a “transition team” within the school to adopt a more joined-up approach for the newly arrived Year 7 students. The same Officer also made personal visits to the homes of all students who served a period of exclusion. Exclusion is a form of punishment used for the worst cases of misbehaviour – usually incidents of assault. Through the course of the school year, the Officer also developed CCTV systems, playground monitoring and school protocols.

Critically, the Officer liaised regularly with the patrol Officers. Intelligence flowed between school and patrol team in both directions. Given that all 1000 students within the school lived within Bridgemary, the impact that the school Officer was able to have on the beat was significant. Similarly, with patrol Officers also dealing with the families of the students, the integration was complete.

Youth engagement

It was clear by January 2006, once analyses of the data and extensive patrols had taken place that the main issues in Bridgemarky related to the youth population. It was no surprise that with no provision for young people, in an area where 41% of the population was under 16, that problems arose from youths being idle. The team Sergeant approached community development officers at the local authority – Gosport Borough Council (GBC) and suggested a project to encourage youth diversion from criminal activity.

As a consequence, two parallel diversionary activities were planned; a 10 week football (soccer) tournament, with coaching provided by youth coaches from the local premier league team, Portsmouth Football Club. Secondly, the non sport activity of “Street-Art” was chosen to attract those who might not enjoy football.

Funding for the 10 week football event, labelled “Football Frenzy” was obtained from Hampshire Police Authority, who gave a grant of £4000. The Street Art project was funded by GBC.

Both projects were begun in June 2006, and ran throughout the summer. Importantly, they were provided free to participants. The criteria for involvement was that they had to be aged 11-17 years, live in Bridgemarky and that they must comply with the Code of Conduct.

The Code was simple;

- Participants must respect each other and the staff
- Participants must not commit offences or come to the notice of the Police. If they did, Officers had the discretion to ban participants from the event for a given number of sessions.
- The participants should have fun.

As well as making presentations at Bridgemaury School, Officers from the team advertised the events whilst on patrol by handing out post cards with details of the venues, dates and times. This was important to target the “difficult to reach” youngsters, as it was recognised that many of the problem youths were excluded from school. Officers made a particular point of targeting known troublesome youths for involvement in the event, and made efforts to encourage the parents of these youth to support the initiative, by visiting them at home.



The ten week Football Frenzy project attracted 201 young people. All of the targeted participants engaged with the project. Police Officers attended every coaching session

(72 hours of youth engagement) and joined in where possible. As a consequence, relations between Police and young people were extremely good; many of them pleaded with Officers to arrange for more football sessions beyond the summer.



The Street Art project attracted 30 young people – which was the maximum allowed. Many of these were specifically targeted and all engaged fully. Police Officers attended many of these sessions, in order to provide law input on vandalism.

Throughout the summer of 2006, Officers continued patrols as before. Robust law enforcement, including making arrests and educating young people continued. High visibility and accessibility, by utilising the team office within the community were essential in this continual process.

By the end of the summer, feedback via public meetings, beat surgeries and Police panel meetings was increasingly positive.

The Assessment Stage

In October 2006, assessments were made of the Bridge Project, using several methods;

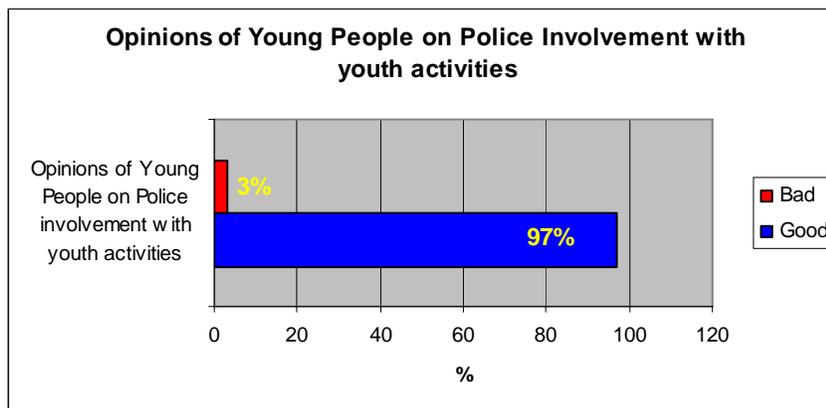
- (i) a survey of young people, conducted by GBC
- (ii) a scan of school incidents
- (iii) a survey of residents, conducted by Hampshire Constabulary Corporate Services Dept
- (iv) a further scan of the crime statistics

Survey of Young people

Conducted immediately following the completion of the Football Frenzy and Street Art projects, the survey revealed that young people

- Welcomed the role of Police in youth activities
- Wanted the projects to continue
- Thought the Police were pretty cool

31% of the surveys completed by 11-17 year olds were returned. The Survey revealed that 97% of respondents thought the involvement of the police was a good thing, with the top 3 reasons being; improved safety, controlling behaviour and crime reduction.



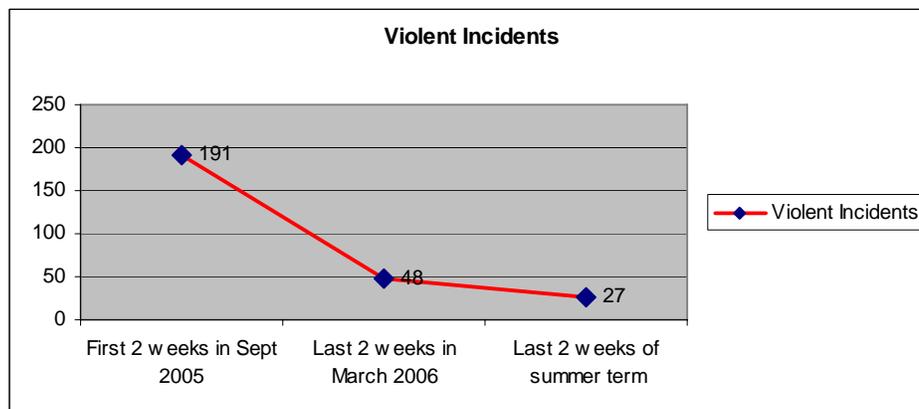
46% of respondents said that their opinion of the police had improved as a result. The following quotes appeared on the youth survey, where the question asked respondents to indicate why their opinions had changed;

- “It shows they like to get involved”
- “I never liked them but now they’re sound”
- “I thought the police were not friendly and only thought youngsters were trouble”
- “More positive – they are doing things for us”

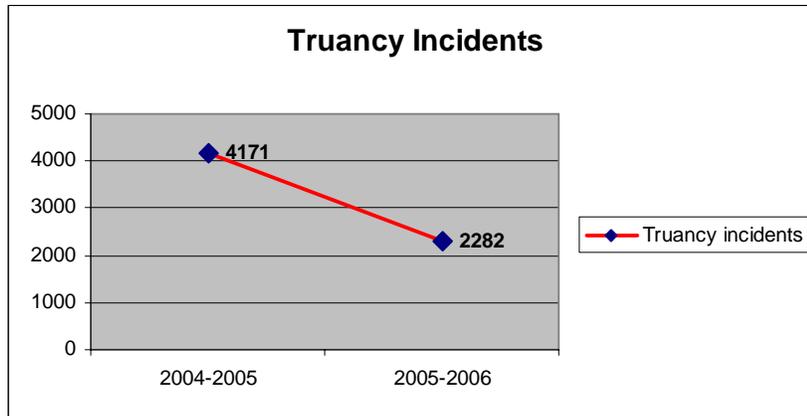
Improvements within Bridgemary School

The School based Constable had a significant impact on the school, evidenced by crime figures falling steadily. This was achieved by “designing out” the opportunity for crime; a new protocol for the use of lockers has meant that thefts of student property have almost stopped altogether, whilst better CCTV coverage has prevented further cycle thefts.

The number of violent incidents has dropped as the graph below illustrates;



Simultaneously, the levels of truancy at the school dropped significantly over the same period;



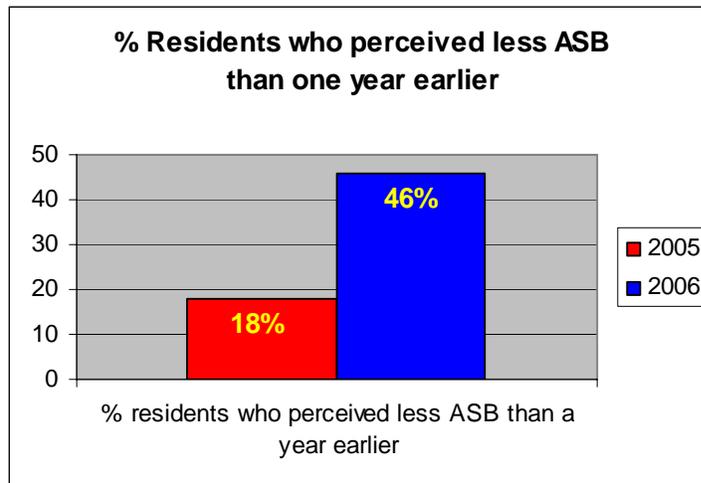
Survey conducted by Hampshire Constabulary

The survey conducted by the Corporate Services Dept in October 2006 was a repeat of the one conducted 12 months earlier. This survey was sent to 1800 homes, 63% responded. Again it focussed on the following areas;

- Fear of crime
- Experience of crime
- Perceptions of ASB
- Safety in the area
- Policing in the area

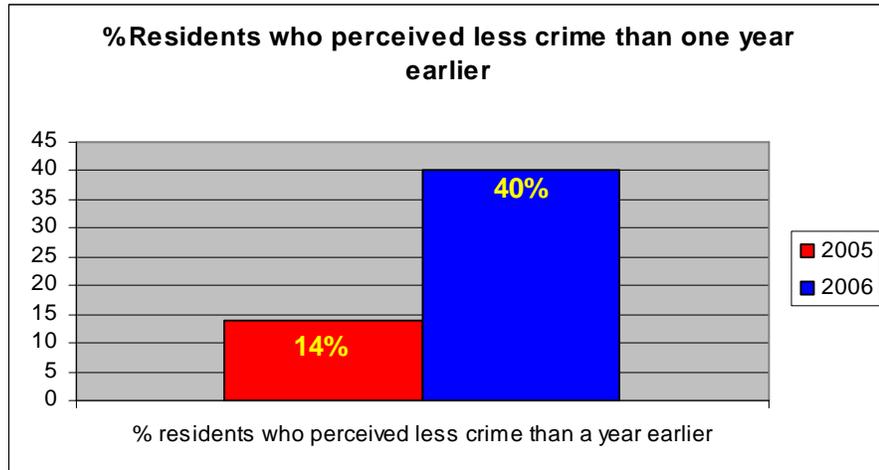
The following are key points from this survey;

- In 2006, 46% of respondents felt that there was less anti-social behaviour in the area than 12 months ago, compared to just 18% in 2005.

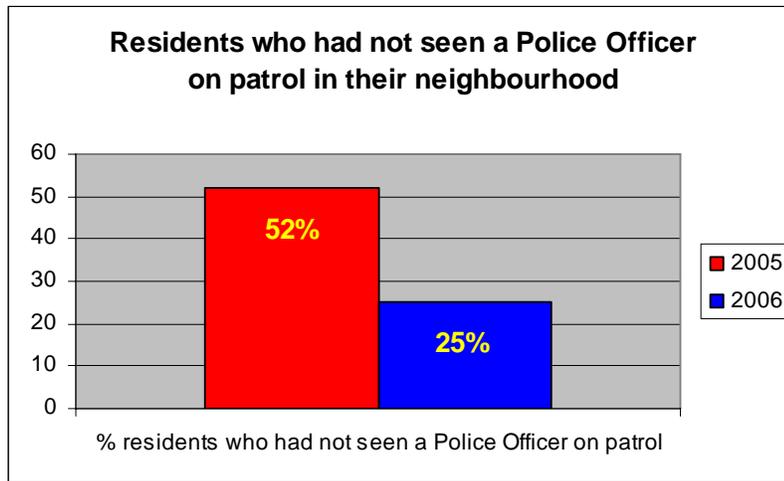


- The biggest reductions in perceptions were seen in the following problems:
 - ❖ Groups of teenagers hanging around on the street or in other public places (a reduction of 17%)
 - ❖ Underage drinking (a reduction of 15%)
 - ❖ People using drugs (a reduction of 14%)
 - ❖ Vandalism, graffiti & other deliberate damage to property (reduction of 13%)
 - ❖ People dealing drugs (a reduction of 12%)
- In 2005, 68% of respondents felt the police were either 'very' or 'fairly interested' in dealing with quality of life issues such as anti-social behaviour. In 2006 this figure increased to 81%.

- In 2005, 14% of respondents felt there was a lot or a little less crime in their area compared to 12 months previously. In 2006, this figure had increased to 40%.



- The likelihood that the respondent or a member of their household had been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months reduced significantly from 24% in 2005 to 16% in 2006
- In 2006 there was a significant increase in those who felt safe living in their area; 73% in 2005 to 83% in 2006.
- The percentage of residents who stated that they had never seen a police officer on foot or on bicycle patrol in their area dropped considerably, from 52% to 25%, between 2005 and 2006.



The following are quotes taken from respondents surveys, when asked to add voluntary free text;

- ❖ *“A more visual police presence is always reassuring, in my opinion prevention is better than detection”*
- ❖ *“I do feel that there has been a big improvement to the area recently and hope it continues.”*
- ❖ *“I find it very reassuring to see community police on the streets. I feel also the progress made with pupils at the local school has helped greatly.”*
- ❖ *“I now consider living in this area safer than any other time over the past 32 years.”*

As well as these detailed surveys, which concentrated heavily on public perceptions, it was clearly important to check how crime figures had changed during the course of the year.

Comparing the baseline period with a similar period of the Bridge Project, the following changes in crime were apparent;

Dwelling Burglaries

May to Oct 05	May to Oct 06	comparing May to Oct 05 to May to Oct 06
54	25	54% reduction

Criminal Damage

May to Oct 05	May to Oct 06	comparing May to Oct 05 to May to Oct 06
178	142	20% reduction

Robbery

May to Oct 05	May to Oct 06	comparing May to Oct 05 to May to Oct 06
4	2	50% reduction

Assaults

May to Oct 05	May to Oct 06	comparing May to Oct 05 to May to Oct 06
89	71	20% reduction

Vehicle Crime

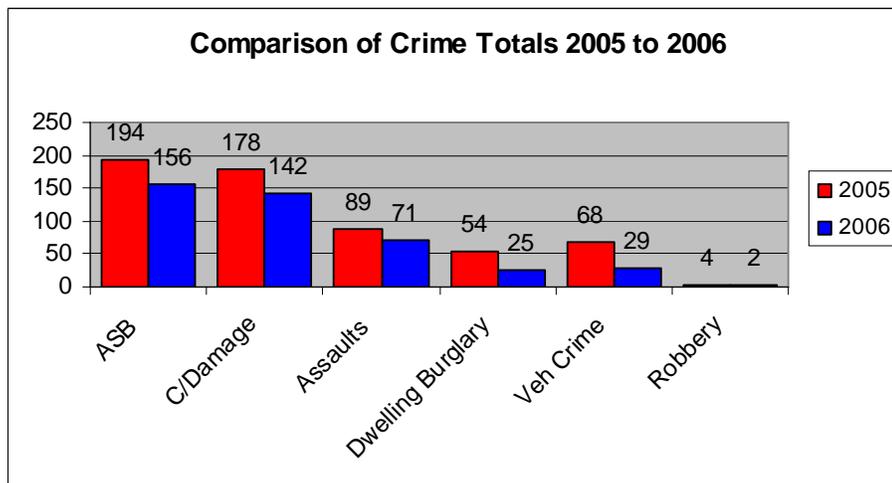
May to Oct 05	May to Oct 06	comparing May to Oct 05 to May to Oct 06
68	29	57% reduction

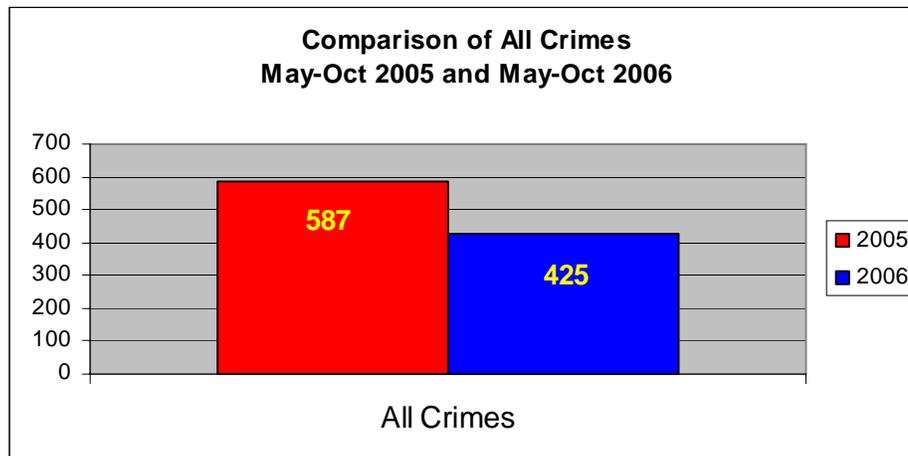
Anti-Social Behaviour

May to Oct 05	May to Oct 06	comparing May to Oct 05 to May to Oct 06
194	156	20% reduction

All Crime		28.5 % reduction
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The two charts below illustrate these statistics more graphically;





Using a cost analysis formula, it was assessed that the reduction in crime in each of these areas, collectively led to savings for the Police of £85,000 in the period May to October 2006 alone.

Conclusion

At the completion of the 12 month project, Officers are satisfied that they achieved the three goals set out in their mission statement;

- Crime and disorder was reduced
- Fear of crime by the public has fallen
- Engagement between Police and the public has improved.

What Next?

It would have been foolish to stop at one year. Bridgemaury Officers are midway through their second year, with bigger and better youth diversionary schemes in progress. At the time of writing, crime statistics are 22% improved on the previous year already. This has been achieved by adopting the same SARA methodology as used in the pilot year. The model has since been rolled out to neighbouring beat areas.

Agency and Officer Information

Hampshire Constabulary is a UK Home Office Police Force. Officers involved in the Bridge Project are all Hampshire Constabulary employees. The concept for the project was originally conceived by the sector Inspector, who chose the Sergeant. Constables were chosen for their independence and high motivation. The entire project was a very local initiative, with full authority for the direction and success handed to the team Sergeant.

No incentives were provided to any of the Officers involved with the project, other than job satisfaction.

Training in “PRIME” was provided to the team Sergeant and to one of the Constables.

Additional Resources: All costs for the project were sustained by Hampshire Constabulary, but this was supplemented by Bridgemary School agreeing to pay for half of one Officer’s salary; £20,000.