

The title of the project submitted for your consideration of award is;

The Townsafe Partnership

The aim of this project is to ;

Bring about the revival of the traditional heart of Birkenhead and to create a unique vibrant place where people want to live work and spend their free time.

The Townsafe Partnership comprises the Central Wirral area of Merseyside Police, Wirral MBC and the regeneration initiatives associated with it. The business community of Birkenhead and the public of Wirral and its surrounding area.

The partnership is now in its fourth year of existence but continues in its problem-orientated approach to achieving its aim. At the time the Partnership was formed it had to face an area that was suffering from the demise of traditional industries. The town had a very high unemployment rate, decaying buildings, high crime and fear of crime rates and was exhibiting the classic features of urban decay.

Problems were caused by opportunities for crime and disorder provided by regeneration and increasing prosperity of the area. Namely the threat posed by increasing numbers of doormen serving the new licensed premises, the opportunity for theft and protection rackets surrounding the new building sites and the threat of attracting criminals from adjoining areas.

The problem is defined by data from Police sources, surveys and forums attracting the residents and visitors to the area. The business communities and from the partnership organisations who were most valuable in identifying unreported levels of crime and disorder.

The policing response to the problem has been the creation of the Operation Townsafe Police Team of Sergeants and 12 Constables. These officers are empowered by the Area Commander to attend meetings and make deployment decisions on his behalf to address identified problems. Initiatives which have been undertaken to tackle the problems of Birkenhead include.

Training of staff, introduction of CCTV, crime prevention through environmental design, exclusion orders, operations to intercept the threats to crime and disorder, and introduction of new bye laws.

The impact of the above responses has been reduction in a number of categories of recorded crime. Public approval of the approach and an increased feeling of safety. Finally the attraction to Birkenhead of more shoppers and businesses increases the likelihood of long-term success for Birkenhead.

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The Townsafe Partnership.

This entry concerns the strategy agreed between the Central Wirral Police Area on Merseyside and a number of Public and Private Sector bodies who work with the community of Birkenhead to;

"Bring about the revival of the traditional heart of Birkenhead and to create a unique, vibrant place where people will want to live work and spend their free time. "

The project is now in its 4th year and remains ongoing. Its early success has resulted in a partnership, which adopts a problem-orientated approach to tackling community problems, and this approach has now become endemic in the whole of the Birkenhead area.

The centre of Birkenhead

The focus for the project is the centre of Birkenhead, which to-day contains;

- 292 shops
- 327 Market stalls

These are contained within 2 main and interconnected shopping centres, the Pyramids and The Grange Shopping Precincts. This area now attracts 4.4 million visitors per year.

It contains a number of other businesses, Pubs Clubs Restaurants, etc and an International Business and Management Centre.. Current developments within the area include a multi screen cinema projected to attract in the region of 750,000 visitors per year and associated pubs and restaurants. This scheme is due for completion before the end of 1999. A large hotel is also planned within this leisure complex.

The area is served by 2 underground railway stations, a new and purpose built bus station, and the regular cross river ferry service. This area of Birkenhead also sits at the mouth of the Mersey Tunnel providing a vehicle link to Liverpool for commuter's visitor's etc.

At the time that this project began Birkenhead was suffering from the demise of traditional industries, mostly related to ship building, the town had a very high unemployment rate, decaying buildings, high crime rates and was exhibiting the classic features of urban decay. Birkenhead was simply not perceived as a safe place.

The Objectives

The objectives for this project were drawn up by a number of founder members of the Townsafe Partnership. These included the Police Area Commander for Central Wirral, Superintendent Paul Forrester, Wirral MBC, the Wirral Chamber of Commerce and other members of the Business Community.

The Partnership drew up a number of inter related objectives including;

- Developing cultural, arts, heritage and leisure attractions.
- Encouragement of sustainable economic growth.
- Fostering and supporting new and existing businesses.
- Protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment.
- Improving the job prospects, education and skills of local people.
- Creating new and improved housing.
- Tackling crime and improving community safety.
- Improving local infrastructure.

Method of Defining the Problem

Having defined the objectives the Partnership then began the task of analysing the scope of the problems.

This was achieved through a series of meetings of the Partnership supported by officers from the I.T. and Research Department of Wirral MBC who provided analytical and mapping capabilities for the data provided.

1 Data on the scale of the problem came from Police statistics/intelligence systems and from data provided by the Town Centre Management Committee of which the Superintendent, Paul Forrester, was also a member. This was supported by an extensive study carried out by Liverpool University who were resourced by the Government supported City Lands Project.

This study explored through interview, focus groups questionnaire surveys and statistical analysis the following areas;

Fear of crime

Business confidence

Levels of Social Exclusionary factors present within the community, Unemployment, Truancy, Health, Housing

Results of the analysis

The crime situation at the start of this project was a high level of acquisitive crime, shoplifting, and vehicle crime. Burglaries within commercial premises were being experienced at a rate of 3 per week. At this time it was estimated that 40 persistent shoplifters including some teams were operating with the centre of Birkenhead alone.

There was a fear of personal attack and intimidating behaviour acknowledged by shoppers during the daytime and pedestrians at night which though not borne out by

statistics was sufficient to spoil the pleasure of shopping and recreational activities by many townspeople and deter others from using the facilities.

Failure to address the crime and disorder problem would have severely disadvantaged the regeneration work which was being financed through the Governments Single Regeneration Budget as the area remained unattractive to new business and the publics of Merseyside who it was seeking to attract.

This new money and business attracted other Policing problems into Birkenhead.

- Police intelligence showed that the new building work being completed in Birkenhead increased the opportunity for Theft of building materials
- As building where demolished some made way for car parking areas which increased considerably the opportunity for vehicle crime to increase.
- Unless controlled the building work would attract unscrupulous security firms in to manage the building sites.
- There was evidence of criminal activity with the threat of serious public disorder moving into the area from Liverpool.
- The increase in "Nightlife" in Birkenhead brought with it the threat of serious public disorder and drugs trade unless the doorstaff on these premises where managed effectively.

It was felt at this stage that there where no gaps within the Partnerships data from which strategies could be developed to address these identified problems.

Dealing with the problem

The Central Wirral area response to dealing with these problems was to create a team of officers, 2 Sergeants and 12 Constables, who would be dedicated on a full time basis to providing the Police input to Partnership needs.

This team of officers varies their duties according to identified need and performs a variety of overt uniform and covert duties within the area. Superintendent Forrester has empowered the Sergeants within the Townsafe Police Team to represent him at meetings and agree a Police response from within their establishment of 12 Constables.

The Sergeants also form part of the Central Wirral Police Area Management team.

In explaining the activities the Partnership has undertaken in seeking to resolve the problems outlined earlier in this report I will divide the activity into 2 main areas;

- Retail Crime
- Public Order

Retail Crime.

Knowing the scale of the problem, 40 active shoplifters working in the town center, fear and intimidation of shoppers visiting Birkenhead the Partnership recognised that it would need to work smarter than before and therefore established its own objective in this identified problem area. The Partnership objective in this area was;

To co-ordinate the resources of the retailers and police in an effort to discourage the persistent thieves from entering Birkenhead town center shopping area.

A fragmented approach had been taken to attacking retail crime with each body, retail outlets, Town Centre Managers, Police each working in isolation and now they were brought together to form a properly constituted committee with monthly meetings. From this point the **Anti Theft Group** could manage a structured and co-ordinated approach to the problem.

Now town centre security staff from all parts of the retail shopping area meet on a monthly basis with Police, store managers, and the Town Centre Manager to review activities, share information and agree tactics for the month ahead.

Specific initiatives which have originated from this group include;

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, (CPTED) Here the owners of the shopping areas and businesses throughout the Birkenhead town Centre have adopted the practice of CPTED into their strategies. Now plans for new buildings have their plans reviewed by the Crime Prevention Officer who makes recommendations on changes required to the structure to make it eligible for such an award.

Birkenhead now boasts one of only 2 Secure Car Parks in the whole of Merseyside. This car park has received national recognition and during the first two years of its operation has not suffered one car theft.

Staff Training. The Police Crime Prevention Officer together with retail managers have developed a training package, which is presented to all shop floor staff in all retail outlets. This encourages all staff in stores to take ownership of the problem of retail crime and provides everyone engaged within the fight against retail crime to make their own contribution to prevention and detection of it.

This initiative has been extended based upon the recognised need that different operatives within the retail security group require different levels of training. The need was identified by the Anti Theft Group and now the Police Crime Prevention Officer leads a training programme leading to an NVQ level 11 award in Retail Security awarded by the Security Industry Training Organisation. Currently 14 staff from the Birkenhead Town Centre are under going this training.

Birkenhead introduces from Monday 5¹ July, 1999, a new system of Town Guides. Managed by Wirral MBC this uniformed presence on the streets of Birkenhead have

received training from Police Officers within the Central Wirral Area on security issues, retail and terrorist, their legal rights and the management of crime and disorder situations. They will provide extra eyes and ears in the goal to make Birkenhead a safer place to live work and visit. They are linked by radio to the Community Patrol Control Centre which manages the CCTV cameras in Birkenhead and which has a direct line to the Wirral Police District Control Room

Radio Link. All town centre security personnel now have radio communication controlled by one centre and operating on one single frequency. Police Officers patrolling the area during planned initiatives, i.e. Christmas shopping periods, also carry one of these radios. This facilitates not only the security of personnel engaged in this area of security work but also a co-ordination of resources to tackle an identified need.

Exclusion Orders. It was identified amongst certain offenders that their likelihood of re offending was high. On conviction for an offence of shoplifting the profile of the offender is reviewed by the Anti Theft Group. Recidivists are issued with a formal notice withdrawing their licence to enter all the shops within the shopping precinct area.

The effect of the notice is to treat the offender as a trespasser who can be refused entry to the shops. The Radio Link enables such people to be tracked around the shopping centre and refused access at the door of the shop thereby reducing the opportunity for further offending. Agreement has also been reached that such exclusion notices will count as an aggravating factor should an offender appear in Court on a charge of shoplifting within the Birkenhead area.

Shoplifters against whom an Exclusion Order are obtained are constantly reminded of the fight against retail crime when entering the retail area of Birkenhead. The territory is ringed with street signs and notices advising such people or anyone else thinking of becoming involved in retail crime that they are entering the Shop Watch Area.

Shop Mobility..Surveys amongst disabled groups in Birkenhead showed a high level of fear of attack or intimidation amongst disabled people, which dissuaded them from shopping in Birkenhead. Work was therefore undertaken by the Anti Theft Group in partnership with the Wirral Association of Disability to obtain electrically powered shopping scooters for use in the shopping area by registered disabled people. Volunteers then accompany the disabled shopper whilst they complete their shopping trip providing a feeling of safety and security for the shopper.

School Contact Programme A profile of people detained for shoplifting showed a high proportion of children of school age where being detained for this offence. The Anti Theft Group therefore combined with the Education Department and produced a role play session for use during a PSE lesson in school which dealt with the issue of retail crime. The areas covered included costs to the individual detained and the results to other shoppers from high theft levels.

A second arm of the school contact programme has been the introduction of the Think Bubble campaign to all Key Stage 1 pupils throughout Wirral. Initiated by the Police in Central Wirral in partnership with the Local Education Authority and some school teachers this programme is designed to help young children remain safe from the threat posed by becoming lost, bullying and Stranger Danger. This scheme has been running since March, 1999, and has therefore yet to be evaluated but it was introduced after a gap in provision of such advice and guidance to children of a younger age was identified by Teachers and Police Officers. Though freely available through Home Office sources this is the only Police Area on Merseyside in which the scheme has been introduced.

Public Order

CCTV The Partnership completed a feasibility study and decided to take advantage of the Governments CCTV initiative and introduce into Birkenhead town centre an extensive CCTV system. The feasibility study revealed that high levels of crime and disorder would have the potential of rising further as regeneration of the area continued

and the location of the cameras was based upon the analysis from Police data of the areas of greatest need within the town centre. The proposal that was made seeking funding had in addition to multi agency support the support of tenants and residents within the affected area.

The system is monitored on a 24 hours basis by staff of the Wirral MBC who have a direct telephone link to the District Communication Centre for Wirral where a monitor is also located enabling Police operators to receive visual images of incidents of policing note. A comprehensive code of practice was drawn up between the partnership members governing the systems use and the product of its cameras. Performance targets were associated with the schemes introduction and these included not only reductions in reported levels of crime but also a measurement of the fear of crime and perceptions of safety and public order. These indicators continue to be measured.

?Kersey Tunnel Operations Intelligence is fed through the Police systems which from time to time indicates the use of the Mersey Tunnels, the entrance and egress point for one of which is located within Birkenhead town centre, by people engaged on criminal activity. This has included the use of the tunnels by drugs traffickers attracted to the area from Liverpool. When such intelligence is received the Operation Townsafe police Team work together with the Tunnels Police and other appropriate bodies to intercept the offenders and reduce the threat to the safety of the Birkenhead publics.

Careful planning and use of specialist equipment is required for such operations and this is conducted by the Townsafe Team with approval for the operation coming from the Area Commander Superintendent Forrester. Arrest results bear testament to the high level of crime and disorder which is prevented from taking place by such planned operations.

Introduction of a Doorman Registration Scheme I have already made mention of the fact that part of the regeneration of Birkenhead has involved an expansion in the liquor licensing trade with new clubs being developed. Intelligence available to the Police

I showed that unless effectively managed the doormen facility on licensed premises may become the means by which high level criminal activity is conducted. Having identified this threat Superintendent Forrester together with his Licensing Sergeant and Wirral MBC developed an effective registration scheme.

The scheme was applied to all persons wishing to act as a doorman on any of the licensed premises within Birkenhead area. Such people were obliged as part of their eligibility to register to undergo a training programme developed and run by the Police and Wirral MBC. Only after training could they register for employment on Wirral in this area of work. The scheme is positively administered by the Townsafe Police Team and by Wirral MBC and has reduced the threat posed by less effective policing of doormen.

Liquor Licensing Bye laws Analysis of recent crime and disorder trends has shown an increase in the levels of injury being caused to members of the public by violence on the street. In particular injuries caused by attacks with bottles and beer glasses. Analysis clearly showed the street most at risk from this type of offence. After consultation between Superintendent Forrester and the Solicitors from Wirral MBC Bye laws to prohibit drinking on those identified streets have been agreed by the Council and now await approval at the Home Office.

Late night bus service The same analysis that identified the need for Bye laws to prevent consumption of alcohol on some of Birkenhead's streets also highlighted the threat to public safety caused by club goers emptying onto the streets of Birkenhead with no means of quickly leaving the area. Groups remained waiting for taxis etc. and the close proximity of large numbers of drunken people lead to violence.

Consultation with Merseytravel by Police from Central Wirral and Wirral MBC has secured the provision of a late night bus service for Birkenhead. This is the first time such a scheme has been attempted on Wirral. It provides a bus service that operates from

Birkenhead town centre area to a number of out of town destinations to take club goers from the town centre to their homes after enjoying a night's entertainment in Birkenhead.

The late night bus service has been operating only one month and it is therefore too early to evaluate the success of the venture in providing a lasting solution to crime and disorder problems in Birkenhead. The scheme does however, indicate the continuing partnership and problem focussed approach to making Birkenhead safe that has been adopted since the Townsafe Partnership began in 1995 and which remains as strong now.

Analysis of Results

The success criteria adopted by the Townsafe partnership are;

- To make the centre of Birkenhead a commercially thriving area.
- To reduce the levels of crime experienced within the centre of Birkenhead.
- To improve the feeling of safety experienced by people living working and visiting Birkenhead.

The range and diversity of the success criteria is we feel necessary based upon the overall aim of the Partnership.

Because this project is still ongoing the Partnership wish to stress that whilst confident in the methods currently used to monitor the success of the project the evaluation is on going and the partnership remains open minded about the methods to be used in future measurement.

All three criteria are dependent upon each other for their success and we felt could only be achieved by this partnership between public and private sectors and the community of Birkenhead

The methods we have used in order to evaluate our level of success include;

- Public *surveys* being conducted in Birkenhead, focussing in particular upon the level of safety the public now felt when visiting Birkenhead.
- Regular public forums at which the residents, business and homeowners, are able to not only express their opinions about the work that has taken place but also comment forward upon what they would like to see happening
- Measurement from Police and other data sources of the levels of crime being experienced.
- Reviewing the economic growth and public confidence in Birkenhead by measuring the number of new businesses attracted into the area and the footfall levels in the main shopping areas.

The result of this assessment is now outlined.

In 1998 a Liverpool University graduate as part of their studies completed an independent survey. The survey was amongst members of the public using Birkenhead town centre and asked the public how safe they felt now shopping, living and working in Birkenhead. The results showed that 95% of those questioned approved of the Townsafe initiative and 60% felt that Townsafe addressed their concerns about policing priorities and quality of life issues.

A further public survey, to be completed later this year, is now being commissioned by the Town Centre Management Team, which includes the Council Management Team, store managers, the Chamber of Commerce and the Police. The aim of this survey will be to review the feeling of safety being experienced and measure this against earlier baseline studies, (City Lands and Liverpool University), and to establish the needs of the public when visiting Birkenhead's shopping complex.

The 1998 Public perception Survey commissioned. by Merseyside Police featured 4 questions dedicated to evaluating the Townsafe Partnership. This survey was sent to 1000 homes on Wirral not just the Central Birkenhead Area in which Townsafe operates.

Results of these questions are fully documented within the Annex to this report however, as a marker of the success of Townsafe a question was asked;

"Are you more likely to visit Birkenhead Town Centre as a result of Townsafe ?"

41.3% of those responding said that they would be more likely to visit Birkenhead Town Centre as a result of Townsafe operating there.

In addition to the statutory Police Community Forums run by Merseyside Police Authority the Hamilton Quarter hold monthly Community Safety Forums. Membership includes, a member of the Police Townsafe Team, the Hamilton Quarter Management Team, a Community Safety worker. Members of the public who live in the area and members of the public who own businesses within the Birkenhead centre. These meetings are minted and are used to review work completed since the last meeting and discuss proposals for future work within the Birkenhead area, which will directly affect the communities within it.

The Central Wirral Area has its own Incident Management Unit (IMU), which incorporates an Intelligence Unit. Here a fully trained analyst is employed to review Police data and intelligence on crime and disorder and examine the information for trends and patterns. Once identified the Unit produces a SARA that is allocated to a named manager to complete. SARAs are drawn up and issued to both the Townsafe Team and the Community Beat Officers patrolling the Birkenhead central area.

Recorded crime levels have been reduced **over the last 3 years** in the area patrolled by the Townsafe Team;

Burglary dwelling	reduced by	43%
Burglary other than a dwelling	reduced by	29%
Theft from shops	reduced by	19.5%
Theft of motor vehicles	reduced by	22%
Disorder	reduced by	30%
Juvenile Disorder	reduced by	33%

However, not all crime is reported to the Police and to fill this gap in data and intelligence the Town Safe Team attend a monthly meeting with the security staff employed by retail and other businesses in the area. Here new trends, which are emerging, are discussed and unreported crime issues, e.g. purse thefts by pickpockets, are shared. Where a trend is identified a SARA approach is followed and plan to tackle the problem is agreed between those assembled. The intelligence and the SARA agreed is fed back by the team into the IMU.

The final area for evaluating our success is collected by businesses and the Local Authority.. A mechanism exists to measure the number of visitors to the two main shopping centres and here we can prove that customer counts have risen from a level of 2.3 million visitors during 1996/97 to a 1998/99 level of 4.4 million customers visiting Birkenhead.

Over 70 new businesses have been attracted into the Birkenhead area, including tea rooms, wine bars, restaurants, architects etc. It is said that, *"The shopping centre is growing and improving faster than any in the North West."*

In 1998, the Birkenhead Town Centre Retail Crime Initiative was Highly Commended in the British Crime Prevention and Community Safety Awards, supported by amongst others the Home Secretary, Jack Straw. The award was given for;

"Their effective partnership solution to the prevention of everyday crime in their community."

Earlier this year the Civic Trust made an award to the centre of Birkenhead and the Civic Trusts Director Mike Gwilliam said ;

"By working up a real local partnership the team have created a sense of confidence and purpose among local businesses and local people --- and once you get that confidence, the investment starts to seep back and flow into the town."

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My submission to you is that;

- The Townsafe Partnership have not only displayed and enjoyed the success of a problem orientated approach to the regeneration of Birkenhead but are continuing to do so.
 - The philosophy of Townsafe is wholly consistent with the guiding principles of the Crime and Disorder Act and the wish of Government and the people of Birkenhead to reduce crime and make Birkenhead feel safer and prosper.
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- I