

SUBMISSION OF THE TILLEY AWARD - 2004

**MAKING THE MOST OF SCHOOL
DINNERS AND SANTA CLAUS
IN COMMUNITY POLICING**

NORTH WALES POLICE

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SUMMARY

In July 2002 I took on the role of Territorial Inspector for the Wrexham Town area of North Wales. One of my areas of responsibility was the management of the Community Policing Teams. The largest in population being the Caia Park estate and is situated to the south east of the town centre.

The Caia Park Estate, previously known as Queens Park, consists of some 2,500 dwellings and 13,000 residents.

It is an estate that has had a lot of attention, and resources, (from various sources), put into it in the past. In policing terms it has until recently, (May 2003), been policed by 3 dedicated CBM's and 1 Sergeant who also had responsibility for all the town community beat managers.

In terms of crime, 815 crimes were reported in 2001/02 with a detection rate of 30.2% and in 2002/03 735 crimes reported with an increased detection rate of 35.2%.

Caia Park is a Communities First Area and has been struggling against negative press for many years. Despite this there is a wealth of activity in making this an area which excels in it's handling of youth development and community building initiatives.

Caia Park is an area of five very distinctive Wards, Smithfield, Cartrefle, Whitegates, Wynstay and Queensway. Each ward has a very active Tennants Association feeding back to the Caia Park Community Council.

It was in my initial dealings with the Caia Park Community Council that it became apparent that police and community relations were extremely poor. This was supported by a large number of complaints coming from the various schools on the estate. It was made very clear that the community had no confidence in the present community policing arrangements.

Of the three dedicated Community Beat Managers, one was performing an acting sergeant role in another police area, one was full time defensive tactics training and the third being left to deal with an area the size of Holyhead. I decided to submit a business case that would see the introduction of a dedicated Caia Park Policing team, comprising of one sergeant and five Community Beat Managers, plus three vehicles. I considered this would work well with the five wards. The plan was submitted and accepted as the way forward but events intervened which had a serious impact on the estate and the way it would be policed.

At 7.55pm on Sunday the 22nd of June 2003 a disturbance began on Prince Charles Avenue, involving a group of Iraqi Kurds and local youths. This disturbance escalated into a serious public order incident resulting in serious injury and damage. It was estimated that at one stage police were under attack from 250 persons using stones and petrol bombs against them.

On Monday the 23rd of June a significant inquiry commenced with police and the Council as to what had taken place and why. Unfortunately, before any conclusions were reached as to the previous night's disturbance, a second and even more violent disturbance started. This escalated into a situation requiring assistance from across North Wales, Merseyside and West Mercia. In the days and weeks that followed public meetings took place and the already low expectation of community policing was very apparent. This project describes how that low expectation and confidence has been completely altered. In 6 months there has been a reduction in recorded crime of 30%, a reduction in calls of anti social behaviour of 15% and a growth in confidence in the police that has been outstanding.

It is with the help of the PS Darren Jacks, Community Beat Sergeant for Caia Park, that I would hope to evidence the advances made and acceptance, by the community, of the best Community Policing Team ever. I will describe why I saw the door into the community being the children and describe how we made use of Santa Claus and school dinners in achieving our objectives.

Chris Beasley
Inspector – Wrexham Town

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective was to convince the local community that we would deliver a promise on the provision of EFFECTIVE community policing and that we were in this for the long term. In support of this a dedicated team of officers led by a sergeant would be held accountable for the management of all policing issues within the estate. This team would be visible, accessible and deliver a first class level of service.

In order to achieve the level of policing being asked for I saw the objectives as follow:

- To speed up implementation of the Business case
- To ensure that the Community Policing team were committed to the role
- To ensure the policing team were committed to the role for a minimum of 3 years
- To win back trust
- To effectively police the five wards
- To ensure police attendance at ALL tenant/council/youth meetings
- To improve media relationships
- To adopt a Problem Solving Approach in tackling the many issues effecting crime & anti social behaviour within the estate
- To work more effectively with our partners

A copy of the business plan is attached as an Appendix. It should be pointed out that the business plan had been submitted in the Spring of 2003 and had been agreed by the Divisional Commander. At the time of the disturbance one of the five community beat managers had been selected and had started work. It had been agreed PS Darren Jacks would lead the team and that he would be allowed to handpick the remaining four. The disturbance highlighted the need to speed up the plans implementation and that is what happened. Within weeks Sgt Jacks and his five officers were in post.

THE PROBLEM

Quite simply the problem was identified by the amount of negative correspondence arising out of a lack of police presence on the estate. With no Community Beat Sergeant and the one Community Beat Manager I found myself attending many tenant and council meetings. Many were not necessarily pitched at my level of responsibility. Nevertheless it was an effective way of assessing the mood on the estate and feelings towards police. It also resulted in daily contact with a great deal of local councillors and residents. That close contact proved invaluable in the months that followed.

At all these meetings the common theme was lack of commitment in policing the estate. It was felt that the one CBM in place was not providing any tangible service. In his defence this was not true but I could see how this might be the perception with the sheer volume of demands.

- Because of the lack of officers we were failing to provide a visible presence.
- Because of the lack of visible presence we failed to offer the required levels of reassurance.
- Because of the lack of reassurance the estate was perceived as unsafe.
- Because of the perception that the estate was unsafe the community felt they were not receiving the levels or standard of policing they were, rightly entitled to expect.

All this was being fed back to me directly from my attendance at the various meetings. I did have access to crime pattern analysis, which was at odds with what the community were saying. It showed recorded crime was down on the previous year and that detection rates sat at a respectable 35%. Despite this, if the community felt let down, then it was this perception that I had to address.

HOW THE PROBLEM WAS DEALT WITH

1. Implement the business plan.
2. Put together the Community Policing Team.
3. Introduce a crime car to speed up arrests.
4. Link each Community Beat Manager with a Ward to ensure ownership of an easily defined area. At the same time ensure they become the first point of contact within each of those wards.
5. Ensure the appropriate officer attends the meetings requiring a police presence.
6. Provide sufficient vehicles and high standard IT and communication equipment.
7. Get involved in school and all youth activities.
8. Make better use of the media.
9. Think outside the box in getting the support of the community.

Taking each heading in turn:

1.IMPLEMENT THE BUSINESS PLAN – A copy is attached as an appendix. Full approval was given by the Divisional Commander to fund and implement the plan in May of 2003. The unfortunate two nights of serious disorder took place as described above. What was fortunate was that I had taken the business case to the Community Council Meetings. I presented this as the way forward and in doing so answered the first criticisms that (A) The police were not listening to their concerns and (B) Showing our commitment to effectively policing their estate with their dedicated team. This presentation was well received and in the aftermath of the disturbance was used many times by the community leaders in showing that changes were being made and that this was not a knee jerk response to the disturbances.

In reality it was an amazing bit of luck that we had identified the problem and were responding ahead of what had been predicted in the business case if we failed to implement it.

2.PUT TOGETHER THE COMMUNITY POLICING TEAM – In May of 2003 the Chief Constables had agreed to the expansion of the number of Community Beat Managers. As a result the Eastern Division were able to bid for additional staff. My bid was for an additional three posts for Caia Park. Two would be PC's and the third would be a PC's post converted to a sergeant with the additional funding provided from division. A decision was then made to ensure that officers occupying the three existing posts would be dedicated to CBM work on Caia Park. There would be no distractions to conduct training or carry out any other duties than those of Beat Manager. At the same time the team were allocated two Cub vans for use on the estate. The latest computer tablets were supplied along with mobile phones. This resulted in access to all force systems from any location where a phone signal could be passed. In addition each CBM received a £500 budget for which they were totally responsible. The money was to be spent as they saw fit to help community projects. In order to ensure stability all Community Beat Managers were tied to three year contracts. All officers and equipment were in place by the September 2003.

3. INTRODUCE A CRIME CAR TO SPEED UP ARRESTS – In June of 2003 I looked at introducing a crime car to compliment and work closely with the Community Beat Managers. It was identified that suspects for crimes were being inputted into the Crimes system and yet they were not being arrested for some considerable time. During that period our suspects continue to create new victims. I saw the opportunity to introduce an unmarked crime car staffed, initially, by two experienced officers. To make it work they had one purpose and that was arrests. The selection process was simple in that I chose my two most pro active officers with the greatest local knowledge. On the 17th of June 2003 the team began operations and proved an immediate success. So successful in fact, that in the September I included a second crew. The shifts worked were Tuesday to

Saturday 9am to 5pm and 5pm to 1am with Overtime on Fridays and Saturdays for the late crew to 3am. As a result of their efforts I no longer have any outstanding warrants, the average time taken from identification of a suspect to arrest is 3 hours, with 523 arrests to their credit. In addition the crews directly input large amounts of intelligence on a daily basis. (An example of 1 days log from both cars is included as an appendix – *The reports have been cleaned so as not to identify the persons mentioned*). Future developments will include using the latest digital video camera in the car to try and identify those who make off from the crime car.

4. LINK EACH COMMUNITY BEAT MANAGER TO A WARD – With the acceptance of five CBM's it made very sense to give each responsibility for a council ward. The five wards of Caia Park are very different and each has it's own problems. Each CBM was required to find a Police Post within their ward and put themselves forward as the first point of contact. At the same time they would take responsibility for attending to all Tennants Association Meetings. The five CBM's would then report back to the CBM Sergeant who would then take on responsibility for attending the Council Meetings leaving me free to attend meetings at a strategic level. As an area manager this allowed me to cover all the bases in terms of providing a full interactive service and offer accessibility to everyone on the estate.

5. ENSURE THE APPROPRIATE OFFICER ATTENDS THE MEETINGS REQUIRING A POLICE PRESENCE – At the top of the tree on the estate is the Caia Park Communities First Limited. It is through here that all funding is routed. As a representative of the police force I have an executive board member place within the company and therefore have an insight to all developments on the estate. At the same time I share responsibility for attending Strategic Meetings with the CBM Sergeant. The CBM Sergeant then attends all Community Council Meetings with the CBM's left to cover the Tennants Association Meetings. At the same time I share my office with my CBM sergeants, this allows me to keep upto date with all community concerns. Community feedback has been excellent and the links made gives me easy access to every activity within my area of responsibility. Partnership working is made easy. So good has the working relationship been that I see the majority of community movers as friends. This has lead to joint training sessions such as a recent two day input on funding and project management. Both I, and my CBM sergeant were invited to attend with the Caia Park Communities First paying the expenses

6. PROVIDE SUFFICIENT VEHICLES AND HIGH STANDARD I.T. AND COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT – To allow officers to spend more time on their areas two LDV Cub vans, with a prisoner cage in the rear, were provided. At the same time to provide links to all the force computer systems each CBM received their own COMPAQ computer tablet. These connected to the Force I.T. systems through mobile phone technology and could be used anywhere. At the same time each officer was given a mobile phone and discretion as to who they disclosed the number. In the main this went the community contacts and vulnerable residents.

7.GET INVOLVED IN ALL SCHOOL AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES – When deciding on the rebuilding plan in the spring 2003 we really had to listen to what the community were saying. As a territorial inspector with focus very much on performance the communities real concerns were being overlooked. Attendance at all community meetings was focussed not on the areas crime figures, not on the reduction of burglary or how many car thieves we had caught, their concerns were, in the main, relating to anti social and youth behaviour. Time and time again it was the activities of the young that caused the most concern. The first job of the new CBM's was to involve themselves in every aspect of youth activity.

This included:

- **Youth Offending Service**
- **Youth Inclusion programme**
- **Youth Clubs**
- **Schools**
- **Multi Use Game areas**
- **The Venture Youth Activity Centre**
- **Inter Agency Forum**

From the outset the CBM's involved themselves with all the above. One example is that of PC Melanie Brace who attended at the Venture Youth Activity Centre. The purpose was to introduce herself but within the hour was an active participant of a water bomb war. Despite ending the shift looking like a drowned rat this one activity endeared her to the children and ever since has been a firm favourite of theirs.

Other CBM's have helped to set up youth clubs and then help in the running. One used his links to Asda store to equip one of the clubs with a wide array of games and electrical goods.

Another initiative was the setting up of a police post within Gwenfro School, which has again been an outstanding success in police youth relationships.

PC Steve Owens had a different tactic. This officer has been very active in school liaison. He is currently trying to arrange funding for a minibus to be shared by the 5 infant schools on the park. Each day he calls at a different school where he is invited to a school dinner. He sits with the children who now idolise him. It's an amazing sight to see the children waiting along the school fence for Steve to arrive. This level of contact has resulted in complimentary letters from school head teachers as well as parents and local councillors. In laying the foundations for the future I see such integration as invaluable.

Other such initiatives have included CBM's paying for Clowns and Magicians to attend school parties. One CBM found the money to allow a child to go on a school trip to Chessington Zoo after her parents were unable to find the money. Another big favourite this Christmas, was the CBM sergeant posing as Santa Clause, calling at all the infant school parties where we supplied small gifts. All these simple community interactions are fed back through the children to their parents. As officers patrol the estate these same parents stop and begin a conversation based on the stories being told by their children. Very soon that chat becomes an intelligence gathering exercise and once again we increase that community contact and acceptance.

8. **MAKING BETTER USE OF THE MEDIA** – For many years Caia Park has suffered from poor media coverage. Even a change of name from Queens Park failed to make a difference. After the summer disturbances every press story relating to the estate mentioned 'Riot torn Estate'. This was so even if the story was completely unrelated to the disturbances. Eventually it was decided that a small group of community leaders, including myself would invite the editors of the local press to a meeting at the Caia Park Centre. A useful discussion took place in which the negative attitude of the press was discussed. Thankfully the editors could see the damage they were doing to the community and agreed that they would no longer refer to the disturbances unless the particular story was directly linked to it. To be fair to those editors they have been true to their word.

Over recent months film crews have revisited the area and been shown all the excellent work being done. The programmes have been very favourable in reporting police and public relations. When those stories go out it has invited a response from other forces looking to solve similar problems. West Mercia and Derbyshire Constabulary's have both sent research teams to Wrexham to see how we have achieved our results. At the same time councils from not only Britain but Europe have sent representatives to the Park to look at the community building structures

that are working so well and receiving international acclaim. It is clearly important to promote these achievements as it's shown to be the best way to re establish that lost public reassurance.

9. **THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX IN GETTING THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY –**
As we move into a more technological age it is important to keep up with the way we communicate. In January 2004 Community leaders decided to arrange a visit to every household on the estate. Assistance was sort from the CBM's and gladly given. The intention was to canvass views on health, local services, community safety and a number of other important issues. Each organisation could submit literature to be delivered explaining what was available to residents. In the past 12 months the Easter Division has been trying to promote ECOMMS. The system will provide details of crime and other activity in the area, that the police feel people should be aware of. The process is designed to raise awareness and reduce the fear of crime in the community and will provide an opportunity for members of the public to pass information back to the police. With the incredible uptake in Home Computers linked to the internet this is seen as a big step in how we might communicate. Simply by logging on to the ecomms site people can sign into the system. The proposed visits and leaflet drop would allow us to pass on details to every householder on the estate. At the same time we took the time to prepare a poster giving details of all the Community Policing Team, the details of Police Posts, ECOMMS, what it means and how to join. Also included were details of the forces anti social behaviour initiative, 'Dyna Ddigon' and the Crimestoppers telephone number. (Copy attached as appendix)

MEASURING SUCCESS

Reductions in Crime of 30% and anti social behaviour of 15% is perhaps one way but might not be a down to the effectiveness of what we have been trying to achieve. (I have included a 1 month snap shot analysis of crime and anti social behaviour within the appendix). From my perspective I could see that prior to the summer of 2003 I was constantly replying to letters of complaint. At Council meetings I was constantly trying to give reasons why there were no officers on the estate and why the police were held in such low esteem.

I measure the success in the lack of complaints and the enthusiastic response to police in our partnership work. I see officers walking the estate as if they were the Pied Piper followed by excited and happy children or their faces lighting up as PC Steve Owens turns up to join them for dinner. This may not be the usual way such a report would measure success but to any visitor that bond between police and community is almost tangible. It is a credit to PS Darren Jacks and his team that all this trust and mutual understanding has been achieved in such a short time.

For me the ultimate measurement of success came at a meeting held at the Caia Park Communities First Office on the 15th of December 2003. It does not involve a comparable chart or list of impressive figures. It involves a special meeting, which had been requested by the local Member of Parliament, Mr Ian Lucas. Mr Lucas has long campaigned for Caia Park to receive Priority Policing Status from the Home Office and thereby attract additional funding. The meeting included all the Community leaders along with the Divisional Commander and the Chairman of the Police Authority Mr Malcolm King. A presentation was made on what PPA status would bring and fully passionately supported by Mr Lucas. What then followed was what I see as my measurement of success. Speaker after speaker then refused to accept the need for the proposed PPA status. Each in turn gave full support to their local policing team and the service they were receiving. With the Chairman of the Police Authority there to witness, and lend his support to, this unanimous vote of confidence in what had been achieved in such a short period.

PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH

The problem was always on a large scale. It was not a small group of children causing a disturbance in a small area. This was a complete rebuild of police community relations on an 11,000 residents estate. Many of those residents had held the police in low esteem for many years. It needed a special team with special communication and problem solving skills. The problem was getting them in post, supplying them with the tools to do the job and use unusual methods to win back the trust of a community deserving the very best police service available. At the beginning I doubt if I would have included water bomb fights, dressing up as Santa Claus or sitting down to eat school dinners in the action plan. Nevertheless these tactics have worked when other more conventional plans might have failed. To me the success is that officers of quality are in a post where they want to be, delivering a quality service to a quality estate.

I submit this report for consideration for the TILLEY AWARD 2004.

Chris Beasley
Inspector Wrexham Town