

ATCM Town Centre Management Awards 2002
Best Liveability Partnership
(Birmingham City Centre Crime Prevention Partnership)

A wide range of both innovative and 'tried and trusted' measures, aimed at making Birmingham the UK's safest city, have been introduced over the last few years. We are now reaping the benefits of our 'Safer City Campaign' and progress is reflected in crime statistics, reducing retail stock losses, increasing visitor numbers and the rapidly changing perception of Britain's second city.

Our success is largely due to the highly effective partnership which has developed between the Police, Birmingham City Centre Partnership, local businesses and other stakeholders. This has enabled BCCP and the Crime Prevention Partnership to tackle proactively high profile and difficult issues including anti-social behaviour, litter and graffiti, store theft, car crime and street begging to ensure that 'liveability' is a key principle of all city centre management activity.

Perhaps the strongest testament to the combined effectiveness of these measures is the growth of city living over the last few years. Until recently few people lived in the city centre. Now, city living is positively booming with some 6,000 dwellings due for completion by the end of 2003 and new City Living report, believed to be the first of its kind in the UK, shows that over 90% of residents are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with City living in Birmingham.

An outline of some of Birmingham's Safer City initiatives follows:

- **Retail Crime Operation/Retail Radio (1999)**

Birmingham RCO has created by City Centre Management in 1999 and is now one of the most successful operations in the UK and cited as an example of good practise by the Home Office. The scheme over 1000 members and issues exclusion notices to shop thieves banning their entry into all participating stores. A photographic database of excluded persons is distributed to all members. Over the last three years reported stock loss from member stores has reduced by a massive 22%, accompanied by a significant drop in shop thefts. The retail radio system is trunked with a direct radio link to the police CCTV control centre and retail crime team.

- **Safer Shopping Award (2000)**

Birmingham City Centre was one of the first locations in the UK to receive the Safer Shopping Award.

- **Midland and Regional Crime Initiative (2002)**

The Police, City Centre Partnership, Pallasades Shopping Centre and RCO are actively involved in co-ordinating the exchange of information and intelligence across the region. It demonstrates the importance attached to joint working, sharing best practice and developing new ideas and technology.

- **BIC's (2001)**

Birmingham City Centre Partnership provided the funding to establish the Business Information Crime System and was the first city to launch the system. It provides a regional computerised database of criminals involved in retail crime together with associated intelligence.

- **Citywatch (1998)**

Citywatch was originally founded in 1989 as a private sector initiative. It has now developed into a true partnership between the private sector, Birmingham City Centre Partnership, the City Council and the police providing 49 state of the art CCTV cameras monitored 24 hours, 7 days a week in the Steelhouse Lane Central OCU control centre. Facial recognition and a vehicle number plate reader have been added to the system to identify known criminals and stolen vehicles.

The City Centre Partnership provided the funding for a hard-wired fibre optic link between the police/city council control centres so that images and camera control can be interchanged when necessary.

- **Beacons (1999)**

These CCTV beacons won the prestigious nationally awarded Millennium Product status by the UK Design Council. The design has been used as a model of best practice by many other towns and cities since their launch in 1998 and this has provided a regular income stream for Citywatch.

- **Help Points. (2002)**

New emergency help points have been established in five busy areas of the city centre. Launched in July 2002 by Home Office Minister John Denham, the Help Points provide a two-way communication link between the street and the CCTV control room for anyone who feels threatened or unsafe. The nearest CCTV camera automatically focuses on the Help Point when it is used. Funding of £30K was provided by Birmingham City Centre Partnership with further development planned for 2003

- **Safe Havens (2001)**

Safe Havens provide a network of premises across the city centre – including shops, public building and banks – where anyone concerned about their safety or wanting to report a crime/incident can do so. Trained staff are available to take a written report of any incident and when necessary, contact an officer in the police control centre.

- **Crime Fighting Teams (2001/2)**

Under the Government's Crime Fighting fund initiative Birmingham city centre has successfully bid for an extra 38 PC posts to boost policing in six distinct operational areas. Additionally, two further posts have been created in the Community Safety Bureau at the Steelhouse Lane Central OCU to improve the quality of intelligence to the teams. The additional officers work in: Central retail core, Business Quarter, Broad Street leisure area, markets/Chinese quarter/Gay Village, Jewellery Quarter, Eastside Development. The teams support the priorities set out in the Crime & Disorder Strategy and target street offences, maintain and improve crime reduction initiatives and provide high visibility reassurance.

- **Passive Response Drugs Dog (2000)**

In November 2000, Birmingham City Centre introduced Bruno, the UK's first-ever passive response drugs dog to their fight against crime. The dog is trained to walk amongst people and their property and, if he detects narcotics, sits quietly next to them. Bruno has been used in a variety of locations from shopping centres to nightclubs and to date has made over 120 detections of illegal drugs.

- **Use of Anti Social Behaviour Orders (2001)**

ASBO's have been used effectively in Birmingham with the first UK order against an aggressive street beggar successfully prosecuted last year. This individual generated a considerable volume of complaints and is now serving a four-year prison sentence for breach of the ASBO.

Birmingham has also been selected to run the pilot scheme for on the spot antisocial behaviour fines.

- **Civil Injunctions (2002)**

The City Council acting with the police are currently seeking a civil injunction against six persistent city centre beggars. The order will forbid the individuals from begging on the streets of the city centre.

- **Partnership Information Networking Systems (PINS) (2001)**

A police text messaging broadcast facility to named individuals in the private sector has been established to disseminate information & intelligence promptly. This supplements the ringmaster system, a computer messaging system which broadcasts either voice or fax messages and e-mail to designated addresses which are then cascaded via the business's own intranet.

- **Business Watch (2002)**

A new scheme is currently being piloted by a number of legal, accountancy and property companies located in the business district of the city centre. It operates on a similar principle to that of a neighbourhood watch scheme but in this case with a radio link. The concierge and security staff from these companies work closely together monitoring both access to their buildings and activity in the street.

- **Guardianship Week – Making Birmingham The Safest City (2001 and 2002)**

An initiative unique to Birmingham, Guardianship Week, was launched in 2001. The scheme encourages employers, employees and everyone involved in the city centre to care about their own safety and the safety of others, acknowledging the strength of a community outside the workplace helping to make the city the safest place in which to live, work and play. Events include crime prevention advice, security/safety displays, office/manual/retail workers and business professionals shadowing Police Officers for a day, annual luncheon addressed this year by Clare Short MP. Special Guardianship black and white chequered ribbons are sold in aid of Citywatch and Diana Princess of Wales Birmingham Children's hospital. The Police, BCCP and the business community provide funding for the scheme.

- **Alternative Giving Scheme – change for the better(2002)**

This new scheme, funded by Birmingham City Centre Partnership, aims to support the work of the rough sleepers unit, voluntary sector and the police by inviting the public to make donations to a special fund, rather than give money directly to beggars. The fund will support those voluntary organisations working to help rough sleepers and beggars off the streets and into a more settled lifestyle. Although it is too early to assess the impact of this scheme, more than one hundred city centre businesses have agreed to take responsibility for a collecting box and there is extensive support from key public and voluntary organisations as well as the media and business community.

- **Street Entertainment (2001)**

A system to manage the activities of street entertainers was introduced by Birmingham City Partnership to deal with penny whistle players who could not in fact play and were in reality begging. Following a consultation process a pass to perform was introduced and is issued to entertainers who demonstrate an acceptable level of competence. Anyone busking without a pass will be asked to move on by a police officer. With the consent of the entertainer a video is taken of the initial performance and the tape(s) are made available to any business that may wish to use street entertainers in a promotional activity, providing a potential source of income for the entertainers. Help is offered through the Birmingham Fringe to those who have a poor repertoire or fail to reach the required standard. All performances take place at designated/sponsored 'busk stops' which are designed to show the performer has official sanction to play/perform.

- **Skateboarders. (1999 – 2002)**

Measures have been introduced aimed at reducing skateboarding in pedestrianised areas of the city centre. These include: a Bylaw introduced by the City Council banning skateboarding and associated activities in designated public places; infrastructure changes to design-out the appeal of certain areas; the identification of a suitable site for a mini-skatepark in the city centre and letters sent by Police to the parents of young skateboarders, pointing out their vulnerability as well as the danger and damage they cause. The combined effect of these measures has reduced complaints about skateboarding by around 40% over the last 6 months.

- **Flyposting, Litter, Graffiti etc (1999 –2002)**

Regular patrols of Birmingham's central street by City Centre Representatives have helped to develop a proactive approach to removing flyposting, litter and graffiti and resolving other minor maintenance issues. The Representatives are employed by Groundwork UK under 'New Deal' arrangements and work alongside City Centre Management.

- **Major Events (2002)**

Effective partnership working ensured that the major events hosted in Birmingham City Centre over the Jubilee in June 2002 were enjoyable trouble free and safe – in spite of the huge number of visitors (20,000+ at Blue Peter concert in Centenary Square and more than 250,000 over the three day event)

- **Youth on Youth Offending Research (2001)**

Represents 80% of reported street crime. Crime Concern has been commissioned to research the 'why's' of robbery profiling offenders, victims and locations.

- **Moving forward together: 2003 and beyond.....**

Although much has already been achieved, a number of new partnership initiatives are currently in the pipeline including a £600K bid for city centre street wardens; development of a marketing strategy for the Crime Reduction Partnership; a 'Safe Drinking' campaign targeting the Broad Street night-life area of the city centre; further Emergency Help Points, Guardianship Week 2003 and much more.

Supporting Information: City Centre Partnership Plan – City Centre Living Report – Crime Statistics – Retail Crime Operation Statistics – Press Cuttings