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SAFETY DEPARTMENT

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Tilley Award 2003
The White City Project
Category: Crime & Disorder Reduction

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THE WHITE CITY PROJECT

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Summary

The homes constructed on the White City estate, Maltby were of the type designed to be built quickly and to provide temporary accommodation for a period of around ten years before being replaced with higher specification housing. This reconstruction was much delayed and in part led to the problems described below.

The estate has suffered for years from an abnormally high incidence of crime and disorder. It reached its height in the summer of 1999, which saw an unprecedented number of arson attacks on the White City community, petrol bombing of the police and widespread disorder. The estate placed high demands on police time, 13% of all recorded crime in the area was concentrated on this estate, a figure disproportionate to the number of residents.

The Fire Service reported a high increase in requests for their assistance. Many of these visits were made more dangerous by the presence of stone throwing youths. The Fire Service attended forty-two incidents in one month alone and the estate annually accounted for 34% of all fire calls in the town.

In addition to gathering statistical data analysis of reported incidents, recorded crime figures and housing data were studied in order to identify hotspots, trends, in fact any significant factor that could be used to isolate those responsible for the incidents that were causing concern. At the same time the police prepared a Community Safety Audit of the estate in which architectural and design factors contributing to the problem were identified, and a Residents Survey was conducted in order to identify matters of greatest concern to those living with the problem.

In 1999 the fight back began in earnest, a multi-agency partnership was formed which continues to this day. The partnership sets itself 'SMART' objectives and uses all the skills available through the different agencies involved to achieve them. If at any time we have been unsuccessful, we try again until we are.

The same data used to identify the problems back in 1999 is constantly being monitored in order to keep the project on track. Any sudden deviations from normal levels trigger a response from the appropriate agency in order to stop it quickly. Since 1999 the Fire Service and Police have been able to identify savings of some £385,190, crime levels have reduced to 3% of the town's total figure and only 8% of fires.

Introduction:

Maltby is an extensive, sprawling community situated to the east of Rotherham, predominantly straddling the busy A631, which links the towns of Rotherham and Bawtry. Open countryside surrounds the area on three sides, to the west is the M18 motorway at the Hellaby junction and Dinnington lies to the south. The residents represent a whole range of socio-economic groups and despite the construction of many new houses, much of the 'village' is clearly made up of low-income households.

For many years the main employer in the town was its colliery situated on the very outskirts and virtually opposite the White City estate, it is no coincidence that the decline of the two are inextricably linked.

The homes constructed on the White City estate were the type designed to be built quickly and to provide the mining community accommodation for a period of around ten years before being replaced with higher specification housing. This reconstruction was very much delayed and not addressed at all until many of the properties were in poor condition. Maltby now contains one of the highest concentrations of older housing in the Rotherham area.

Maltby has a narrow economic base with a population of around 22,000¹, of which about 5,000 is less than 18 years—a significant indicator. Unemployment in this category has been significant for sometime and has been as high as 13%.

The White City estate is policed by 'C' District uniform and CID officers operating out of Maltby Police Station, supported by two Community Constables. These officers work a flexible type shift pattern, which provides overlaps at key times in order to facilitate proactive initiatives and public order patrols when demand is predicted to be high.

The estate has suffered for years from an abnormally high incidence of crime and disorder; this inevitably affects the mood of many residents on the estate. The summer of 1999 saw an unprecedented number of arson attacks and petrol bombing of emergency services on the White City community. The Fire Services reported a high increase in requests for their assistance. Many of these visits were made more dangerous by the presence of stone throwing youths. The Fire Service and Police attended forty-two incidents in one month alone. It was necessary for task force and mounted branch officers to be deployed on the estate in order to restore order.

Back in 1999, in response to the mounting problems, the Residents Association evolved in to a multi-agency partnership. What we in the newly formed partnership were interested in was moving beyond the rhetoric of community police partnerships and into the reality of making it work. We started by reading all the Home Office publications we could get our hands on, particularly the POP booklets. We realised that the field of community partnerships is littered with failed efforts to change how organisations and the public interact with one another and recognised that this is particularly a problem between agencies.

It became clear to us that translating the abstract concepts of community partnerships and problem oriented policing into day-to-day steps that police and local authority officers would be able to follow is difficult. It is also difficult to rebuild the collective self worth of communities that have lost it. Just as it is difficult to involve the residents of poor, disenfranchised neighbourhoods in partnerships with the police,

¹ Rotherham Unitary Development Plan Strategy to reduce crime and disorder 1999-2002

particularly when they have been indoctrinated since childhood with the concept of, not trusting the police and generally telling them nothing.

During September 1999 a meeting of the partnership took place regarding the identification of the most important issues affecting the estate. It was agreed that arson was the main problem and had attracted adverse television coverage of the estate. At the meeting there was agreement by the partners that in isolation each member was unable to resolve the arson issue and to tackle the problem a new approach was required. It was agreed that letters would be sent to all residents from the various local authority departments involved, the police, voluntary agencies and the three landlords with properties on the estate, affirming their commitment to work together to stamp out unlawful or anti-social behaviour.

A meeting was convened of all the members of the partnership on 11 November 1999 in Maltby. The meeting was the beginning of the formalised partnership and this continues to the present day.

Analysing the problem:

In our problem-solving model, a "problem" is defined as a group of related incidents or an ongoing situation that concerns a significant portion of those who live or work in a particular area. A problem is also persistent if it is unlikely to disappear without active intervention of some magnitude and must potentially be solved using police, other agencies and community resources combined, because not everything is within the power one team in isolation. A problem need not be a serious criminal matter. Although dealing with crime remains at the heart of the police mission, it was envisioned from the beginning that the police mandate would co-ordinate responses to a broad range of community concerns, including social disorder, local authority service problems, and even the infringement of tenancy agreements.

In practice, analysis of reported incidents and recorded crime figures lent support to the view that frequently, problems are not legal offences at all. Large proportions are issues related to youth nuisance and alcohol or drug abuse but minor issues resolved have ranged between noise nuisance and people repairing their cars at the roadside.

The White City approach was in line with principles of Problem Oriented Policing, in that community problems were addressed at source. Rather than continually returning to the estate to simply contain a problem, by addressing the underlying causes of crime and nuisance calls, it was hoped that the number and frequency of calls would be reduced substantially. Discussions took place regarding the way forward and a joint strategy was agreed:

- To conduct a thorough, street by street, community safety audit the Police agreed to produce it.
- Resident's survey was produced which complimented the audit and which was distributed to occupiers with the intention of addressing many aspects of life on this estate. We decided to complete the distribution of the Residents Survey to impact simultaneously with the audit.
- To provide residents with a voice and clear lines of communicating with the officials involved in the partnership

The views of the community are represented in two ways: through a district-level advisory committee known as the Maltby Community Safety Group where policies and strategies are discussed, and through monthly community meetings held in the Community House, Quilter Road. Since 1999 people have attended these meetings

every month, as targets were set and then met, this led to the spread of program awareness and sparked involvement in the problem-solving effort. Priority problems identified by White City residents were incorporated into formal beat plans and operational orders drawn up by the community officers and officials serving the area.

Members of the partnership have access to all of the membership departments to deal with problems, and can quickly mobilise services. This structure enabled officers to respond effectively to problems they do not ordinarily handle and for which they are not traditionally equipped. Another important feature of the partnership approach taken on the White City is that residents were expected to take an active role as partners with the police and on their own.

The Community Safety Audit:

The 1999 Community Safety Audit looked at the White City, which at that time was very much an estate under renovation. It is worth recounting the state of the place at the time the audit was completed, many homes had been refurbished but others were waiting to be demolished or renovated. Space had been created where some houses had been demolished already.

South Yorkshire Housing Association own a substantial number of houses with a private company called Greystones Estates owning the majority of the remaining homes. The local authority (RMBC) owns 8 properties. The road structure remained the same on the completed estate.

The renovation was started in 1998 and was due to be completed in 2003, in fact it is now coming to a close with the final phase, the construction of housing for private purchase, underway. The main access onto the estate is via Quilter Road.

This is an extract from the 1999 Community Safety Audit,

“Immediately you enter the estate the amount of litter and rubbish dumped in gardens becomes apparent. This is highlighted by the outline of four terraced houses that form a Tee junction with Quilter Road. It is obvious that these houses have been subjected to extreme vandalism and arson. Access to the houses could be easily gained and the whole area around these houses is dangerous.

- Recommendation 1
These four houses (1,3,5,7 Mortimer Road) should be demolished immediately, the hedges removed, the ground leveled and made good. This should be seen as a priority. The owners (believed to be 3 x South Yorkshire housing and 1 x RMBC) have a duty of care. Fires might be repeated and someone could be injured. These empty houses can only be described as crime generators where differing forms of criminal activity is known to take place.

Three sets of semi detached houses on Elgar Drive (26,28,33,35,37 and 39) are also scheduled to be demolished. Some of these have also suffered arson and extreme vandalism.

- Recommendation 2
These six homes should be demolished at the same time as the Mortimer 4. The very tall overgrown hedges should be removed, all debris removed and the ground leveled and made good. This should not be a gradual process it should be achieved as a continuous process. This is very important to raise the image of the estate, it is the first junction and at the moment it is reminiscent of images seen on TV coverage of Kosovo. Unoccupied properties (and some occupied houses)

have very tall overgrown hedges. These have been used in the recent past for youths to hide behind and harass passersby and have provided cover for the throwing of petrol bombs. They contribute significantly towards the fear of crime. They also look very untidy and unkempt.

- Recommendation 3

All hedges of unoccupied property due for demolition should be removed, property due to be renovated should either be removed if eventually fencing will replace them or they should be cut to a height of 1 foot tall. This will have four major advantages it will remove vast areas of shadow at night, remove cover for various illegal activities, enhance the look of the estate and reduce residents' fear of crime.

- Recommendation 4

All debris generated from the removal or cutting of the hedges should be removed off site the same day. At present there are piles of old hedges scattered about the estate. These could easily become bonfires and may even be used to fuel fires next to resident's homes. The existing piles of hedges should be removed immediately.

Many of the unoccupied houses and much of the open space is littered with items ranging from old settees to bike frames. Broken bottles and empty cans are in abundance. Children play in these open areas and are at risk of serious injury.

- Recommendation 5

All rubbish should be removed off the estate immediately

Some houses have already been demolished and much of the land they occupied is fenced off with temporary fencing. The original hedges are left in many cases and these have been allowed to continue to grow. The actual ground and gardens of these demolished houses are strewn with rubbish and remnants of the demolition process.

- Recommendation 6

These sites must be cleared of debris, redundant hedges removed, and all fencing secured until this process is completed.

-

Fencing has been stacked at various points around the estate, some is wooden whilst other is of the steel security type used on building sites. Children are using them to play on.

- Recommendation 7

Fencing awaiting removal or burning should be removed from the estate ASAP. Children have used fencing as a bike track; this should be cleared away immediately as it represents a hazard.

Street lighting exposes certain criminal activity. This is probably the reason the lighting is attacked so regularly. The removal of hedges and piles of earth will increase the number of natural surveillance areas on the estate.

- Recommendation 8

Regular inspections on the streetlights should be made and any damaged lights replaced. Consideration should be given to using tougher materials. Previously made recommendations re clearance work should be implemented in full.

Incomplete areas of demolished houses mar the general appearance of the estate and the roads have an unacceptable amount of litter on them.

- Recommendation 9

The roads should be swept at regular intervals.

The vacant plot areas created by demolition of homes are a major problem. As mentioned earlier the debris is being thrown and the areas are a danger as a playground.

- Recommendation 10

They should be landscaped (or at least covered with topsoil) as soon as practicable and the intended paths be laid at the same time.

Houses that have become vacant have in the past not been properly secured this has contributed to the problems of criminal damage and arson that have plagued the estate.

- Recommendation 11

Immediately houses become vacant and are due for renovation, adequate boarding (steel shuttering) should be used to secure them.

Even when there has been good practice where houses have been properly shuttered, there are still areas on the estate have not been properly and safely maintained.

Recommendation 12

Working areas should be properly secured.

Anecdotal information suggests that there are a significant number of serious crimes committed on the estate, which appear not to have been reported to the police. There is either some exaggeration or under reporting of crime. To determine if this is so we have in conjunction with the White City Residents association commissioned a Residents' Survey, which is currently being completed by the inhabitants".

Problem Solving in Practice:

The housing estate was already identified for refurbishment by SYHA (South Yorkshire Housing Association); we were able by the partnership approach to bring this major project, including the funding packages already agreed, forward. All the recommendations of the community safety audit were implemented.

This was a major commitment by RMBC and SYHA, it has been backed up by all the landlords adopting a common approach to their tenancy agreements with a number of clauses built in to make nuisance residents easier to tackle. Widespread use is made of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's) when behaviour patterns require more rigorous control. At the present time a number of individuals are being considered for Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's), appropriate agencies are working together and gathering evidence at this stage. We consider ASBO's a last resort and explore all other avenues before committing to this course of action.

The community beat officers quickly began employing creative or at least non-traditional strategies for solving problems. A significant introduction was a weekly joint patrol of the estate (the walkabouts), with all partners being represented on the patrol. Each agency enforces in their own field – it could be offenders being dealt with by a police officer or a resident spoken to about breaches of tenancy agreement by a housing officer. It's not all about the negatives though, of equal importance is to 'catch people doing right', praise where its due can be very valuable. The 'walkabouts' continue to this day and remain both popular and effective.

This was one of the aspects of the new program that has not surfaced as often as we would have liked. Most officials on the team have, in the main, retained traditional tactics. Some of the innovations involved communicating and working with new civilian partners, including school heads, voluntary groups and local retailers. One weekend saw residents and children assisted by police cadets and junior fire-fighters, cleaning up a section of hedgerow of litter which included drug paraphernalia as well as general rubbish.

The group has each year set itself a list of targets to strive for in that year. Productivity has been found to improve when these targets were reduced to 'bite sized chunks' of a specific nature. We now have a housing group, a community safety group, children and young people group and an environment group. Each team has an identified lead agency responsible for delivering the action plans of that group.

Considerable care is given to ensure agencies including the police reported back to residents on the status of problems discussed at previous meetings or on their efforts to do something about them. It is our experience that providing success at community meetings encourages future participation. Meetings are therefore carefully minuted in order to keep careful track of each problem raised. At each meeting an action plan would be agreed upon, with each member being fully aware of what his or her commitment to the process is. At subsequent community meetings, team members then report back on what they had done about the problems discussed at the last meeting and their current status.

Many examples of creative partnership working have been identified; a good example of this has been preventative action to stop the dumping of stolen and other vehicles on land adjacent to the estate. With the cooperation of many individuals and companies, the land has now been circled with very large boulders and sturdy gates have been erected in order to allow legitimate access. The site is also a nature reserve and this provided the most effective solution to residents and environmentalists alike. Later, when the site was secure, Fifty-five stolen and burnt out cars were recovered. The large number of vehicle's recovered illustrates the previous scale of the problem. Now, although the gates have been rammed a couple of times, the site remains unbreached and the problems appear to have been given a long-term solution in an imaginative way.

Since the measures identified in the police community safety survey were implemented, the estate has had no arson attacks and crime levels generally have been reduced by significant amounts. At the beginning, in 1998 154 crimes were committed on the estate, which represented 14% of the total crime in Maltby in that year. This was the same the following year with 166 crimes equating to 13% of the total crime in the area. In the years up to present date however, the story has been different. Only 52 crimes in 2000, 4% of total, 57 the year after and only 54 last year representing only 3% of the total crime in the town.

South Yorkshire Fire and rescue have reported a steady decline in fire calls from the estate. They reached a peak in 1999 when 38% of all Maltby's fires occurred on the White City, this has now dropped to only 8% of total, at a time when they are rising elsewhere in Maltby.

The combined cost savings in terms of both agencies since 1999 are conservatively calculated at some £385,190². This figure would obviously increase if savings from

² Using costing methods suggested in Home Office Research Study 217 (2000) 'The Economic & Social Cost of Crime'.

RMBC Housing and other Departments were to be included. By any standards we feel this is a significant milestone and a feather in the cap of the partnership.

Other Milestones have been:

- The Residents Association continues running in harmony with the Partnership.
- The partnership expanding with the Police, landlords and other agencies joining.
- Community Safety audits a continuing feature.
- Residents Surveys carried out to check progress.
- Acceptance and implementation of findings.
- Meeting structure with specific roles and responsibilities.
- Monitor impact.
- Enforce law and tenancy agreements with joint foot patrol.

The initiative has attracted much interest locally; it has been the subject of several newspaper articles and has formed part of a study by Hallam University. It is now regarded as a model of good practice by the force and is currently being replicated in five other areas of Rotherham.

The impact for the police service of South Yorkshire has been that where once, considerable time and resources were committed to the estate, we now no longer need to provide that presence. This means we are able to deploy those resources elsewhere in the district. This is the reality of good, effective, problem solving and partnership working.

Appendix

1. A property on Quilter Road 1999



2. A property on Mortimer Road 1999



3. Examples of overgrown hedges



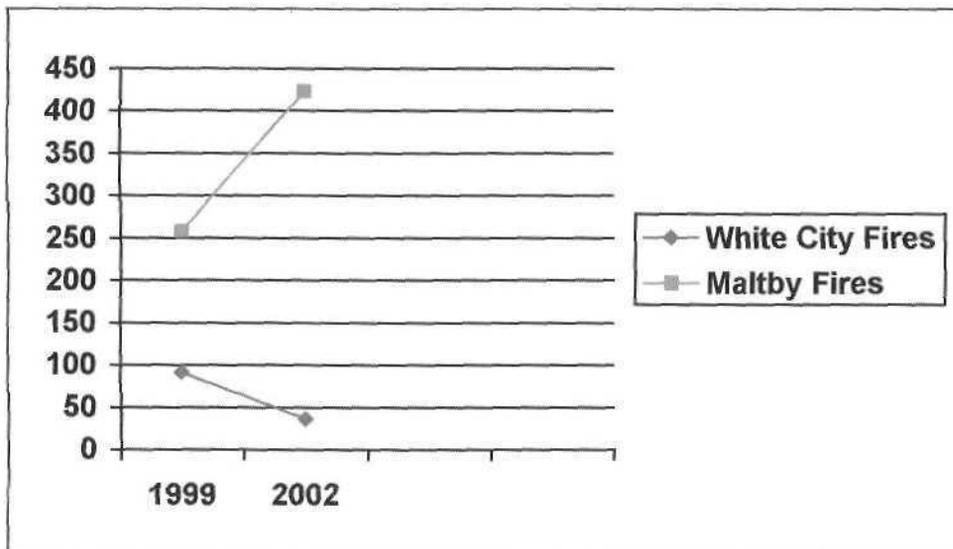
4. An example of occupied properties on Mortimer Road



5. Crime Patterns on White City 1998-2002

Year	Total No crimes on estate	% total Maltby crime
1998	154	14%
1999	166	13%
2000	52	4%
2001	57	5%
2002	54	3%

6. Fire Calls on White City 1999-2002



7. The clean up day in progress.



WHITE CITY INITIATIVE A SUCCESS

ARSON attacks and other crime problems have been reduced dramatically on Maltby's White City Estate after community organisations got together to find a solution.

Only three months ago residents reported 41 arsons in a month and police were spending vast amounts of time on the estate.

But since the community initiative started the arson attacks have virtually stopped and the police have reduced the amount of time they are spending at White City by 80 per cent.

"It's brilliant to see what has been achieved," said Tony Russell, chairman of the Maltby Amalgamated Community Association.

"Everyone is a lot happier there. People now want to move onto the estate instead of away from it."

"Communities in Maltby have all banded together to support each other which is how we've all become involved."

"Things are going from strength to strength up there and it is due to a lot of good work by the police, the council and other organisations."

Arson attacks and crime problems fall dramatically on Maltby estate

by Will Froggatt

"A lot of the spade work has been done by Rotherham Council and it's nice to see it's had an effect."

One reason put forward for the reduction in arson attacks is that there are no longer empty houses to burn. Landlords have demolished them and refurbished them complete with steel shutters.

Community fire safety officer Andy Taylor said: "The response from the community has been excellent and we are really pleased. There has been a quite dramatic reduction in the number of incidents we have had to attend."

"We have worked with residents and organisations like Action for Maltby to try and highlight problem areas."

"It is important to stop the kids starting fires and to show them what the repercussions are."

Among the initiatives taken on the estate has been for the police to go into schools to talk about vandalism.

It is now hoped that other areas will adopt the White City initiative in a bid to reduce crime problems elsewhere.

9. Example of action planning process - Crime and Community Safety sub-group objectives.

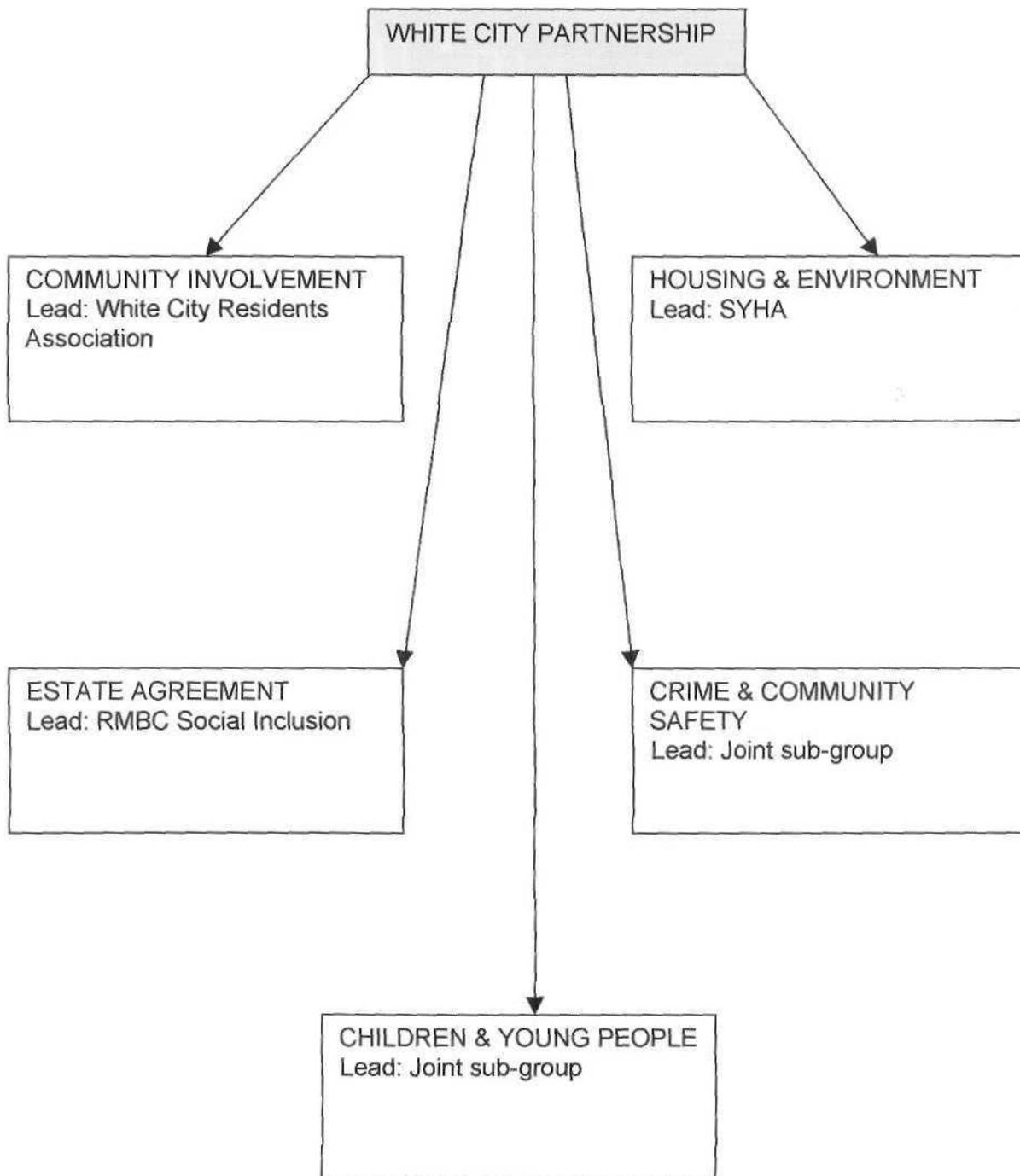
**WHITE CITY PARTNERSHIP – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2001/2
ACTION PLAN**

2. Contribute to the reduction of crime, and fear of Crime on the estate.

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	WHO	TIMESCALE
Reduce vehicle related crime	1. To collate the baseline figures for 1999/2000.	Police. Fire. SYH.	Next mtg 2/7
	2. Explore the introduction of 'Autocrime' project.	Police.	Aug 01
	3. Crime prevention display/info on 16/8-Fun day.	Police. Fire.	2/7
	4. Installation of barriers mortimer Rd and Maltby common. (Links to objective 4)	SYH. Police.	ASAP
Reduce household burglaries	1. To collate baseline figures for 1999/2000.	Police. Fire. SYH.	2/7
	2. Explore setting up of NHW.	Police. SYH	sept 01
	3. Crime prevention display/info on 16/8-fun day.	Police.	2/7
	4. Address security of houses where needed. (alarms/locks- target hardening)	SYH.	dec 01

Reduce anti-social behaviour	1. Enforce tenants agreements. Take action where appropriate.	SYH. RMBC. Mike W.	Immediate.
	2. Explore construction of youth shelter/multi purpose play area . Youngsters play area.(linked to objective 3)	SYH. Police. Fire. YIP. RMBC	12 months.
	3. To arrest and prosecute offenders where sufficient evidence.	Police. SYH. RMBC. Mike W.	Immediate.
Reduce drug related crime	1. Arrest and prosecute offenders where sufficient evidence.	Police.	Immediate.
	2. Enforce tenants agreements where convicted.	SYH. Mike W. RMBC.	Immediate.
	3. Try intervention strategy by offering known users services of Medway House etc.	Police.	Immediate.

10. Delivering the action plans, who is responsible for the aims and objectives.



11. Newly refurbished rental housing on Mortimer Road.



The two people in the foreground are taking part in one of the estate walkabouts.

10. Advertisement from local press launching the new property development on the 'White City'. For the first time owner-occupiers will be moving onto the estate.

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