

THE **SH**P embarked upon the huge task of tackling the fear of crime three years ago, in February 2004, when the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) allocated funding for a full-time, dedicated Communications Manager.

The funding was provided for this post in recognition of the fact that while partners had achieved significant reductions in crime, it was proving harder to combat the fear of crime and public perception still lagged far behind the reality.

The prioritising of public reassurance extends farther than Hastings, as evidenced by the creation of the Home Office's Fear of Crime Team in 2001.

More recently, the latest Home Office guidance, published by the Partnership Performance & Support Unit (PPSU) in April 2006 under the heading *Reducing Crime, the Harm Caused by Drugs & Anti-social Behaviour: Delivering PSA 1, PSA 4 & PSA 2*, states that communication is a key indicator in measuring the success of CDRPs. It requires evidence that:

- A communication strategy/ plan is in place that proactively informs and engages staff,

partners, stakeholders and the local community of its objectives, priorities and progress; and:

- Communicating success and learning lessons of the partnership is raising the confidence of stakeholders and the local community, and increasing involvement with its work.

As addressing the fear of crime has increasingly become a Government priority, the **SH**P has established itself as a leading agency in this area.

Its pioneering approach has resulted in opportunities to showcase its innovative measures to cut the fear of crime at both Houses of Parliament.

With the inception of the Communications Manager role, the **SH**P developed a robust, holistic and long-term plan to increase feelings of safety among residents and repair the reputation of the town to outsiders.

From standard press releases to an award-winning 11-screen community television network, the **Partnership** has utilised a comprehensive range of measures, which, when integrated and working together, have achieved remarkable increases in feelings of safety in Hastings and have started to undo the damage done to the town's reputation.

Initially, this meant increasing tenfold the number of news releases issued about the **Partnership**, crime reduction initiatives and partners' achievements to local and regional press.

However, with funding from GOSE, Sussex Police, Sussex Police Authority and a number of other partners, the **SH**P was able to develop a more far-reaching range of complementary initiatives and, in the process, has become a model of best practice for other CDRPs in England & Wales.

*The Partnership has developed a robust, holistic & long-term plan to increase feelings of safety & to repair the town's reputation*

*The Safer Hastings Partnership has achieved outstanding results & leads the way in tackling the fear of crime*

**Nick Ross, BBC's Crimewatch**

