

SCRUTINY PANEL B

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Wednesday, 18th October, 2017 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Helen Hollis in the Chair;

Councillors Rachel Bissett, Christine Quinn-Wilcox,
Paul Roberts, Mike Smith and Sam Wilson.

Apology for Absence: Councillor Lauren Mitchell.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Mike Joy and Mike Manley.

SB.4 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

SB.5 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 19th July, 2017 be received and approved as a correct record.

SB.6 Introduction to Scrutiny Review of CCTV

The Chairman introduced the item and advised the Panel that a review of CCTV had been added to the Scrutiny Workplan following a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10th September, 2017. It was agreed that the purpose of the review would be to gain an understanding of CCTV, how it contributes to the Council's corporate priorities and what impact they may have within the community. To assist with the review, the Council's Interim Community Protection Manager was in attendance at the meeting.

The Scrutiny Manager advised Members that the meeting would enable them to scope the topic and decide on the length and breadth of the review.

Councillor Wilson took the opportunity to comment that he had taken part in the first scrutiny review of CCTV which had taken place around 9 years' previously. He extolled the benefits of undertaking a site visit to the CCTV control room at an early stage in the review which he believed enhanced Member's insight into the topic and greatly informed the direction of the review and its possible outcomes.

The Council's Interim Community Protection Manager advised the Panel that the new shared Police control room had recently opened. It was now located at the Police Headquarters at Sherwood Lodge, Hucknall following the sale of Kelham Hall by Newark and Sherwood District Council where it was previously located. The new base had been equipped with all the latest technology and the formal launch of the control room would be taking place within the next few weeks.

Whilst speaking, the Interim Community Protection Manager took the opportunity to inform Members about his background as a Police Chief Superintendent with the Nottinghamshire Police Force and his knowledge of the benefits and challenges of CCTV provision.

Ashfield District Council currently owned 29 wireless cameras with 2 of them being the more mobile (rapidly deployable) versions for use at hotspot locations. The cameras were fixed across the District's 3 town centres and other key locations i.e. parks and were monitored 24 hours a day, all year round.

The CCTV provision in Ashfield was part of a collaborative arrangement with Newark and Sherwood District Council and Broxtowe Borough Council. Nottinghamshire Police were also a stakeholder and had direct access to the images as required. A company called Profile Security currently undertook the monitoring and storage of the CCTV images and provided the stakeholders with regular performance and operational data as necessary.

CCTV use nationally was increasing both in the private sector and for personal use. Increasing camera presence promoted community safety and went a long way towards reducing the fear of crime. The 29 cameras provided by Ashfield District Council was a relatively small amount compared to the 79 cameras provided by Newark and Sherwood District Council and the 63 provided by Broxtowe Borough Council, however this was reflected in the cost of providing the service with Ashfield District Council paying a proportional contribution to the agreement of 17%.

From a policing perspective, the use of CCTV assisted with the detection of crime but not in overly large amounts. Studies have shown that crime reduction through CCTV provision is achieved via the deterrent effect rather than the detection of offences. However, significant contributions could be made to the investigations of very serious crimes and for missing persons.

In relation to public perception, there was still no reliable way to report the levels of confidence gained by residents/visitors to town centre and parks with overt CCTV provision and on the reverse side being able to quantify the reduction in confidence and footfall should the CCTV cameras be removed at any time.

Recent newspaper articles had documented comments from the National Surveillance Commissioner expressing his concerns that a number of local authorities had reduced their CCTV provision as a result of the ongoing austerity cuts. The benefits of CCTV provision had been reinforced recently in relation to the protection of town centres and crowded places from potential terrorist threats.

To conclude, the Council's Community Protection Manager advised that a CCTV Strategy for England and Wales had been published to endeavour to address the gap between current national CCTV provision and what should be in place. The document would assist with the co-ordination of local authority provision of CCTV and raise regulatory standards regarding the surveillance of public spaces.

The most recent figures in relation to surveillance from the Council's cameras indicated that there had been 142 viewings with 29 arrests as a result. There had also been 37 occasions whereby evidence provided from CCTV footage had been used in prosecution cases.

Panel Members then took the opportunity to discuss the topic and ask questions of the Community Protection Manager as follows:-

- slight concerns that the Council should be able to deploy cameras more readily to hotspot areas as they emerge;
- acknowledgement that the Community Protection staff believe the CCTV provision is a valuable tool in the fight against reduction in crime;
- opportunities for the Council to require mandatory provision of CCTV for various types of business premises through its licensing and planning processes to help support crime prevention measures and improve the quality of residents and traders' lives;
- developments in technology allowing for the control room to increase revenue opportunities by offering additional services to the private/commercial sectors linking cameras to smoke and fire alarms and providing monitoring services as required;
- the layout of the control room and how the operators monitor the array of cameras as incidents are detected;
- should additional revenue be obtained in the future via CCTV monitoring for the private/commercial sector, the funding should be invested fairly across the District including the rural areas.

Following conclusion of the presentation and debate, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank the Community Protection Manager for his informative briefing and valuable contributions towards the Panel's review.

RESOLVED that

a) the terms of reference for the review be as follows:-

“To gain an understanding of CCTV within Ashfield, how it contributes to the Council's Corporate Priorities and to discover opportunities for expanding the CCTV monitoring and response service into the local commercial/private sector.”

- b) a site visit be facilitated to enable Panel Members to view the new CCTV control room at the Police Headquarters, Sherwood Lodge, Hucknall, prior to the next Panel meeting scheduled for 21st November, 2017;
- c) an officer from the Council's Commercialism team be invited to attend the next Panel meeting to offer their expertise in relation to any potential income opportunities for expanding the collaborative agreement within the commercial/private sector to provide CCTV monitoring and response services through the CCTV control room;
- d) officers from both the Council's Licensing and Planning teams be invited to attend the next Panel meeting to offer advice regarding the potential for securing mandatory provision of CCTV for various types of business/commercial premises through its licensing and planning processes, thus endeavouring to increase coverage and help support future crime prevention measures within the District;
- e) for a future meeting, an invite be extended to an officer from Newark and Sherwood District Council to enable Members to gain an understanding of the activities undertaken in the development of their CCTV commercialism plan.

The meeting closed at 7.10 pm

Chairman.