

Report to: Communities Select Committee



Date of meeting: November 8 2016

SCRUTINY

Subject: Proposed Decommissioning of CCTV

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Epping Forest District Council

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That, in view of them being the first cases arising under the Council's new CCTV Strategy, comments be provided to the Safer Greener Transport Portfolio Holder on the proposed decommissioning of the CCTV cameras currently installed at Longcroft Rise, Oakwood Hill Shopping Parade (Loughton) and Upshire Shopping Parade, Upshire, (Waltham Abbey) prior to him making a decision.

Report:

1. A decommissioning assessment of CCTV currently installed across the Epping Forest District was undertaken in 2015 as part of the review process for the production of the Council's CCTV Strategy 2016 – 2022.
2. This was to meet with the guidance provided in the CCTV Code of Practice, which states that regular reviews of CCTV systems should be undertaken, to ensure that the use of surveillance cameras remains in pursuit of a legitimate aim, and that there is a pressing need for its use, including requests for downloading of CCTV footage in relation to crime.
3. As a result, the Council's CCTV Officer has identified the following two sites to be considered for potential decommissioning and this is based upon the last two years of service and other factors, such as reduction of service requirement and ongoing costs;

Longcroft Rise, Oakwood Hill Shopping Parade (Loughton)

Upshire Shopping Parade, Upshire, (Waltham Abbey)

4. Since these are the first cases to arise under the Council's new CCTV Strategy, the Safer Greener Transport Portfolio Holder would like to seek the views of the Select Committee on the proposed decommissioning of these CCTV cameras, prior him making a decision, which will also help him to assess future requires too.
5. The CCTV equipment installed at Longcroft Rise in Oakwood Hill, Loughton has generated 6 requests for CCTV in 2 years and is now operating beyond its expected life span of 7 years. The cost to update this system will be in the region of £4,000 with ongoing servicing costs of approx. £300 per annum. This does not take into account repairs, which will become more frequent due to the age of the equipment.
6. Four requests to view footage from the CCTV cameras at Upshire Shopping Parade in Waltham Abbey have been received in the past two years and the cost to update this system will be in the region of £4,000. This system is also operating beyond its lifetime expectancy of 7 years and ongoing servicing costs will be in the region of £180 per annum. This does not take into account repairs which will become more frequent due to the age of the equipment.
7. Out of the 10 requests for CCTV footage from these sites during the last two years, only one was in relation to a serious incident/offence.

8. However, as suggested in the CCTV Strategy and Action Plan, it is important to note, that if these sites are decommissioned under the Code of Practice guidelines, there is a risk that the following may occur:
- An increase in crime, disorder & anti-social behaviour in these areas;
 - A potential increase in fear of crime in the local community;
 - A loss of public confidence; and,
 - Should any crimes or incidents take place, these will obviously not be captured
9. There is no hard evidence to demonstrate that low crime rates in certain areas are due to the deterrent value of CCTV, but anecdotal information suggests so.
10. However, should there be a notable increase in crime and anti-social behaviour at these two sites subsequent to the cameras being removed, mobile CCTV cameras can be installed at very short notice.
11. This report also suggests that the infrastructure for the CCTV should remain in place and only the cameras removed, to enable swift re-installation of the CCTV system, should this be required. Thus, saving time and money for a re-installation.

Reason for decision:

In order to reduce ongoing costs of CCTV in the district, the Council undertook a decommissioning assessment as part of its CCTV Strategy 2016 - 2022.

This assessment focussed on CCTV systems that are under-utilised in terms of reporting and requests for downloads and was undertaken in line with the CCTV Code of Practice, which recommends, that regular reviews should be undertaken of all CCTV operations, to ensure that the use of surveillance camera systems remain in pursuit of a legitimate aim, and that there is a clear need for them.

As a result, Community Safety has identified two sites to be considered for potential decommissioning and this is based upon the last two years of service and other factors such as reduction of service requirement and ongoing costs.

Options considered and rejected: To continue to operate and maintain CCTV cameras and systems at Longcroft Rise, Loughton and Upshire Shopping Parade, Waltham Abbey.

Consultation undertaken: Consultation with Waltham Abbey Town Council and Loughton Town Council, who said:

Waltham Abbey Town Council:

I understand from the responses that I have received from Councillors that I should formulate a strongly worded objection to the decommissioning of the Upshire Shopping Parade CCTV on the grounds of:

- There have been problems in the past with ASB, which has been controlled with the use of the CCTV, both as a deterrent and identifying perpetrators
- There is now an ATM installed at the Co-Op, and a sub-Post Office within the newsagents, these should have the protection of CCTV,
- The Co-Op stays open until 10:00pm, and there is also a fast food outlet that stays open late. It is these kinds of locations that attract groups later in the evening, and so would require the deterrent factor of CCTV

- The crime figures for July 2016 show considerable numbers of public order offences. The decommissioning of CCTV gives the impression that all forces of law and order are being withdrawn from Waltham Abbey. Due to the closure of the police station, no pro-active policing, only reactive policing, this withdrawal of yet another form of crime prevention sends out the wrong signals to residents.
- The Town Council cannot support, and in fact strongly objects to the decommissioning of this CCTV scheme.

Loughton Town Council:

Our initial response is that the existing CCTV system on the Oakwood Hill Estate should be maintained and actually upgraded and/or extended around the estate when possible. This is important given the record of anti-social behaviour and drug related problems that residents there have had to endure over the years.

We appreciate that there may have been only a limited number of requests for the footage but it is perhaps not realistic to compare the estate to an area such as say Loughton High Road with its night-time economy fuelling problems.

We have taken the opportunity to consult with OHERA. Their response was to raise a strong objection to the decommissioning with a request that there should actually be more CCTV around the estate to provide extra security for residents.

OHERA suggests that most residents are probably unaware of exactly which areas of the estate are currently covered by CCTV and that its removal could potentially lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour. Regardless of the final decision, OHERA would appreciate clearer communication directly from EFDC about the reasons and its plans for the future.

I trust these comments will be taken into account by the Portfolio Holder.

Resource implications: If a decision is taken to retain the existing CCTV equipment at either of these sites, there will need to be a minimum of £4,000 investment to update the systems. Ongoing maintenance costs will also be incurred; £300 per annum for Oakwood Hill site and £180 per annum for Upshire Shopping Parade.

Budget provision: As above

Personnel: N/A

Land: N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A

Relevant statutory powers: N/A

Background papers: EFDC CCTV Strategy and Action Plan 2016- 2022, approved by Cabinet January 2016.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: As stated within Report