

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Safer, Cleaner, Greener Scrutiny **Date:** Thursday, 25 February 2010
Standing panel

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, **Time:** Times Not Specified
High Street, Epping

Members Present: G Pritchard (Chairman), A Boyce (Vice-Chairman), R Barrett, R Frankel, Ms J Hedges, D Jacobs and R Law

Other Councillors:

Apologies: - Miss R Cohen and Mrs E Webster

Officers Present: J Nolan (Assistant Director (Environmental Health)) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: J Gilbert, C Wiggins, A Petty, Chief Inspector A Ray, Inspector C Carrington and P Arnold

35. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted there were no substitute members.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

37. NOTES OF LAST MEETING

The notes from 27 October 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

38. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY REPORT

The Chairman of the Epping Forest District Safer Communities Partnership, John Gilbert welcomed the meeting to the latest Crime and Disorder Scrutiny meeting, when they were to receive an update on CCTV implementation. The Panel noted that large strides had been made to bring the CCTV up to date and able to be used in evidential terms.

Adrian Petty, the CCTV Operations Operator, began by saying that the drive for better CCTV stemmed initially from the 9/11 and the 7/7 attacks. CCTV had been installed then but the quality of the pictures were in question. The Panel noted:

- There was a need to bring CCTV images and the need for evidence together and also to make sure that the council was compliant with the Data Protection Act;
- There had to be an audit trail in place and a need for adequate maintenance for the cameras;
- They had to identify budgets and bring it all under one umbrella;
- They now deal with all the EFDC CCTV in this area, except for Council buildings;

- Officers also have a mobile system they can deploy very quickly. Using this they have had successes in, for example, eradicating fly-tipping in Darby Drive and are working closely with Essex Police at a number of locations within the District. They can also use it to keep certain ATMs under surveillance;
- The quality of the system in place means that the imagery can provide evidence even in dark conditions;
- They have a 'Rotakin Testing' system in place for testing the cameras installed and are the only council in the country to have CCTV "secured by design".

They now have remote access (via the web) to the cameras live twenty fours a day that would enable officers to check they are working correctly. However the cameras are not monitored all the time as there is no monitoring centre.

The partnership working with the Police also uses the Automatic Number Plate Recognition System and also with the environmental company looking after Bobbingworth Land Fill site. The CCTV system monitors the car parking area, looks for fly-tipping and monitors the reed bed water levels and the monitoring equipment. This saves officer time in having to visit the site.

CCTV officers are also trained in the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act if they need to undertake covert surveillance.

They have had successes in investigating burglary, sexual offences, criminal damage, shoplifting, driving offences and fly-tipping.

The Chairman then opened the meeting to questions from Panel members.

Q: What is secure by design?

A: This was akin to designing buildings by specifically taking into account security, the same applied for CCTV systems, e.g. making sure that the cameras could be seen, that the cameras could move etc. generally pre-thinking about the design and location of the system.

Q: It seems to be about 80% more in favour of law enforcement with a bit of fly-tipping for the Council. Where does Council work stop and the Police work start?

A: This is a crime and disorder partnership. It's all about dealing with criminality and increasing public confidence. There was no real conflict and a degree of joint funding was involved. Others are comfortable with the balance they have achieved. The Police could make use of the images, and they have stopped fly-tipping and anti social behaviour.

There were fourteen incidents of fly-tipping that the CCTV was used to catch; this helped the police a lot by freeing up their resources to tackle other things. CCTV was invaluable for investigations into crime prevention, public order and incident control. It also enabled them to deploy their resources effectively.

Q: How could we be sure that people caught fly-tipping would not repeat that offence if not prosecuted? And, Ongar Town Council had set up their own CCTV system but they were not sure how effective it was.

A: Officers at first take a softly, softly approach and give a warning, if it was repeated then they would prosecute (they have done so recently in Debden). The CCTV officer had worked with Ongar TC recently advising them on their CCTV policies etc.

Q: What mechanism was in place to request the mobile CCTV system?

A: The policy for requesting the unit was that the organisation had to prove that they had taken other measures to solve their problem. They would loan it out to communities for three months and would then review it again.

Q: The cameras seem to be a replacement for Police officers. Police Officers do a good job, but what do the cameras do?

A: This is not just about catching people but about public confidence. The cameras act as a deterrent and are not there to replace the Police or the Council's enforcement team. Surveys suggest that the public are confident with their use; it is also an invaluable tool as far as enforcement was concerned.

Q: I would be pleased if the use of these cameras (such as the Automatic Number Plate Recognition system (ANPR)) resulted in a conviction. Does this happen.

A: We have taken people to court many times on the back of evidence provided by CCTV and ANPR. It can also help in the recovery of stolen vehicles.

Q: Where would the control centre be and how would the Police/Council liaise?

A: The ANPR system is controlled from our Headquarters and the Council is still updating its systems.

Q: How has the number of police per capita changed over the last 50 years and are the new systems replacing the Police officers we should have.

A: The Council is not playing at being Police officers as it has a statutory duty to consider Crime and Disorder matters in the work it does such as Planning, Environmental issues and Licensing. As for police officers per capita the figures are not to hand. However, things are done differently nowadays and officers are split into various specialist teams.

Q: How long before images are erased.

A: The system is digital but as there is not enough room to store all the images indefinitely we wipe them after 31 days.

The Panel was then given a general briefing from Chief Inspector Alan Ray. The Panel noted that:

- There had been an 8% reduction in crime last year and to date this year there had been a 3% reduction; that equated to a 230 drop in the crime figures. This was based on national figures and was used to compare with other districts as they all work to the same standards;
- Violent crimes were roughly the same as last year but there had been a 24% drop in thefts of motor vehicles;
- There was no drop in criminal damage but dwelling burglaries were down by 9% which was very good compared to other surrounding districts;
- Local Partnership working was working well;
- They were aware of the local ASB hot spots;
- They had recently held a consultation evening at Waltham Abbey where there was much concern about Anti Social Behaviour, they were looking into every incident;
- They had sought and attained the closure of Club 195 for some months and it had recently reopened under new management and under new licensing conditions;
- Officers were now satisfied with the Minx in Loughton and the White Lion in Waltham Abbey.

The meeting was then opened up for general question to the officers.

Q: Has the new non-emergency telephone number had any impact?

A: It was part of centralisation but was proving efficient and working well.

Q: Attempted burglaries were up but burglaries are down, how has this come about?

A: The national trend of burglaries was on the increase, but locally there has been a large amount of work on burglaries. The Council, working in partnership with the Police, with funding from the Home Office, had appointed a cross border liaison officer which directly affected the number of burglaries.

The Councillors were appreciative that the Police were getting involved with problem licence premises and congratulated them on their recent successes and the effective way they were working.

The Chairman thanked them for their time, their informative presentation and report.

39. CCTV SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

The Director of Environment and Street Scene, John Gilbert, introduced the two key documents on CCTV, the Service Delivery Plan and the Code of Practice.

The Code of Practice was arguably the more important of the two because it regulated the control of CCTV, based on the national code of practice.

Asked if the protocol would encompass all the CCTV that the Council had responsibility, the Safer Communities Manager replied that it did not cover Town Councils, but District officers were working with them and with Sports and Leisure Management at the leisure centres, but they would eventually need their own code of practice.

Councillor Jacobs asked what the life span of the new system was; was there an allowance in the rate support grant for CCTV; and Ongar Town Council have their own CCTV – should they have let the District do it for them. Adrian Petty, the CCTV Operations Officer, said it was difficult to gauge the life time of the cameras which was why they had a robust maintenance schedule in place. They should get about seven or eight years life out of a camera. The Safer Communities Manager added that there was no central budget from the Home Office for CCTV systems; they were looking at alternative sources of funding and partnership working. Officers had supported Parish and Town Councils with their CCTV systems including Ongar Town Council. There were all sorts of money available to Parish and Town Councils such as partnership working and the District Council that could be made available.

As an example they noted that District officers had worked in partnership with Theydon Bois and their CCTV system.

Members questioned the cost of equipment as outlined in the Service Delivery Plan and were assured that because the equipment was very specialised they were expensive. Members also asked if officers blanked people out on the pictures and if the system would be used to give out fixed penalty notices. They were told that they did not blank out faces, as the images were not publicly available. And, as for using the system for parking enforcement, since this activity is governed by the agreement with Essex County Council and they had not adopted the relevant powers, this could not be done in this District.

The documents in front of the Panel were there to provide members with peace of mind on the CCTV surveillance procedures and to break down the budget and the sources of funding.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the CCTV Service Delivery Plan and the associated Code of Practice was noted;
- (2) That the following key actions from the action plan was noted and agreed:
 - (a) the resource implications;
 - (b) the reconfiguration of the post of Safer Communities Assistant to CCTV Support Officer; and
 - (c) bringing together the management and maintenance of all CCTV under the remit of the Safer Communities Unit; and
- (3) To recommend accordingly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

40. FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the Panel's next meeting was noted.

CHAIRMAN

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