

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - CCTV Provision

Tuesday, 18 February 2014

Present: Councillor Robert Fynamore (Chair), Councillor Kim Snape (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Doreen Dickinson, Graham Dunn, Roy Lees, June Molyneaux and Rosie Russell

Also in attendance

Officers: Paul Lowe (Merged Crime and Disorder Reduction Manager) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

14.CTV.10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

14.CTV.11 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – CCTV Provision in Chorley meeting held on 27 January 2014 be held as a correct record.

14.CTV.12 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of any interests were received.

14.CTV.13 SCOPING OF THE REVIEW

The Working Group considered the scoping document for the review of CCTV provision which had been drawn up at the last meeting.

RESOLVED – that the scoping document be agreed and forwarded to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.

14.CTV.14 STAKEHOLDERS REPRESENTATION

The Group interviewed representatives of all the relevant stakeholders to obtain their views on the CCTV provision in Chorley. Members requested their views on the following:

- What value they placed on the current CCTV system and service.
- What benefits, if any, they received from the service,
- If they made contribution to the provision of the service, and
- What impact did they think there would be if the CCTV system was either to be reduced or upgraded.

In addition, Members were keen to ascertain if they could provide any anecdotal evidence of how the CCTV system and its service had benefited them, their premises or organisation.

Malcolm Allen, Chair of Chorley Trader Alliance on behalf of the day time economy

Mr Allen said that the CCTV service including the radio service was an invaluable tool for the shopkeepers of Chorley. The service was particularly useful in helping to catch and deter shoplifters and assisted in locating children who had wandered away from their parents.

A number of shopkeepers had originally contributed to the handheld radio system that was still used in shops around the town centre. However, a few years ago, the Council had taken the decision to mainstream the funding of this provision. Mr Allen reported

that the shopkeepers would be willing to pay a contribution for the service if it meant it could be retained, although it was considered that the contribution should be worked out on a sliding scale, with the larger stores, who benefited more, paying a higher rate.

The shopkeepers thought that the Town Centre would suffer greatly if the CCTV provision was significantly reduced. There were some areas that would benefit from being included under the provision and that some cameras needed upgrading to provide a better quality of picture. It was also considered that the Market Walk development should be linked back into the scheme.

Sam Wyatt, Community Safety Manager, Places for People

Places for people are a registered social housing provider and have properties for let in the Astley Village and Clayton Brook areas of the borough. The CCTV provision is limited and is mainly situated around the two Community Centre sites. This however has helped when dealing with issues associated with anti-social behaviour. The organisation also 'buys in' additional equipment on an ad-hoc basis as and when required. Any additional equipment is generally used only for recording purposes so that activity can be monitored over a course of time.

The organisation would benefit greatly, if Chorley's CCTV provision was extended to include some of the outlying areas although it would depend on who would stand the cost. Currently their tenants paid for any services they received through their rents.

Cath Burns, Head of Economic Development, Chorley Council

Feedback from both traders and staff of the market service stated that the CCTV provision was an invaluable resource for their businesses and work. There was also a greater feeling of security for visitors to the town.

The current service can alert market staff to any issues that may be occurring and helps to monitor traffic flow and car park usage. The market officers undertake a cash collection service for market stall rents and car park payments and the CCTV provision affords them an element of protection against being attacked for reasons of theft. The CCTV cameras also help to direct emergency services where needed to ensure a swift response to the incident at hand. There had been incidences when market traders had been assaulted and many examples could be given when the system had helped to either catch or deter potential shop lifting incidents. The CCTV service often assisted with a prosecution.

It was felt that there were some areas of the town that needed to be additionally covered under the scheme and that some of the current equipment needed to be upgraded. Everyone concerned with the town centre and markets service would be greatly concerned if the service was either reduced or removed.

Chorley has a low empty shop rate and although this mainly attributed to the work of the economic development team, it does help that the town centre of Chorley is perceived to be a safe town and new investors could be attracted to the town because of their consideration of our manned CCTV provision.

Peter Verhaege, Applejax Nightclub on behalf of the night time economy

As a licensee who had worked in Chorley for over 20 years, Mr Verhaege reported that the CCTV system and its service had become an invaluable tool to business's in the town and in particular when monitoring the activity of the night time economy. The town's bars and club use the town centre radio communication to contact the CCTV control room and this provides reassurance and confidence to those businesses that are operating into the late hours. With the help of the CCTV monitoring, the police can be given a true and accurate picture of any unfolding incident to ensure a quick and effective response. Most people who come to Chorley are aware that their behaviour

is being monitored by CCTV, thus the service has helped to greatly reduce unwanted behaviour.

The use of CCTV is often used to track underage drinkers who try to gain entrance to a number of venues in the town. This assists the licensing trade to fulfil one of their four licensing objectives, which is the prevention of children from harm, from the misuse of alcohol. The licensing trade meets as a pub watch on a monthly basis to discuss any issues and is often able to refer to the towns CCTV coverage when compiling evidence to substantiate any claims.

It was felt that any reduction of the CCTV service within the town would reduce their protection and ability to combat alcohol related crime. The absence of any CCTV would promote an upsurge in crime and disorder as there would be nothing to discourage or deter those individuals who were intent on causing trouble or committing crime, whereas, any upgrade in the service would give greater confidence and reassurance to the night time economy.

Mr Verhaege also commented that over the years there had been some very serious incidents that included violent assaults, sexual assaults and damage to property and buildings. By working together in partnership with the police and with the Council, via use of the CCTV service, the police have been able to demonstrate continuity of evidence when building a case against those persons breaking the law, thus being able to make offenders answerable to justice in the courts.

Inspector Alison Barff-Lewis, Lancashire Constabulary

Lancashire Constabulary though that the current CCTV provision was priceless to their organisation. The manned system assisted them in numerous ways and was paramount to helping with the detection and protection against crime. The service assists with the detection of burglaries, the obtaining of anti-social behaviour orders, building evidence in support of charges and surveillance of illegal activities for the CID target team.

The system is regularly used as evidence in cases that are taken to court and has been the difference in obtaining a conviction. The presence of CCTV is definitely seen as a deterrent for many offenders.

The current provision is invaluable but could always do with more and any increase would see huge benefits for all the community. The system is currently manned until 3am in the morning and is an integral part of the night time economy plans for the police service. The service provides reassurance for traders, taxi drivers, door staff, street pastors and PCSO's. The police would like to see the possibility of an increased 24 hour service being considered. Although the police do not financially contribute to the provision of the service, the CCTV suite is accommodated with Chorley's Police Station free of charge.

14.CTV.15 WEST LANCASHIRE COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

The Group also interviewed Andrew Hill, Environmental Protection and Community Safety Manager for West Lancashire Council as the authority had recently undertaken a similar review of their CCTV provision and service.

Mr Hill reported that West Lancashire Council's CCTV service had always operated a 24 hour, 7 days a week service. Although they had offered up the reduction of hours as a cost saving measure for the Council, this has never been taken up. Ormskirk was a busy town and although there was probably periods throughout the day that were less busy than others, the service was used at all times.

The old system was ten years old and coming to the end of its practical working life. The Council had started to see an increase in maintenance costs and any potential

new equipment had significantly advanced. The decision was taken to renew the system and the service was increased by adding a further 50% of cameras to provision. Although the equipment was upgraded, the Council didn't invest in the best or latest technology. They did however, try to get as many cameras as they could that were the same, to reduce on maintenance contracts. Some additional types were needed dependant on its location. They now have some cameras that are cable of recording a 360° rotation and some are fitted with a sensory light, aimed at dispersing.

The service was originally staff with employees from Remploy which was a company subsidised by the government. The Council have now taken over the delivery of this service and the costs for the service will be considerably more.

The CCTV service was funded by West Lancashire Council's mainstream funding and had recently moved the CCTV suite to new premises to allow for an extension to the service and upgrade of the equipment. Originally some of the cameras and equipment had been funded by a Local Strategic Partnership grant but all funding is now delivered by the authority. No actual income is generated from the scheme but it is considered a vital service for the detection and prevention of crime in the town.

The locations for the cameras are determined by a number of different intelligence sources, like data produce by the Crime Partnership's analyst, local neighbourhood police and ward councillors. The Council has developed a new Code of Practice and any new locations that are put forward for the siting of CCTV have to meet its requirements, with a justifiable need being demonstrated.

14.CTV.16 PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

It was reported that all the Parish Councils had been contacted to ask for their views on the current CCTV provision in Chorley, including the mobile CCTV unit that was deployed where needed.

It was noted that this feedback would be brought to a future meeting of the Group.

14.CTV.17 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A public consultation survey to determine how safe the residents of Chorley feel was now available on the Council's website. The results of this survey would be reported to the Group at a later date.

Chair