

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – CCTV Provision and Infrastructure May 2014



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1. PREFACE

Under the requirement to undertake scrutiny of crime and disorder matters, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a detailed report of the Director of People and Places on the current Chorley CCTV service and existing infrastructure and also information about CCTV systems in other authorities systems had been reduced or decommissioned.

The report included information about provision in the South Ribble area where the system was much smaller and also in Blackpool where the Council had decided, due to budgetary pressures, to stop staffing the system.

Details about Chorley CCTV system – the hours of operation, infrastructure, and staffing and maintenance issues were provided, along with overall comments on the impact of reducing CCTV coverage, cost implications and potential options for improvements in the future.

In discussion Members raised the public perception of safety provide by CCTV, how far cameras acted as a deterrent, the cameras role in preventing the escalation or crime or the prosecution of offenders including those involved in serious crime.

As the subject was a complex one, the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny suggested that a full scrutiny review on the provision of CCTV in Chorley be undertaken to by a Task Group to inform future CCTV provision in the Borough.

The task group engaged with both partners and customers to ensure that all perspectives were considered and to ensure the scrutiny was balanced. The system is highly valued by the community and is an effective tool used in the prevention of crime and disorder.

We would like to thank the Task Group Members for their deliberations, the officers and the external representatives and the residents of Chorley who made a contribution to this report. The representations we received have proved invaluable and enabled us to recommend a number of options for the Executive to explore to enable the Council to better serve our residents of Chorley.



Councillor Robert Fynamore (Chair)



Councillor Kim Snape (Vice Chair)

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked the Task Group to undertake a scrutiny inquiry to look at CCTV Provision and Infrastructure in Chorley.

Chorley Council's closed circuit television system (CCTV) is solely owned and operated by the Council and comprises a number of overt cameras located across the Chorley borough area. The infrastructure has been in place for 18 years with some upgrades and improvements to equipment during that time but is essentially analogue based whereas current technology has moved to a digital format.

There are three main areas to the system:

- CCTV suite with monitored screens
- Recording capability for images
- Image capturing hardware – cameras

Improvements over recent years have been to partly digitise recording capacity which is now at full capacity; upgrading of monitoring screens; and the replacement of some cameras when irreparable or requiring excessive maintenance.

Present monitoring operating times meet current periods of high demand and are regularly reviewed based on crime and other intelligence data. This element of the service has been the subject of a recent internal audit and several management actions arising out of the review are being implemented.

The CCTV equipment and infrastructure is supported by an external contractor on a fixed term procured contract. The current contract is due to expire at the end of March 2015 and any planned changes to the CCTV infrastructure would be timed to coincide with the drafting of a new contract specification.

Objectives

To review the current CCTV system and inform future provision with a range of options from gold plated, through to minimal/no CCTV provision – including impact and cost implications.

Outcomes

To recommend a level of CCTV provision for the future which balances the needs of stakeholders with affordability for the Council.

Members were keen to ensure that all seven equality and diversity strands were fully taken into consideration throughout the review and were keen to work effectively in partnership with the relevant stakeholders to facilitate any improvements to the service.

Task Group Membership

Councillor Robert Finnamore (Chair)
Councillor Kim Snape (Vice Chair)
Councillor Doreen Dickinson
Councillor Graham Dunn
Councillor Roy Lees
Councillor Rosemary Russell

Officer Support:

Lead Officers

Paul Lowe – Neighbourhoods Manager
Simon Clark – Head of Health, Environment and Neighbourhoods

Democratic Services

Dianne Scambler Democratic and Member Services Officer

Meetings

The meeting papers of the Group can be found on the Council's website www.chorley.gov.uk/scrutiny. This includes the inquiry project outline and other relevant information on policy and procedures.

Contribution of Evidence

The Task Group would like to thank all those who have provided evidence and contributed to the Inquiry. Section 4 contains the details of those involved

3. LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall there is significant support for the provision a CCTV service from key partners such as police; from public response to a consultation; from local town centre business and from Parish Council.

Therefore the option to decommission the service is not considered acceptable and the Task Group would recommend the service is continued to be provided by the Council at some level.

The Executive Cabinet is asked to consider the following recommendations:

Infrastructure Provision

Option	Detail	Cost	Advantage/Disadvantages
Option 1	Do nothing and retain the existing system and seek to maintain it.	c. £20K per annum	Equipment will become obsolete and not maintainable at reasonable cost
Option 2	Replace key components to improve the system recording capability	c. £28K one off cost	Upgraded and digitised recording capacity provided
Option 3	Option 2 plus replacement of the current desktop operating system utilised to remotely switch camera views and manoeuvre cameras according to monitoring requirements	c. £48K one off cost	Improved operation and manoeuvrability of cameras
Option 4	Option 3 plus the wholesale replacement of existing camera heads	c. £215K	The current suite of 50+ cameras would be replaced with new products and remove the current annual maintenance cost requirement of £20K
Option 5	Option 3 plus phased replacement of existing camera heads	c. £48K plus £4K per camera which could total in excess of £250K	Higher costs due to no economies of scale and maintenance cost of remaining cameras

			ongoing. However there is an advantage in terms of ability to consider relocation and addition of cameras in a phased way to meet changing demand.
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In addition the Task Group recommends that the Council explores any outsourcing opportunities for the service and the provision subscription service for businesses.

In terms of the operation of the service the Task Group recommend that current staffing levels are maintained but that the hours of operation are regularly reviewed using local intelligence to ensure periods of high demand are covered.

4. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

CCTV SERVICE

Chorley Council's closed circuit television system (CCTV) is solely owned and operated by the Council and comprises a number of overt cameras located across the Chorley borough area.

The system was first commissioned in 1996 and was initially introduced as a town centre system, linked to the Secured Car Parks scheme. It was subsequently extended throughout Chorley Borough and there are now a number of overt cameras located across the borough. All cameras are monitored from a central control room located at Chorley Police Station and are only accessible to view by Chorley Council appointed CCTV control room operators.

The CCTV service also has access and control over two stand-alone CCTV systems, which cover Astley Park and the Chorley covered market. Additionally the service also has direct access to live CCTV footage from a number of cameras, covering Chorley Railway Station, owned by the British Transport Police. However there is no facility to control these cameras.

The CCTV unit benefits from a direct link to the police radio system, ensuring real time communication and the appropriate deployment of police officers and PCSO's. This is further supported by the town centre radio system where the majority of pubs and retail businesses within the town centre, including Chorley Bus Interchange, have direct radio contact with the CCTV unit.

Chorley Council has CCTV equipment, maintenance and call outs contract in place that is due to expire at the end of March 2015.

The Council's CCTV system is regulated by the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice pursuant to Section 29 of the Protection of Freedom Act 2012. In recognition of this, the Council's CCTV Policy 2013/14 has been introduced and covers all twelve guiding principles of the Act. The Council's CCTV service is also compliant with all relevant legislation.

The CCTV service also benefits from having a CCTV operating policy, which was reviewed and refreshed on the 1 August 2013. The purpose of this policy is to support the regulation, management, operation and use of CCTV system for Chorley Council.

The Council's CCTV system is aimed at preventing and detecting a wide range of crimes such as theft, burglary, violent crime, criminal damage and tackling anti-social behaviour. The system can also be used to locate missing persons.

In conjunction with Chorley Council's CCTV Policy 2013/14, the objectives of the CCTV system are:

- To protect residents, environment and the people who work and visit the borough of Chorley

- To improve feelings of safety
- To support Lancashire Constabulary in a bid to deter and detect crime
- To assist in identifying, apprehending and prosecuting offenders
- To protect members of the public
- To protect private and public buildings
- To support the Community Safety Partnership in relation to reducing and preventing crime and disorder
- To assist in the management of the Chorley town centre radio scheme in conjunction with the retail and business sector
- To monitor and safeguard town centre car parks to deter all aspects of auto-crime
- To help tackle and identify offenders of anti-social behaviour

STAFFING LEVELS/HOURS OF OPERATION

All staff that operate the CCTV system are employed by Chorley Council and work in the CCTV suite based at Chorley Police Station. The team consists of just under four full time equivalent posts including a team supervisor.

The CCTV unit operates 365 days a year and the system is monitored over a 6 week rota during the hours of 8.30am and 3.00am. Operational times vary to meet expected demand. Although the system is not monitored twenty four hours a day the system does record all the time, 365 days a year and recorded footage is retained.

Staffing levels have been the subject of a separate internal audit and several management recommendations are now being implemented as a result including:

- A regular review of operational hours to ensure periods of high activity/demand are covered.
- A review of camera locations to ensure infrastructure is effectively deployed in areas of high activity.
- A robust logging system for incidents to ensure the work and value of the service is effectively captured

CAMERA TYPE AND LOCATIONS

The CCTV cameras are commissioned on an intelligence led basis subject to consultation with partners and stakeholders.

The CCTV system is made up of two camera types, Shoebox type which are square shaped cameras and Dome type, which are multi directional cameras housed in a clear dome, both have the ability to pan, tilt and zoom.

The CCTV cameras relay images back to the control room using a number of transmission mediums including coaxial, microwave transmission, radio transmission, Coded Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiplex (COFDM) and Fibre Optic.

The Task Group received information on the locations and numbers of cameras currently in operation over the Borough of Chorley.

CCTV EFFECTIVENESS

The use of closed circuit television cameras for the purpose of tackling crime has greatly increased over the last decade. It is estimated that nationally 80% of Councils operate and contribute to the provision of CCTV services.

The Group considered an analytical report that had recently been undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership's Analyst. The report sought to provide analysis of the Council's CCTV usage, crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough of Chorley, so informed decisions could be made in relation to tasking and allocating resources effectively.

The report had been prepared by utilising data from the Chorley CCTV Operator Log and Lancashire Constabulary's crime recording and intelligence based systems between 1 June and 31 December 2013,

The group also received a report giving a brief summary of finding relating to a national study that had been undertaken by the Home Office to evaluate the effectiveness of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV).

5. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Evidence

The Group were received the following reports:

Chorley's current CCTV system and existing infrastructure, along with information about CCTV systems in other authorities
The effectiveness of Chorley's CCTV system
Draft CCTV System Operating Policy 2013/14
Review of the Impact of Chorley Council's CCTV service – Internal Audit Report
Detailed Analyst of the current CCTV provision in Chorley undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership's Analyst
Home Office National Study on the effectiveness of CCTV

Interviews

Members interviewed various stakeholders to find out their views about the Council's CCTV system that included:

Malcolm Allen, Chair of Chorley Trader Alliance on behalf of the day time economy
Sam Wyatt, Community Safety Manager, Places for People
Cath Burns, Head of Economic Development, Chorley Council
Inspector Alison Barff-Lewis, Lancashire Constabulary
Andrew Hill, Environmental Protection and Community Safety Manager, West Lancashire Council

Written representation

The Task Group also received written representations from:

Peter Verhaege. Applejax Nightclub on behalf of the night time economy
The Parish Councils of Adlington, Astley Village, Charnock Richard, Clayton-Le-Woods, Ecclestone and Whittle-Le-Woods

Public Consultation

A public consultation survey to determine how safe residents of Chorley felt was posted on the Council's website.

Site Visit

Members also attended Chorley Police Station to see the CCTV system in use and view footage of activity leading to police intervention/prevention of crime.

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholders Representation

The Group interviewed representatives of all relevant stakeholders to obtain their views on CCTV provision in Chorley. Representatives were asked a number of questions that included:

What value they placed on the current CCTV system and service.
What benefits, if any, they received from the service,
If they made a 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.

The CCTV service, including the radio service was considered an invaluable tool for the shopkeepers of Chorley. The service was used in helping to catch and deter shoplifters and assisting in the location of children who had wandered away from their parents. In the past a number of shopkeepers had originally contributed to the handheld radio service that is still in use in shops around the town centre. However, a few years ago, the Council had taken the decision to mainstream the funding of the service through the Councils budget. It was conveyed that shopkeepers would be willing to pay a contribution for this service if it meant it could be retained, although it was considered that any contribution should be on a sliding scale, with the larger stores who benefiting more, paying a higher rate.

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

It was however, felt that there were some areas of the town that were not presently covered, that needed to be and that some of the current equipment would benefit from being upgraded. Chorley has a low empty shop rate and although this is 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, a fact that attracts new investors to the town.

The CCTV system was also considered highly 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 system, the police can obtain a true and accurate picture of an incident to ensure a quick and effective response to the matter in hand. The use of CCTV also helps to track underage drinkers, helping to prevent children from harm.

Lancashire Constabulary considers Chorley's CCTV system provision priceless to their organisation. The monitored system assisted them in numerous ways and was considered 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 their CID target team. The system is used regularly as evidence in cases that are taken to court and has often been the difference in obtaining a conviction. Several examples of where CCTV footage had been used as evidence in securing criminal convictions were provided to the Group that included, successful conviction of drug dealing, the capture of offenders of vehicle damage, the apprehension of a large scale shoplifter, serious acquisitive crime and the finding of missing persons.

The current provision is invaluable but could always benefit from extra provision and any increase would see huge benefits for all the community. The system is currently monitored 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 PCSOs. The police would like to see the possibility of an increased 24 hour service to be considered. Although the police do not financially contribute to the provision of the service, the CCTV suite is accommodated within Chorley's Police Station at no cost.

Representations from our registered providers who have housing stock in the borough thought that their organisations would benefit greatly if Chorley's CCTV provision was to be extended. Although current system is limited in some of their areas, the system helped when dealing with issues associated with anti-social behaviour especially around their community centres or other communal areas.

Parish Council Representation

Committee to consider the responses at this meeting.

Public Consultation

A small web based public consultation was undertaken during the period the Task Group was operating and the broad findings were that over 61% (n122) of respondents felt safe or very safe in the knowledge that a CCTV service was operating. A further 32% reported neither safe or unsafe feelings.

Other Local Authorities CCTV Services

South Ribble Council

South Ribble operates a much smaller and less comprehensive CCTV service when compared to Chorley Council. Currently 12 unmonitored CCTV cameras are operated across the South Ribble Borough Council footprint. The CCTV service has an annual revenue budget of £15,000 to support its service and maintenance.

Whilst the system is not monitored, there is a member of staff who is employed on a part time basis to manage the systems service and maintenance contract and to review and download CCTV images for evidential purposes.

South Ribble has a similar population and crime profile to Chorley but they do not have an established Town Centre or night-time economy, unlike Chorley. Similarly to Chorley, South Ribble has experienced significant reductions in Crime and anti-social behaviour over the last six years.

Blackpool Council

Blackpool Council operated a 151 camera monitored CCTV system at an annual cost of £600,000. In 2013 a decision was taken by Blackpool Council to cease manning CCTV operations completely. Lancashire Constabulary were keen to retain the service however, because Blackpool Council produces a priority led budget; CCTV was deemed to be a priority for the Council, therefore funding was withdrawn, Blackpool Council took the view that the CCTV service is largely utilised by the Police and not Council used, therefore not a Council priority.

The control centre and equipment are still operational, just not monitored so it is feasible that the service could be re-established in future years. However, Blackpool Council have stated that even if crime levels increase unless the funding gap can be closed by the police and local commercial sector, the unmanned CCTV system will continue to be provided.

Similarly to South Ribble Council, Blackpool Council still employs a small team to manage the CCTV systems service and maintenance contract and to review and download CCTV images for evidential purposes. The effect on community safety issues of the decision to operate an unmonitored CCTV system across Blackpool has yet to be

evaluated. Therefore further research would be required at a further date in order to accurately report on the impact of this decision.

West Lancashire Council

West Lancashire Council had recently undertaken a similar review of their CCTV provision and service. The Council has always operated a 24 hour, seven days a week service. Although the service had always offered up the reduction of monitored hours as a cost saving measure for the Council, this had never been taken up. Ormskirk is a busy town and although there are probably periods throughout the day that are less busy than others, the service was used at all times.

Their old system was 10 years old and was 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 Council decided to renew the system and the service was increased by adding a further 50% of cameras to existing provision. Although the system was upgraded, the Council did not invest in the best or latest technology. They did however try to get as many cameras as they could that were the same type, to reduce on maintenance costs, although some additional types were needed dependant on its locations or required functionality. The Council now has some cameras that are capable of recording a 360° rotation and some that are fitted with a sensory light, aimed at dispersing.

The CCTV services is funded by West Lancashire Council's mainstream funding and had recently moved its CCTV suite to new premises to allow for the extension in service and upgrade of equipment. Originally some of the equipment had been funded by the Local Strategic Partnership grant, but since its cessation all funding is now covered 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.

7. CONCLUSION

The CCTV system is highly valued by the community of Chorley and has been evidenced by the findings the Group has made. The Group feel that the perception of crime and the confidence upon which Chorley residents place in its CCTV system is of paramount importance.

It was noted that there have been many research studies conducted which have aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of CCTV but that it was difficult to quantify its effectiveness with a broad brush approach. Advice given directly from the Home Office indicated that authorities were best to evaluate their need in response to local issues and concerns.

The impact on crime figures is hard to predict but should the CCTV service be decommissioned, it could be theorised that without the deterrent effect of the CCTV cameras, certain crime categories would be negatively affected. Theft, anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and violent offences could increase.

CCTV places a key role in both supporting the detection rates of crime and anti-social behaviour. The system is not only used to identify suspects and accomplices but serves to eliminate individuals from suspicion, which can reduce the length of the investigatory process. Reducing the CCTV service provision could see a reduction in the successful detection of cases and prosecutions.