



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	<b>Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee Thursday 19 November 2020</b>
Report Number	<b>Agenda Item No. 8</b>
Subject	<b>Public open space CCTV provision and monitoring arrangements</b>
Wards affected	All Carterton wards, Witney Central and Witney South
Accountable member	Councillor Merylyn Davies, Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing Email: <a href="mailto:merilyn.davies@westoxon.gov.uk">merilyn.davies@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Group Manager – Strategic Support Tel: 01594 812290; Email: <a href="mailto:andy.barge@publicagroup.uk">andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</a>
Summary	To provide a progress update on upgrading the public open space CCTV cameras covering areas of Carterton and Witney and associated monitoring control room arrangements.
Annexes	None
Recommendation	That the Committee notes the report and the proposed next steps towards upgrading the public open space CCTV provision and provides observations and comments to the Cabinet.
Corporate priorities	Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities  Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance: Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultation	Engagement with Thames Valley Police and the other Oxfordshire Districts. Further consultation will take place with the Carterton and Witney town councils as the upgrade progresses.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The motion below was put to Council in February 2020 by Councillors Duncan Enright and Laetisia Carter and was referred to the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment and advice:

*“Witney's CCTV system is nearly two decades old, and despite finances being identified by West Oxfordshire District Council and Witney Town Council, only slow progress is being made in replacing it effectively. The Council therefore resolves to call a meeting with stakeholders at the earliest opportunity, and to seek to expedite the replacement of the system with a target date for completion by the end of Summer 2020.”*

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) owns and operates a public open space Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system in the district, consisting of 61 cameras - 57 in Witney and four in Carterton. The town centre public space CCTV scheme was introduced in the town in 2002 after the council successfully obtained a Home Office grant. The scheme was expanded to cover Carterton town centre in 2008; and the scheme was upgraded (digitised) and expanded to include Marriotts Walk in 2009.
- 2.2. Monitoring of West Oxfordshire's cameras takes place at Witney Police station, with the staff employed by Thames Valley Police (TVP) and a service level agreement in place with the Council. Within Oxfordshire, monitoring control rooms are also located in Oxford City, Banbury and Abingdon.
- 2.3. In late autumn 2018, WODC commissioned CDC Technical Services to undertake an independent review of the public space CCTV systems in Witney and Carterton town centres. This review concluded that:
  - i. In general, the WODC CCTV scheme provides good coverage of the areas being monitored with overlapping camera coverage;
  - ii. But, the current system control room and recording technology is old and, in the main, obsolete and there is a significant amount of repeated camera maintenance issues to be addressed;
  - iii. The implementation of a digital transmission network utilising the existing private fibre network within Witney town centre is relatively straightforward, cost effective and most importantly can be done on a camera-by-camera basis as required;
  - iv. Upgrading or replacing one part of the system will have a knock-on effect to other parts of the system that need to be upgraded as well.
- 2.4. In setting the 2019/20 budget, Council approved £300,000 capital for investment in CCTV, subject to business case.

## **3. WHY THE SLOW PROGRESS?**

- 3.1. The catalyst or starting point for replacing the public open space CCTV system needs to be the monitoring control room. This is because there needs to be certainty that any new camera equipment is compatible with the control room equipment; and there needs to be certainty over the location of the control room.
- 3.2. Since 2016 there has been a desire for a shared Oxfordshire hub control room, as this will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the monitoring – with more ‘real time’

monitoring, less lone working, capital investment from Thames Valley Police (TVP) and resilience from fail over to other TVP hubs with the same monitoring equipment. The disadvantages of a shared monitoring hub are potential loss of local knowledge and a small loss of local employment, depending where the hub is located.

- 3.3. This desire for a shared solution has hampered progress for a number of reasons:
  - i. Design and implementation of a TVP shared hub in Buckinghamshire ahead of Oxfordshire;
  - ii. Where in Oxfordshire a shared hub could be located, with each of the existing control rooms having a degree of uncertainty over longevity, or not being suitable to host a hub;
  - iii. Which Districts wanted to be part of a shared hub, with some having made more recent investment in new equipment.
- 3.4. At meeting between TVP, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and Oxford City Council in late January 2020 (Cherwell invited but not able to attend), it was made clear that we needed to agree a partnership route by the end of March 2020, or West Oxfordshire would progress a standalone solution.
- 3.5. This picked up the impetus for a shared monitoring control room and by early March:
  - i. Oxford City volunteered to act as project lead, on the basis that they were in the process of engaging project management support for reviewing their other internal and housing schemes CCTV provisions;
  - ii. TVP had agreed to share the technical specifications and partnership agreements used for the Buckinghamshire hub, based in Aylesbury, with Oxford City. The tender specification and procurement route used for the Aylesbury hub effectively allows us to draw down on the same technologies for an Oxfordshire hub. This brings two advantages if we agree to sign up for the shared solution – it will expedite any tender process; and having common technologies with another hub provides a robust business continuity solution.
- 3.6. Since late March, the onset of Covid-19 has regrettably meant little progress has been made as all of the community services based resource has been directed at to the Council's response to Covid-19. A check was made in early July and Oxford City has appointed a project manager and a potential solution for the Oxfordshire hub location been found.

#### **4. WHERE ARE WE TODAY?**

- 4.1. A partnership agreement for the Oxfordshire hub has been drafted (yet to be received) and it is proposed to enter in to a memorandum of understanding to commit partners to the shared solution – subject to business case and Cabinet approval.
- 4.2. A report is being taken to the Chief Constable this month for strategic sign off from TVP.
- 4.3. A draft outline business case indicates a capital investment of between £350,000 and £550,000 for a shared monitoring hub, depending on the operating model used. The initial design principles for the Oxfordshire hub are based on TVP funding 50% of these capital costs, with the remainder split across the participating districts on an agreed basis e.g. number of cameras.

- 4.4. Other design principles for the shared hub are a seven year agreement, at which point a technology review would take place; revenue costs split on a formula based on population and crime data; and the ability to remotely access images from a review suite in a local police station with the potential to stream it to a police officer's phone, so it can be played to suspects at interview and increase the number of guilty pleas.

## **5. WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED NEXT STEPS?**

- 5.1. As described at 3.1, knowing what technology will be used in the monitoring control hub can inform compatible camera technology to use as part of the upgrade to our systems.
- 5.2. Before replacing all of the existing cameras, in their existing locations, a rationalisation exercise is proposed, for four reasons:
- i. The surveillance camera commissioner requires all local authorities to look at their systems, the camera locations and reasons why the cameras are where they are to be revisited, to see if there is still a valid need for them to be at that particular location – supported by privacy impact assessments;
  - ii. Reported crimes have been mapped and overlaid with existing camera locations. The use of these crime 'heat maps' can inform the future camera placement;
  - iii. Technology and subsequent image quality has advanced significantly, meaning fewer cameras may be needed. This could reduce the ongoing maintenance and monitoring costs and therefore reduce the revenue budget requirement, without compromising public safety.
  - iv. A reduced number of fixed location cameras could be supported by a number of deployable wireless CCTV cameras.
- 5.3. The current revenue budget for CCTV is £122,400. The bulk of the expenditure is the contract with Thames Valley Police for control room staffing, the annual maintenance contract for the cameras and control room equipment, and the fibre network to carry the images from each camera back to the control room. Contributions from Carterton and Witney town councils and Marriots Walk shopping centre totalling approximately £45,000 help offset these costs. It is anticipated that a shared monitoring hub, together with a rationalisation of the number of cameras will achieve a saving of £40,000 - £60,000 per annum.
- 5.4. The next steps are summarised as:
- i. Present the outline business case to Cabinet for a decision on the shared monitoring control hub, once it has been completed;
  - ii. Confirm the control room technology that will be used;
  - iii. Review and rationalisation of the number of cameras and their locations – supported by crime hot spot mapping and ensuring surveillance camera code of practice compliance;
  - iv. Procure new cameras;
  - v. Agree the future funding and operating model.

## **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

6.1. A range of alternative options could include:

- i. The Council could choose to cease CCTV provision;
- ii. Pursue a standalone monitoring control room solution, but with no TVP contribution and therefore at a significantly higher cost;
- iii. Explore the model used in many other districts – including Cotswold and Forest of Dean – of handing operational responsibility for an upgraded CCTV solution to the relevant town councils.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. No specific implications arising from this update report.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. No specific implications arising from this update report.

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT**

9.1. No specific risks have been identified in respect of this report.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

10.1. The report raises no specific implications for any particular group or individual. Any future changes to camera locations will be subject to the appropriate privacy impact assessments.

## **11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1. There are no specific implications arising directly from this report.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. No background papers have been identified.