



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee 5 July 2023
Subject	Public open space CCTV update
Wards Affected	All Carterton wards, Witney Central and Witney South Potentially Chipping Norton
Accountable Member	Cllr Geoff Saul, Cabinet Member for Housing & Social Welfare geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andy Barge, Assistant Director – Communities Tel: 01594 812290 andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Summary	To provide a progress update on upgrading the public open space CCTV cameras covering areas of Carterton and Witney (with Chipping Norton under consideration) and associated monitoring control room arrangements.
Annexes	None
Recommendations	Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to: <i>a) Endorse the continued need for public open space CCTV;</i> <i>b) Note the progress towards a shared monitoring control room;</i> <i>c) Note the camera optimisation review and provide a view on extending public open space CCTV to cover Chipping Norton;</i> <i>d) Provide a view on the options for mitigating tree growth;</i> <i>e) Note the proposed future operating model</i>
Corporate priorities	Putting residents first Enabling a good quality of life for all
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultation	Engagement with Thames Valley Police, OPCC and the other Oxfordshire Districts. Further consultation will take place with the Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney town councils as the upgrade progresses, along with Marriott's Walk and Woolgate shopping centres.

I. BACKGROUND

- I.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 – 23 covering Witney town centre, 25 in Marriott's Walk shopping centre, 11 at Woolgate shopping centre and four in Carterton.
- I.2.** The town centre public space CCTV scheme was introduced in Witney town centre 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 Marriott's Walk in 2009.
- I.3.** 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.
- I.4.** 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 – providing the monitoring control room technologies are compatible.
- I.5.** In setting the 2019/20 budget, Council approved £300,000 capital for investment in CCTV, subject to business case, to upgrade the cameras and replace the monitoring control room equipment.
- I.6.** In March 2020, Cabinet approved a CCTV compliance policy, ensuring we meet the Surveillance Camera Commissioner Code of Practice.

2. IS THERE A CONTINUED NEED FOR CCTV?

- 2.1.** Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities to do all they reasonably can to prevent:
 - a.** Crime and disorder in their areas, including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment
 - b.** The misuse of drugs, alcohol or other substances
 - c.** Reoffending in their areas
- 2.2.** The use of a CCTV system to help meet this duty includes detection; deterrence; self-discipline – by potential victims and potential offenders; and acting as a capable guardian. Routine activity theory, which looks at crime from an offender's point of view, suggests that for a crime to be committed there must be a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable

guardian. Any act that prevents the convergence of these elements reduces the likelihood of crime.

- 2.3. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 introduced the regulation of public space surveillance cameras in England and Wales. As a result, the Secretary of State, under Section 30 of the Act, issued the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. The code of practice details that a CCTV system must always be for a specified purpose which is in pursuit of a legitimate aim and necessary to meet an identified pressing need, which might include:
- a. national security
 - b. public safety
 - c. the economic well-being of the country
 - d. the prevention of disorder or crime
 - e. the protection of health or morals
 - f. the protection of the rights and freedoms of others
- 2.4. The [Strategic Intelligence Assessment \(SIA\)](#) for Oxfordshire shows that West Oxfordshire has the lowest total recorded crime in the county, but the greatest increase between 2018 and 2020 has been for stalking and public order offences.
- 2.5. At its October 2021 meeting, after considering a notice of motion on violence against women, Council resolved to do everything in its power to build a District free from harassment and violence against women and girls. Continued provision of public open space CCTV supports this.
- 2.6. Crime density maps, together with local knowledge, and when considered alongside the legitimate aims in the commissioner’s code and our duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, provide the evidence base to support the continuation of a CCTV system. They further suggest an extension of the system to include Chipping Norton, as well as covering Carterton and Witney, could be beneficial – a view supported by Thames Valley Police.

3. A SHARED MONITORING CONTROL HUB

- 3.1. Since 2016, there has been a collective desire between the five Oxfordshire districts and Thames Valley Police (TVP) for a shared Oxfordshire hub control room. Sharing will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the monitoring – with more ‘real time’ monitoring, no lone working, capital investment from TVP and resilience from fail over to another TVP hub with the same monitoring equipment in Buckinghamshire.
- 3.2. The disadvantages of a shared hub are potential loss of local knowledge and a small loss of local employment, depending where the hub is located. These pros and cons are summarised in the table below:

Advantages
A better working environment with no lone working, leading to greater capacity and a more resilient staffing model to improve health and wellbeing
Thames Valley Police capital contribution
Fail over to Buckinghamshire hub, supported by a common IT infrastructure providing a reliable and sustainable service which is economical to maintain for a minimum of 7 years

Compliance with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice and other legislative requirements and best practice
One control room, plus local viewing at Witney, resulting in more productive, real time monitoring of CCTV
Single maintenance contract for all cameras and control room equipment
Technology to facilitate digitally disruptive policing models and digital evidence management
Disadvantages if not based in Witney
Loss of local knowledge
Small loss of local employment

- 3.3. Progress towards a shared hub has been hampered by a number of reasons, but in the last nine months a CCTV partnership board has been established and TVP has employed a CCTV Operations Manager to gain greater traction.
- 3.4. At the CCTV Partnership Board meeting in October 2022 Witney was confirmed as the preferred location for the Oxfordshire monitoring hub (with the potential to become a hub for the whole Thames Valley Police region).
- 3.5. On 20 October 2022 a critical failure of the monitoring, recording and control equipment at Witney police station occurred. Despite the best efforts of the appointed maintenance contractor and the current supplier a permanent repair could not be made due to the obsolescence of hardware and non-supported software version.
- 3.6. As the various component parts of the system interact to form 'one' integrated system, it was not possible to replace one or two parts and get the system up and running. Using his emergency decision making powers, the Chief Executive approved spend of approximately £44,000 from the capital programme budget to replace the CCTV monitoring control room equipment.
- 3.7. To ensure future compatibility with the proposed shared hub a contract waiver was approved by the Chief Finance Officer and the Council's Solicitor to purchase the minimum amount of Genetec equipment required to provide a basic system to meet our current needs, until such a time as the system is enhanced when the shared hub is implemented (envisaged to be from April 2024).
- 3.8. Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Councils have already installed new Genetec equipment in readiness for this, with a view to using a 'lift and shift' approach. The Buckinghamshire hub also uses Genetec and this would be the fail over business continuity solution for an Oxfordshire hub, and vice versa.
- 3.9. At the CCTV partnership board meeting in March 2023 a first draft outline business case was presented for the shared hub. Two options have been modelled – a 24/7 service, or one which operates 0700 - 0000 Sunday - Wednesday and 0700 - 0200 on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. For both, TVP would cover 50% of the operating cost.
- 3.10. Two cost sharing models are suggested for the remaining operating cost. The percentage of cameras or percentage share of the Community Safety Fund. Both would give WODC an approximate 11% share. For option one this equates to approximately £72,500 pa and £53,000

for option 2. In addition, for both options fibre and electricity costs would be covered locally at £14,000.

- 3.11. Total revenue costs would therefore range from £67,000 to £86,500 and this would represent a projected revenue saving of between £50,000 and £70,000.

4. CAMERA OPTIMISATION

- 4.1. Before starting a camera replacement programme and in line with the commissioner's code and our local policy, a review of all existing camera locations has taken place, for five reasons:

- a. To make sure the legitimate aim is still relevant and take account of any effect on individuals through privacy impact assessments;
- b. In addition to considering crime density maps, we can overlay reported crimes with existing camera locations and these crime 'heat maps' can help inform future camera placement;
- c. Technology and subsequent image quality has advanced significantly, meaning we may need fewer cameras to achieve the same, or better, coverage. This could reduce the ongoing costs, without compromising public safety;
- d. Changes in public realm and infrastructure may suggest alternative locations;
- e. A number of redeployable wireless CCTV cameras may be beneficial for addressing shorter-term needs.

- 4.2. This exercise was undertaken by an industry expert and provides a mapping of where and why (legitimate aim) for each proposed camera location, using the reasons listed below:

- To detect and prevent crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour
- To deter theft and criminal damage
- To help people feel safe and support the night time economy
- To assist with vehicle recognition involved in crime

- 4.3. Details captured in the review's report include:

- a. An assessment of each of the existing camera locations within the current public open space CCTV scheme, along with recommendations for each location
- b. The mapping of existing and new camera locations in accordance with available crime statistics
- c. Recommendations for improvement of coverage – including the use of additional locations, the removal of locations and/or the relocation of camera locations
- d. Existing and future technology considerations, including:
 - i. the re-use of existing camera technology,
 - ii. the requirements for upgrade of the existing transmission network,
 - iii. the requirements for control room systems upgrade,
 - iv. the different types of ANPR camera technology,
 - v. the use of redeployable cameras and considerations for using them,
 - vi. the use of video analytics and the potential use of data gathered by cameras

- 4.4. All cameras have been mapped using the online mapping tool, Scribble Maps. This tool has allowed the field of view for each of the existing cameras to be mapped to allow for easy observation of the total coverage. An example is shown on the next page.



- 4.5. The resultant recommendations of this coverage mapping suggest two cameras can be removed, six relocated and three new locations.
- 4.6. The scope of the review included investigating the requirements for the installation of public open space CCTV in Chipping Norton, with the general operational requirement to provide coverage to the main pedestrian and parking areas of the town as well as provide coverage of the main roads through the town.
- 4.7. A survey of the town was undertaken, supported by a TVP local police sergeant and identified five potential positions for new cameras that would achieve the main coverage requirements:
- Outside the front of the Town Hall at the A44 junction of New St,
 - Outside the rear of the Town Hall at the junction with High St (Top Row),
 - On High St (Top Row) o/s WH Smith,
 - On High St/A44 o/s Crown & Cushion Hotel,
 - On Market St (Bottom Row) o/s 19 Market St
- 4.8. The capital budget estimate for this work would be £50,000 and it would add around £10,000 to the annual revenue budget requirement.

5. TREE GROWTH

- 5.1. During the spring and summer months trees are a very common cause of performance issues for public open space CCTV systems and the scheme in Witney is no different, with 14 cameras significantly or severely affected. An example is provided on the next page.



- 5.2. A number of options exist to mitigate or address these issues:
- 5.2.1. **Adapt** – coverage can sometimes be improved by raising or lowering the height of a camera in its existing location to improve its coverage, or using a longer outreach bracket.
 - 5.2.2. **Relocate** – move the position of the camera to increase coverage, but this is contingent on a suitable mounting position, electricity supply and fibre cabling all being available. Cost and benefit would need to be considered.
 - 5.2.3. **Pruning** – in most instances, lifting the canopy of the trees in question will suffice and provide the visibility required for the camera, albeit for a short time until the tree grows again. Where this is the case, it is important to put in place a tree pruning regime to ensure the trees are regularly maintained. As none of the trees are in this Council’s ownership this can present a challenge. Equally, no annual budget currently exists to implement such a regime.
 - 5.2.4. **Tolerate** – research has shown that high canopy trees does not encourage crime. Even where vegetation reduces natural surveillance, residents have a higher sense of safety in areas of high density tree planting. The reason for this is that tree planting contributes to a sense of ownership and that this leads residents to care for the area. The benefits that trees provide to people's mental health and wellbeing have been widely researched.

6. CURRENT MONITORING CONTRACT

- 6.1. The contract for the current monitoring arrangements described at 1.2 expired on 31 March 2023. The option to extend has already been exercised, but following advice and opinion from legal and procurement, an exemption from contract procedure rules has been used to allow the current arrangements to continue to 31 March 2024.

7. FUTURE OPERATING MODEL

- 7.1. Under the current operating model, this Council retains direct responsibility for the public open space CCTV system and its ongoing maintenance. In early April 2022, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner tabled a report to the Police and Crime Panel outlining a new vision for CCTV. This vision recognises that CCTV exists primarily for the benefit of policing and the wider interests of community safety. Therefore it is right that policing shoulders the lion share of the responsibility for providing the capability
- 7.2. The long term vision is for CCTV across Thames Valley to be provided by Thames Valley Police. The Force would own the equipment/contracts, be responsible for maintenance and employ staff to monitor the service. This “single owner” model will help to consolidate technology, drive savings through economies of scale, improve integration with police systems and provide increased resilience.
- 7.3. Under this model, district and town councils (and commercial beneficiaries such as shopping centres) will continue to make a financial contribution using an agreed funding formula and as part of the partnership agreement local authorities would allow TVP to use appropriate street furniture for the placement of equipment.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. Council could choose to cease provision of this discretionary service.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this update report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this update report.

11. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1. Having no public open space CCTV means our duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may not be met. It could also lead to an increase in the fear of or actual crime.

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 12.1. 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, compliant with the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice .

13. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. There are no specific implications arising directly from this report.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1. No background papers have been identified.

(END)