

Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee

Action from the Committee on 9th March 2020

A Member requested an update on CCTV.

Response to Action:

For information only – attached is a report that was presented and supported by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2020.

Report Subject: Position Statement on the Council's CCTV system (April – August 2020)

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Council's CCTV system covering the period April to August 2020 (during the COVID-19 Pandemic).

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 A comprehensive position statement was provided on the Council's CCTV System to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 12th February 2020. This report summarised the background of the transition to the new system, key information on CCTV system technical aspects and locations on camera equipment, and also initial performance information on the use of the system from 30 July 2019 to 15 January 2020.
- 2.2 Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 consideration was given to the provision of the CCTV service with Corporate Leadership Team agreeing that it would continue with a limited restriction on access to footage for the most serious incidents. Furthermore, taking into consideration the national guidance for the pandemic response and in-line with staffing capacity and safety measures the operating of the system has mostly been carried out remotely by staff working from home, as opposed to through the CCTV Control Room at the Civic Centre.
- 2.3 Gwent Police were fully engaged in the process outlined above, and new COVID-19 protocols were established for requesting and retrieving footage for lockdown and out of hours' arrangements.
- 2.4 Technical support and interaction with the CCTV system providers, (IDS) during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period also witnessed some challenges as a consequence of national restriction, e.g. system investigations, site visits, dealing repairs, accessing supporting buildings for resetting systems.
- 2.5 There continue to be 53 CCTV cameras installed on 33 specific posts in seven CCTV zone areas. These zones cover Ebbw Vale, Abertillery, Brynmawr, Tredegar, Cwm, Blaina and Llanhilleth train station. Each zone is legally compliant through Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) in-line with the expectation of the Surveillance Camera Commissioner. No

changes have been made to the locations of the cameras during this period.

- 2.6 As part of the move to this CCTV system, four deployable cameras were purchased. These remain in the testing phase having not being deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option One**

That the Committee considers the information provided in the position statement on the CCTV function during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2 **Option Two**

That the Committee considers and provides comment on the position statement on the CCTV function during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- 4.1 The provision of a CCTV service is non-statutory function and not required under legislation, however the CCTV system is one of a range of tools the Council uses with its partners to tackle crime and disorder, in-line with the requirements of its Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) powers.

- 4.2 In utilising CCTV to tackle crime and disorder the Council is contributing to the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan Objective for Safe and Friendly Communities.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

- 5.1.1 As of month five of 2020/21 the CCTV budget is underspent, as a consequence of reduced staffing costs. To be able to respond to the new working arrangements during the COVID-19 Pandemic additional IT equipment was procured to ensure appropriate access the CCTV Control Room from remote locations.

- 5.1.2 On-going consideration needs to be given to the efficient operation of the system with the budget being utilised for preventative maintenance including regular replacement of components such as recording media (hard drives), cameras, wireless transmission equipment, and ICT equipment such as server and PC's. Without this the system will degrade and become obsolete due to its location within the external environment and future technological and software changes.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 **Legal Compliance**

There is risk associated with non-compliance of good practice guidance provided by the Surveillance Commissioners and GDPR requirements

This risk will be mitigated by the appropriate policies / strategies being in place ensuring compliance with legislation and best practice, which have been included into the appropriate forward work programmes for Council business for 20/21.

5.2.2 Revenue Implications moving forward

There is a risk that unforeseen revenue costs related to dealing with operation of the CCTV arrangements will exceed the agreed budget.

This will need to be kept under review and corrective action taken as appropriate as part of normal budget monitoring.

5.2.3 Technical Issues

During this period Technical Services have put in place weekly and monthly checks to monitor the system. When required the contractor (IDS) is immediately informed of any faults.

Technical Services continue to hold regular meetings with the contractor (IDS) to discuss the status of the system, any future remedial works required and what future improvements will need to be considered.

Due to the reduced data transfer rates resulting from removing the high cost rental fibre lines from the previous scheme, there are operational issues with retrieval in some instances of extremely large volume of video images when requested by Authorised Organisations such as the Police. Technical Services are currently working with SRS and BT Openreach to investigate options to increase the data speeds at the hub sites.

In terms of specific technical issues in the Blaina Zone, Technical Services are currently working with Western Power Distribution (WPD) and the Contractor (IDS) to investigate and restore the power to the CCTV Columns (previously supplied from old Council Office on the High Street). Consideration will also be given to the option to install a new BT Openreach fibre line to improve transfer speeds and reliability. Technical Services are awaiting costs.

Technical Services are due to install Dynamic DNS on the CCTV system to allow checks and software maintenance to be carried out remotely.

5.3 Legal

- 5.3.1 The Council when operating a surveillance camera system needs to operate within the appropriate legislation e.g. Human Rights and Data Protection laws. The Surveillance Camera Commissioner provides guidance via the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice to support

appropriate compliance. A crucial step to ensure that the Council is operating in-line with these expectations is the completion of Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for the CCTV cameras and supporting systems. All current DPIAs remain relevant and lawful with the 'pressing need' to capture CCTV images.

- 5.3.2 The Control Room where images captured by the system can be checked and transferred is restricted to authorised people. The Council has an obligation to guard against unauthorised use, access or disclosure. During COVID-19 the Control Room has only been accessed in-line with appropriate arrangements for accessing the Civic Centre (e.g. access on Tuesday and Thursday between 9am and 1pm). Both technical and operational access has been required during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- 5.3.4 There is a requirement for the Council to regularly review the CCTV system to ensure it remains justified, with an expectation from the use of the DPIA process on an annual cycle. This process will be delayed to the Spring 2021 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

- 5.4.1 The Council's Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) is the Chief Officer Resources, aligned to the responsibilities via the General Data Protections Regulations (GDPR).
- 5.4.2 The Council's Technical Services Team has project managed the tendering, design, and implementation of the Council's CCTV's system, and continue to provide the technical support required during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- 5.4.3 The Policy Team (Community Safety) continue to provide policy support to ensure that the Council is taking into consideration the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice, and has continued to provide operational support to enable the transfer of imagery to responsible authorities such as Gwent Police during the COVID-19 pandemic (March to August 2020) handling all enquiries for CCTV evidence packets to Gwent Police, whilst offering 24/7 cover for any major emergency incidents.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

- 6.1.1 The CCTV system has remained operational and has been actively providing high quality digital imagery to appropriate responsible authorities, such as Gwent Police, to aid the detection and prevention of crime and disorder across the local areas during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

6.1.2 Following the installation of the system there continues to be a number of technical issues with operational delivery. The technical and external issues have included security and stability of the local low voltage power supplies, use of existing columns and their condition, local wireless interference, outages in broadband lines, vandalism, adverse weather conditions and premature failure of equipment. The issues may continue into the foreseeable future, and as noted above Technical Services are implementing procedures to regularly monitor the system status and undertaking remedial works. The result of these issues has been and may continue to be that the transmission and recording of images has been and maybe interrupted at some periods.

6.1.3 Since 1 April 2020, in-line with the COVID-19 Pandemic arrangements with Gwent Police, there have been 26 incidents where CCTV footage was requested; 1 from a member of the public, 1 from a local business and 24 requests from the Police. It is noted that the Police did not follow up with details in relation to 2 of these initial incident enquiries.

6.1.4 11 Evidence Packets were produced to support Police enquiries and investigations, which include: Assault / Threat (3), Burglary/Attempt Burglary (2), Hate/Racial Crime (2), Knife (1), Arson (1), Criminal Damage (1), and Road Traffic Collision (1).

6.1.5 Of the 24 Incidents, there were 11 where no CCTV evidence was provided, the reasons include:

- No BGCBC CCTV in the area: 4
- 'Incident not deemed 'serious enough' in-line with agreed COVID-19 arrangements at the time: 2
- Operational issues with cameras or system: 1
- Incident beyond the view of available CCTV: 1
- No evidence found on CCTV footage: 1
- Matter resolved via other means: 1
- Discussions with Police ongoing: 1

6.1.6 **Compliance update**

The cameras that are recording in each of the zones have been subject to the necessary DPIAs and have been approved and signed off by the Council's Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO).

6.1.7 The CCTV Policy and Operating Framework for the Council is being revised in-line with the new GDPR Privacy Commissioner expectation.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The provision of CCTV is in place to assist with the prevention and detection of crime and disorder. The DPIA process described above ensures that appropriate consideration is given to the pressing need for surveillance to ensure that the Council is lawfully breaching people's rights under relevant legislation such as human rights and data protection.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

As part of the implementation of the CCTV system, there was extensive involvement with Gwent Police who also represented views from town centres traders. This dialogue included discussions on the camera positions to identify overlaps and obsolete positions. Gwent Police were fully engaged in the service provision arrangements for CCTV imagery requests during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The new CCTV system utilises up-to-date hi-tech equipment and software which will provide a long-term CCTV solution, as long as there is appropriate investment in the running, upkeep and maintenance of the overall system. An annual review process will support this process, and allow for forward planning and technological advancement to be regularly considered.

The CCTV Policy and Operating Framework for the Council is being revised in-line with the new GDPR Privacy Commissioner expectation.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The CCTV system provides a service which is focused on reactively providing evidence to police in relation to crime and disorder which will have already occurred.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

There has been extensive collaboration with Gwent Police in relation to the implementation of the CCTV system, and this with appropriate protocol changes implemented for interactions during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

The new policy and strategy framework for CCTV for the Council, taking into account the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice, will look to take wider consideration of CCTV as a whole, which is utilised by the Council.

6.8 ***EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

As this is a progress report there is no requirement to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment. Equality Issues are considered as part of the operational delivery of the service.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Surveillance Camera Code of Practice outlines considerations for monitoring arrangements for CCTV systems noting there should be effective review and audit mechanisms. This will inform the Council's new CCTV Policy and Operating Framework.

7.2 The Council's SIRO has established an officer group to monitor the arrangements to ensure compliance, holding one meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic in July 2020. Quarterly meetings have been diarised for the future.

7.3 An annual monitoring report will form part of the Committee's forward work programme for 2021.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *N/A*