

Minutes

Economic Scrutiny Panel

30th October, 2007, Newton Hall Community Centre

Present: Councillor Hopgood (in the Chair)
and Councillors Colledge, Kelly, Marsden, Simmons, Stoddart and
Wilkes

Also Present: Mrs J Dwyer – City Care Manager
Mrs J Harvey – Assistant City Care Manager
Councillors: Kellett; and Robinson

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Bartle, Guy, Lightly and Simpson

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd October, 2007 were agreed as a true record.

3. Scrutiny of CCTV

The City Care Manager and Assistant Manager had been invited to the meeting to give information on the equipment in use and current procedures relating to CCTV.

The cameras are monitored twenty four hours per day 365 days per year most of the cameras are owned by the City of Durham but there a small number in the new Walkergate development that are privately owned and which the Council is paid £22,000 for monitoring their cameras.

Most of the cameras in use are digital and produce excellent quality images, the services is hoping to renew a percentage of the VHS camera heads. The VHS images are of good quality too. The City Council has always purchased the best equipment and the quality produced has been excellent. As the quality of the images is so good, defence solicitors are questioning staff about procedures and practices used – the staff has been congratulated by solicitors for the way in which they carry out their duties.

The section provides a monitoring service to pub watch and shop watch and is in radio contact with the police. This is a much more effective way of dealing with street incidents that telephoning the police station.

Arrests are increasing each year, this does not necessarily mean that there is an increase in crime rates; this is because of the experience of the staff who are monitoring the cameras and the improved methods of detection.

Members asked how many convictions were made as a result of evidence obtained by the CCTV cameras. Members were advised that this information was only available when the service had been used as a witness.

All of the cameras are used but there are blind spots and those seasoned criminals are aware of the blind spots and where they are. Also if a camera is facing the wrong way at the time of an incident then the monitoring staff would be unaware of it.

The Panel were informed that City of Durham Council pays for the service in its entirety; they receive no contributions from either the Police or the Shopkeepers. The Panel suggested that contributions to the costs should be made by the police and the retailers and were advised that the Police do not contribute to any CCTV and that retailers were not interested as they have high cost loss in to their budget. The Panel were interested that research be carried out to check if the police contribute any where to CCTV.

Members expressed concern about the numbers of youths congregating at the Bus Station, the dispersal order that had been in place had now lapsed. Members informed the Panel that members of the public are becoming nervous of using the bus station.

The Panel were informed that the staff is multi skilled and training is regularly updated, each member of staff has a training log and regular checks are made on staff members.

Members discussed the use of mobile cameras and were informed that a camera could be put anywhere as a deterrent but for them to be effective they needed to be monitored. There are also problems with lighting, thus giving graining images of poor quality.

The panel suggested that in an ideal world, the use of the cameras should be extended and the images sent to one control centre.

The Panel asked would it be cost effective to replace all camera heads with digital cameras and were informed that when searching for information using digital imaging it is much quicker to find what you're looking for and less storage space is taken up.

The Chair and Panel Members thanked Mrs Dwyer and Mrs Harvey for attending the meeting and for a very informative meeting.

4. Actions for Next Meeting

Invite Keith Davis, Community Safety Officer and representatives from Durham Police – Inspector Dick Dodds and Chief Superintendent Trevor Watson.

Make arrangements for the Panel Members to visit the control room.

5. Any Other Business

There was no other business Members wishes to discuss.

The Meeting Terminated 6.20 p.m.