

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 5 APRIL 2006

REPORT OF THE PARKING & CIVIL CONTINGENCIES MANAGER

FUTURE OF CCTV MONITORING

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillors Lewin-Harris)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report brings before Members proposals for the medium term future of monitoring the Taunton and Wellington town centre CCTV systems and seeks a decision as to the way forward.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The present monitoring is undertaken by Parking Services using Parking Attendants by day and other staff during late evenings. Active monitoring takes place during limited hours, with recording from all cameras on a continuous basis. There are drivers to increase the active monitoring hours to 24 hours seven days a week (24/7) and to move to fully dedicated specialist operators. Two options exist to achieve this – one by employing specialist staff directly and one by entering into a partnership with Sedgemoor District Council. This has been considered by the Community Leadership Panel. Consultations have been carried out with stakeholders within the Crime & Disorder arena. The proposals and responses are outlined in the attached documents.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Borough Council first introduced CCTV into Coal Orchard, Old Market Shoppers (OMS) and Kilkenny car parks in 1995 as a response to criminal and anti-social behaviour. The Control Room was established within the OMS multi-storey in conjunction with the Car Parking Inspectorate offices. Over the next five years the number of car parks covered was increased to ten across those which, according to the Police, had the highest criminal activity.
- 3.2 At the end of the 1990s the Home Office had measures to reduce criminal and anti-social behaviour at the top of its agenda. It began a programme of bid funding for CCTV schemes within town centres where such behaviour, and perception of it, reached certain levels. The Taunton Deane Crime & Disorder Partnership made a bid in 2001 for a scheme to provide cameras within Taunton town centre. At the same time the Borough Council agreed to provide additional capital money to extend the coverage in Taunton and put cameras into Wellington. The Borough Council also took on, on behalf of the Partnership, the ongoing revenue costs involved in monitoring and maintenance. The bid was successful.

The CCTV system presently comprises 31 cameras in Taunton car parks, 22 around Taunton town centre and 6 in Wellington town centre.

3.3 It was decided to extend the Control Room at OMS and to continue with the arrangements whereby the newly-created Parking Services Unit, now delivering the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE), undertook the proactive monitoring. Staffing levels were set accordingly, with Parking Attendants doing short shifts in the Control Room as part of their normal duties and other personnel being recruited to cover the late evening duty.

3.4 Following discussions with the Police active monitoring hours were fixed as 0800-0100 hours on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 0800-0300 on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and 0800-1800 on Sundays. Parking Attendants cover the cameras until 2100 hours, with two working in the Control Room during daytime hours and one in the evening. Other staff working alone cover the late shifts. The cameras operate on a pre-programmed sweep and record during the unmanned periods, resulting in 24 hour recording

4 DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

4.1 Both the DPE and CCTV operations have grown in complexity since their inception. Demands on the staff are increasing to the point where it is now considered that neither operation can be delivered at the required level. This is not a criticism of the staff, who provide an excellent service and who have been instrumental on the CCTV front in several high profile anti-crime initiatives, and on the parking front in keeping fairly congestion-free town centres, looking after residents' parking schemes and collecting a large amount of income. However, the skills required to deliver each service are diverging to the point where specialists or dedicated staff must be considered.

4.2 The needs of the CCTV service are evolving, both in relation to changing legislation and the expectations from both the police and public. Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Human Rights and Regulation of Investigatory Powers legislation all potentially have a major impact on the way the CCTV operation must be managed, with increasing demands from the public. The Private Security Industry Act 2001 is best known

for dealing with licensed premises door staff and vehicle immobiliser agents (wheel clampers). However it does cover many aspects of CCTV operations, including those operating in the public domain. Amongst its requirements are ones for all such installations to be licensed and for all employees working at any level with the system to be trained to a national standard. This would require all Parking Attendants and Managers within Parking Services to undergo a comprehensive, and relatively expensive, training package.

- 4.3 One consistent outcome from rounds of recent public consultation exercises has been the public's increasing concerns over the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, and fear of crime. Members have responded to this by making tackling these issues one of the Council's key priorities. The present CCTV monitoring hours do not meet with changes in leisure industry operating hours following the Licensing Act, to the extent that we are not actively monitoring activities around closing times. Extending monitoring activities to 24 hours 7 days a week would be one step in delivering against this priority.
- 4.4 The Police are making increasing use of the CCTV system for investigating incidents within Taunton and Wellington town centres. The importance and value of CCTV evidence is increasing, but this brings with it the potential for legal challenges. The technology surrounding digital images and the ability to manipulate them brings more training needs. The public are also becoming more aware of their rights under the legislation mentioned above and the number of disclosure requests is increasing. Both these increased uses are involving supervisory Parking Services staff in many hours work in reviewing tapes, taking their focus and attention away from the main business of managing the on- and off-street parking operations and maintaining the revenue stream.
- 4.5 Senior local Police Officers have stated that, despite the best efforts of all concerned, the current CCTV service is not delivering the present needs of the Police. They feel that the

originally agreed monitoring hours no longer cover the night-time economy and sometimes do not produce potentially valuable visual evidence to back up criminal prosecutions. Also, the present service is not flexible enough to be able to respond to conflicting demands. In addition, from the Police perspective there is a security issue. They are moving to a new radio system, named Airwave, and want to use this to have direct communications with CCTV Control Rooms. This radio system carries all Police transmissions and ideally should be restricted to a secure environment with the minimum of recipients. The present CCTV operation involves some 24 individual staff in “part-time” monitoring of the system. This is too many for reasonable security of Police operations, which require a smaller number of dedicated operators.

4.6

Since the introduction of DPE in February 2001 there have been numerous additions and alterations to the parking restrictions throughout Taunton Deane. The priority given to the CCTV service, when combined with the East Reach Clearway requirement, has meant some areas have not received the attention they are due. This can lead to congestion problems and also a general disregard for the restrictions themselves. This has manifested itself in requests from some rural areas for an increased presence. As mentioned earlier, the hours spent by Senior PAs in reviewing tapes are hours when they are not available to manage the on- and off-street operations or deal with the many and varied requests coming from the public. This results in pressure at all levels within the Parking Services Unit.

5 OPTIONS FOR THE MONITORING SERVICE

5.1 There are four options to be considered

- leave the service unchanged in its present form;
- employ dedicated CCTV operators within the existing level of service;
- employ dedicated CCTV operators to deliver an enhanced level of service providing a 24 hour 7 day active coverage; or
- enter into a form of partnership with another organisation to deliver a 24 hour 7 day service.

- 5.2 The status quo is not considered an acceptable option as it leaves all challenges unanswered and would probably result in a gradual decline in the CCTV service's ability to deliver the Council's key objectives.
- 5.3 Separating the two services and employing dedicated operators to cover the current active monitoring hours would meet the challenges posed by legislation. It would require a team of operators and an additional supervisor to become expert in all CCTV-related fields, and for senior Parking Services managers to be trained in all the legal aspects. It would not meet the Police requirements for increased active monitoring, but would deal with the security issues.
- 5.4 Enhancing the service to a 24 hour 7 day level would meet all the drivers for change. It would require the commitment to training staff at all levels.
- 5.5 Entering into a partnership with another organisation to deliver a 24 hour 7 day service would deliver all the drivers for change. It could also remove the need for future capital investment in monitoring and recording equipment. There would also be benefits in economies of scale. Sedgemoor District Council has expressed an interest in partnering Taunton Deane in providing such a service from its existing 24 hour 7 day CCTV Control Room. The Police are supportive of such an arrangement and feel it would enhance the overall level of service provided. The Sedgemoor service presently covers several towns within its own District as well as monitoring Yeovil town centre on behalf of South Somerset District Council.
- 5.6 Sedgemoor's proposal includes the following elements:
- provision of 24/7 monitoring and recording in accordance with an industry approved CCTV code of practice;
 - undertaking the reviewing, copying and exhibiting evidence to Police personnel in accordance with their requirements;
 - using an existing fibre optic link to Taunton Police control room to relay Taunton and Wellington CCTV images to Police control room dispatchers;

- providing evidence in Court when necessary
- collating statistical evidence on the performance of the CCTV operation for management at Taunton Deane;
- providing adequate cover in the event of holiday or sickness absence;
- recording camera and other equipment fault details and passing to the appropriate organisation;
- to undertake, if required, the tender process for an equipment maintenance provider;
- bearing the costs of SIA training and licensing;
- bearing costs associated with provision of Police “Airwave” radio;
- TUPE provisions for TDBC staff if necessary;
- production of Service Level Agreement; and
- undertaking the recruitment and training of any additional staff that may be required to cover for the increase in workload. This will also incorporate all training and vetting to ‘Counter terrorism’ level, an Avon & Somerset Police requirement for deployment of “Airwave” radio.

6 OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The CCTV service exists to fulfil the Crime & Disorder Partnership’s, the Council’s and the Local Strategic Partnership’s objectives to prevent and reduce criminal and anti-social behaviour and the fear of both.
- 6.2 In fulfilling this role the service is part of the Taunton Retailers Against Crime (TRAC) and the PubWatch initiative for licensed premises. Whether the service continues to be provided locally or by Sedgemoor these key links will need to be maintained. Sedgemoor is part of similar arrangements with organisations in Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Yeovil.
- 6.3 Using Parking Attendants to monitor during the day makes good use of their local knowledge. Likewise, the experienced night-time operators have built up local knowledge. If the service remained in-house new staff would have to be employed and these would take time to build up the same level local knowledge. If the service moved to Sedgemoor their present employees would need to become familiar with Taunton and Wellington. However, any change in staff under the present system requires a period of local knowledge build-up. The Sedgemoor service also benefits from mapping technology. As a

matter of interest some of the staff in the Bridgwater Control Room live in Taunton.

6.4 The present operation provides additional links between Parking Attendants and supervisory staff in addition to the radio and mobile phone networks. Moving the monitoring service to Sedgemoor would mean that the Senior PAs would become more heavily involved in receiving and dealing with information from patrols on the ground. This would enhance the management of the operation. The CCTV system has been used to record potential incidents involving Parking Attendants and the public. A method of direct communications between the two services would need to be established.

6.5 Our Control Room has been involved in a number of successful operations with the Police. At times they have used it as an operational base. They use the Sedgemoor Control Room for similar operations in Bridgwater and Yeovil. The important issue here is clarity of picture rather than geographical locations. Sedgemoor has a direct video link with the Police Control Room in Taunton. This link would be used to transmit pictures from Taunton and Wellington cameras to Taunton Police Station. South Somerset DC also has a slave monitor within the Council offices.

6.6 The Police are promoting the need for 24 hour monitoring and the advantages that using the newly-refurbished facilities at Sedgemoor. They are the main customer for the existing services from both Taunton and Bridgwater-based Control Rooms. To advocate the proposed change they must be satisfied that the service levels presently achieved through the Taunton-based operation will not be reduced by any move to another location. Discussions with both the Police at Yeovil and South Somerset DC's client officers are satisfied with the service they receive from Sedgemoor

6.7 Sedgemoor have recently upgraded their facilities to take advantage of digital technology and recording techniques. Our facilities are mainly analogue based and will require updating over the next few years.

7 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 A consultation paper, on which this report is largely based, was circulated to the Police and Somerset County Council as major partners on

the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, the Taunton Town Centre Company (who forwarded it to Taunton retailers Against Crime and PubWatch), Wellington Town Council, all Parking Services staff, Unison and Staff Side, and – for information - all Borough Councillors. Two briefing meetings have also been held with Parking Services staff.

7.2

The Police have not submitted a formal response as they are jointly behind the proposals and therefore supportive. No formal response has been received from Somerset County Council, Wellington Town Council, or Staff Side. The written responses from the Taunton Town Centre Company, TRAC and Unison include issues identified above as operational considerations. The responses are appended but can be summarised as

TTCC

- loss of local control of the service;
- retaining of 'real time' communication of incidents in the town centre;
- effective radio communication with TRAC and PubWatch teams which are essential to the safety of Taunton and must not be regarded as a lesser priority than servicing Police requirements;
- loss of local knowledge;
- potential for monitoring resources to be directed away from Taunton to deal with serious incidents in other towns;
- future monitoring provision for extra cameras needed following Vision for Taunton redevelopment;
- potential capability at Sedgemoor to accommodate expansion plans from Yeovil and Bridgwater;
- Sedgemoor CCTV's own service expansion plans; and
- satisfaction of existing customers.

TRAC

- no obvious way of TRAC members being able to directly communicate to CCTV monitoring staff on a “live” basis;
- the potential loss of CCTV staff listening to the TRAC system and being aware of and able to respond to potentially dangerous situations involving both the Police and TRAC members;
- possible deterioration of the existing service by its dilution with service provision to other towns (Bridgwater, Burnham, Yeovil); and
- increased costs to the tax payer resulting in a less satisfactory service.

Unison

- the potential loss of the direct link between staff patrolling on the ground within the town centre areas and the camera operator, and possible resultant health and safety issues;
- how the day to day radio communications between patrol staff and supervisors will be managed;
- the potential detrimental effect on the service provided to TRAC and PubWatch; and
- the loss of local knowledge.

8 RESPONSES

- 8.1 It was considered that a visit to the Sedgemoor control room by Town Centre Company and TRAC representatives and the opportunity to discuss concerns with staff there would be more beneficial than protracted correspondence. This took place on 21 March involving Lucy Ball, Town Centre Manager, Keith Lowe, Old Market Centre Manager, Cyan Jones, OMC Security Officer together with Jason King and Andrew Sharman from TRAC.
- 8.2 The Sedgemoor team explained how resources are deployed to cover more than one town and confirmed that additional staff would be taken on to cater for the proposed additional workload. At present they deal with 112 cameras with two staff dedicated to monitoring and other staff dealing with peripheral activities. The staff are experienced in recognising and prioritising incidents where necessary. When a major incident occurs in

any one location additional monitoring resources can be deployed to ensure other locations are not ignored.

- 8.3 Sedgemoor staff have visited the other towns whose cameras they monitor to familiarise themselves with the areas covered and meet with TRAC and similar organisations. They would do so in Taunton prior to taking on the service.
- 8.4 The Sedgemoor system is capable of some further expansion to cater for possible additional cameras required by major redevelopments within Bridgwater, Yeovil or Taunton in the next few years. There are no plans to seek to extend monitoring activities to other towns.
- 8.5 There is a direct audio link between the TRAC operators in Yeovil and the Sedgemoor control room. This would be easy to achieve for Taunton given the hi-tec TRAC system recently introduced. Control room staff monitor the TRAC radio traffic in Bridgwater and Yeovil and would do so for Taunton. During the visit a number of potential benefits for Bridgwater and Yeovil systems were identified if Taunton is incorporated.
- 8.6 South Somerset District Council have just signed a further three year contract with Sedgemoor to continue the monitoring activities for Yeovil. The Officer responsible at SSDC is satisfied with the service and response times provide. He is not aware of any issues relating to TRAC or PubWatch. He is confident that as long as Sedgemoor continue to provide the service within the agreed parameters there would be no issues for him in the service being expanded.
- 8.7 A further visit for Parking Services staff is being arranged and should, hopefully, take place prior to the Executive meeting. Sedgemoor have confirmed they are happy to monitor Parking Services radio traffic and respond to requests for surveillance and recording. Issues around day to day operational communications are still being investigated but it is believed these can be overcome relatively easily.
- 8.8 Cllr Lewin-Harris has visited the Sedgemoor control room, with the Parking & Civil Contingencies Manager and Sgt Frewin of the Police's Taunton Town Centre Team. They raised a number of management and operational questions with the Manager there, similar to those dealt with above. The answers confirmed the view that the service the Borough Council provides now would be substantially enhanced by moving it to Sedgemoor, and that local arrangements in Taunton could in the main be replicated at Sedgemoor

9 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

		Total est cost pa (£'000)
1	No Change (the baseline) £87k direct staffing, £86k infrastructure and maintenance	173
2	Employ dedicated operators at TDBC on present active monitoring hours £140k direct staffing, £86k infrastructure and maintenance	226
3	Employ dedicated operators at TDBC to provide 24 hour 7 day active monitoring £174k direct staffing, £86k infrastructure and maintenance	260
4	Partnership with Sedgemoor to provide 24 hour 7 day active monitoring Sedgemoor's costs (including monitoring, infrastructure and maintenance)	226

- 9.1 The issues with the present service were acknowledged during the budget setting process for 2006/07 and an extra £50k has been provided for under the heading "CCTV improvements". To move to dedicated operators on current hours would require an additional £3k. To move to TDBC dedicated operators on a 24 hour 7 day basis would require an additional £37k.
- 9.2 The Sedgemoor price is £226k pa based on the present 59 camera system. Against this would be a saving of our current staffing, infrastructure and maintenance costs of £173k. This option would require an additional £3k to be found over and above the £223k in the budget. Sedgemoor's direct costs for staffing are lower than ours as they are able to take advantages of economies of scale. The maintenance aspect has to include the new required link between the control rooms, a cost neither council incurs now.
- 9.3 It would be necessary to transmit the CCTV pictures from Taunton to Bridgwater. This would entail a one-off capital cost of £95-100k. Sedgemoor DC has offered to meet up to 40% of this cost, say £40k, in return for a five year commitment from ourselves. The Police have set aside a further £10k and the Crime & Disorder Partnership has already earmarked £20k of its

Home Office grant money towards CCTV enhancements. The remaining £30k would come from the Council's existing CCTV capital budget.

9.4 Investigations into a direct video link from the Control Room at OMS Car Park to Taunton Police Station, via County Hall, indicate capital expenditure in excess of £30k.

9.5 The Vision for Taunton includes redevelopment of the area east of the High Street, including demolition of the OMS Car Park. This would result in the need for considerable capital investment to relocate and fit out the existing CCTV Control Room, probably in the order of £100k.

10 OTHER ISSUES

10.1 Cllr Lewin-Harris and the Parking & Civil Contingencies Manager were recently invited over to Bridgwater Police Station to view a proposal to introduce an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) capability to the Police Districts in Somerset. ANPR is basically the ability to read car number plates through existing CCTV cameras, with connections to several databases (including the Police National Computer, British Insurance Association database of insured vehicles and others). Any vehicle which is "flagged" in any of these databases is automatically identified to Police Officers on the ground who then intercept the vehicle as part of a planned operation. This has been working very successfully in other Police Districts, resulting in a number of wanted criminals being apprehended and a large number of uninsured vehicles taken off the road. The Police would like to take this initiative forward by identifying which of our camera locations are best suited for inclusion. It is not likely to be more than ten. There is a cost involved which the Police are not able to be firm about until they have looked at our system. They have advised that in other areas this has been in the order of £2-3,000 per camera. The CDRP received a presentation from the Police at their last meeting and have provisionally set aside some money for this. The system requires a link through the CCTV control room to the various databases. It

is obviously cheaper to the public purse at large if the number of such connections is kept to a minimum.

10.2

The Parking & Civil Contingencies Manager has also been contacted since the CCTV consultation paper was issued by a contractor working on behalf of Avon & Somerset Police HQ at Portishead about providing CCTV video links between our CCTV control room and the Police control rooms at both Taunton and Portishead. We have explained the management proposals under consideration and the contractor accepts that it would be very sensible to wait until a decision is forthcoming. He sees several advantages in linking Taunton to Sedgemoor (which already has a connection Yeovil Police Station) and then into the Police network rather than a number of individual links.

11 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

11.1 The CCTV system supports primarily the Crime Corporate Priority in helping to deliver a safer community.

12 SUMMARY

12.1 The need for moving to active 24/7 monitoring of the CCTV system by dedicated operators is clear to all the major partners and stakeholders. The question is how that is best achieved; by direct employment or by entering into a partnership with another organisation. There is understandably a desire to retain control within Taunton and a number of concerns about a move to monitoring by a third party. It should be emphasised at this point that the proposal involving Sedgemoor is for a five year service provision contract and there is no question of a permanent transfer of the function.

12.2 The concerns raised by stakeholders have been taken up with Sedgemoor and acceptable responses received. South Somerset DC have reaffirmed their satisfaction by renewing their contract.

12.3 The timescale for the Vision for Taunton is such that within five years the Council will need to make a decision concerning funding the permanent CCTV infrastructure.

13 RECOMMENDATION

13.1 The case for moving to a 24 hour 7 day active monitoring service is well established. The operational issues arising from a transfer of the monitoring services to Sedgemoor can be dealt with in a satisfactory

manner. In revenue expenditure terms the figures clearly show the Sedgemoor proposal delivers a better financial option.

13.2 Given all of these factors it is recommended that the Executive approve the proposal to enter into an agreement with Sedgemoor District Council for a period of five years for provision of CCTV monitoring on terms to be agreed by the Strategic Director in conjunction with the responsible Executive Member.

Contact Officers: Shirlene Adam, Strategic Director
Tel: 01823 356310
E-mail: s.adam@tauntondeane.gov.uk

John Lewis, Parking & Civil Contingencies Manager
Tel: 01823 356501
E-mail: j.lewis@tauntondeane.gov.uk