

## **Housing & Community Safety Select Committee**

A meeting of Housing & Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday, 29th January, 2009.

**Present:** Cllr Julia Cherrett(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Bill Woodhead

**Officers:** Mike Batty, Mick McLone(DNS)Sarah Whaley, Kirsty Wannop, Peter Mennear(LD)

**Also in attendance:** Sergeant Andy Richmond(Cleveland Police), Mr F.W. Hayes, Mrs Freda Robinson.

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs Allison Trainer, Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Liz Nesbitt

### **HCS 47/08      Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **HCS 48/08      Scrutiny Review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, and outward facing aspects of CCTV**

Members were presented with a report in relation to the Review of the outward facing aspects of CCTV from the Head of Community Protection. Evidence was also provided from the Security Services Manager and a member of Cleveland Police. The main points covered were as follows:-

- Requests for CCTV footage had been received and used to provide evidence in relation to specified incidents, and the number of related arrests had been increasing steadily over the last few years. However it was reported that the evidential value of each request could vary, with some footage proving to be of more importance than others in terms of being able to use it in a prosecution. The Head of Community Protection provided examples of where CCTV had been most effective especially in relation to crime in car parks and its deterrent effect. This included vehicle and non vehicle related crime.
- Some of the CCTV equipment was coming to the end of its life span and the Council was facing significant budgetary challenges in terms of funding replacements.
- It was confirmed that Cleveland Police do not contribute financially to the Security Centre however they had in the past provided support in kind in the form of police officers on restricted duties acting as tape librarians and performing monitoring duties. However this was not currently in place, and the need for training and continuity of staffing was emphasised. The Security Centre Manager also confirmed that many man hours were used when Cleveland Police and other organisations requested evidence from CCTV footage as the reviewing of tapes could be lengthy depending on how accurate and detailed the leads were which were given to the Surveillance Centre. The representative of Cleveland Police discussed the possibility of opening better lines of communication with the CCTV staff and where possible being more specific when requesting footage. For example, by narrowing the time band of a request, or by waiting for more information from other sources before making a more specific request, where appropriate.

- Members raised issues around raising monies to update CCTV equipment. Although recognising the current economic climate, the Committee discussed the option of raising contributions from town centre retailers. It was also queried as to whether contributions towards CCTV costs could be sought through planning obligations. It was agreed that this aspect, and how best to obtain the views of retailers, would be explored in order to inform the review.
- It was noted that 3 'mobile' cameras were available on request, one of which was deployed subject to police requirements. Two cameras were available to Ward Councillors, for a cost of £375 installation fee and a £200 weekly charge, funded through Small Environmental Improvements Budgets. These cameras would be installed normally attached to street lighting columns to watch over a specific area. These were normally used in places of areas of high crime.
- Members expressed that members of the public felt safe with cameras in and around their areas and that Members frequently received requests for more from residents and resident groups. Members raised the question as to whether 'dummy' cameras would be an alternative in some areas however the Head of Community Protection stated that it could have a negative effect by lowering public confidence within the community if, when actual footage was requested from the 'dummy' cameras, it could not be provided. It was also discussed that local criminals usually work out when a camera is not operational and this could result in a crime hot spot.
- The Committee was informed that it was the Council's policy that CCTV footage would not be sold to media companies. The possibility of Talking Cameras was discussed and it was noted that the cameras in Stockton Town Centre were located at such a height as to make this generally impractical.

CONCLUDED that the scrutiny officer and vice-chair explore how best to obtain the views of retailers in order to inform the review, the status and content of the Council's policy on planning obligations would be clarified, and that the information be noted.

**HCS  
49/08      Work Programme**

Members discussed the scope and project plan for the current review and were advised that the issue of Neighbourhood Policing would be considered at the next meeting. Members were asked to forward any specific questions for the next meeting to the scrutiny officer.

Members requested more information regarding Neighbourhood Watch and, in particular, details of each different type of 'Watch' scheme that was in operation in the Borough. The vice-chair informed the Committee that she had been invited to the Stockton Central Committee Neighbourhood Watch regarding the review.

CONCLUDED that the work programme be noted and that the scrutiny officer would request further information regarding Neighbourhood Watch.

