

Report to the Cabinet



Report reference: **C-~~ann~~016-
2015/16**

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Date of meeting: **23 July 2015**

Portfolio: **Safer, Greener and Transport**

Subject: **District CCTV Provision – Strategic Direction**

Responsible Officer: **Julie Chandler (01992 564214).**

Democratic Services: **Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That, in view of the need to increase capital and revenue budget provision to renew/replace existing CCTV systems coming to the end of their useable life and to properly repair and maintain existing and planned additional CCTV systems, the Cabinet considers whether or not, in principle, it wishes to continue to provide and invest in CCTV for the future; and

(2) That, if the Cabinet determines that it does wish to continue to provide and invest in CCTV, the Director of Communities formulates a fully-costed CCTV Strategy and Funding Plan, based on the anticipated future costs and proposed new installations, for consideration by the Cabinet at a future meeting, in advance of the budget cycle to enable the increased costs to be incorporated within future budgets.

Executive Summary:

Responsibility for the Council's CCTV systems was transferred to the Community Safety Team in 2008 as part of the Safer, Cleaner, Greener Review.

Since the transfer seven years ago, many new CCTV systems have been requested by Directorates and installed across the District, in an attempt to deter crime and to enable identification and prosecution of perpetrators. This has resulted in 480 cameras now being active in the district.

The maintenance budget for CCTV has not increased in this time and where cameras have required maintenance or repair, the additional budget required has been found from ad-hoc sources. However, with the number of cameras now in situ, and the pressure on finding budget savings across the Council, this is no longer a viable option. Added to this, each CCTV camera has a lifespan of approximately 5 – 7 years and there are now more cameras requiring complete replacement.

It is evidenced that CCTV is certainly a deterrent to crime and with systems such as the Council's, which is well managed and maintained, CCTV footage is frequently utilised by the Police, resulting in many perpetrators of crime being brought to justice. The Council is also able to charge for footage supplied to insurance companies in cases, for example, of damage to vehicles whilst parked in Council car parks. Areas of surveillance where it has been particularly useful include Night Time Economy crime and several cases of financial abuse of elderly people living in the District.

This report therefore asks the Cabinet to consider whether or not it wishes to continue to

provide and invest in CCTV for the future and proposes that, if it does, the Director of Communities formulates a fully-costed CCTV Strategy and Funding Plan, based on the anticipated future costs and proposed new installations, for consideration by the Cabinet at a future meeting.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The level of CCTV coverage requested by Directorates for key locations in the district has increased significantly over the last few years, but the budget held by Community Safety has not increased in line with this. The regular maintenance work undertaken under contract has helped keep the costs of repair to a minimum over the last few years, but the budget is now unable to accommodate the levels of expenditure required for continued growth, ongoing maintenance, equipment repairs and replacement.

Other Options for Action:

A decision could be taken to not to increase the current CCTV budget and to phase out respective systems as they fail. However, this would leave these areas of the district without CCTV coverage and therefore a lack of detection in the case of vandalism or crime.

Report:

1. Responsibility for CCTV transferred to the Community Safety Team as part of the Safer Cleaner Greener Review in 2008, which took place over a period of two years. The sites where CCTV was already installed included land drainage sites such as Clifton Rd, Loughton; the Bobbingworth former landfill site; and housing areas and sites originally managed by the Estates Department, including Oakwood Hill, Loughton Way and Coopersale, amongst others. The last CCTV site to transfer to the Community Safety Team was the Civic Offices.

2. The respective budgets for these original sites were also transferred to Community Safety and included a maintenance budget of £4,460 per annum, which covered two annual service visits by contractors to each site, to clean, inspect and report any repairs required. The contract for this work is due to expire soon and is currently out to re-tender.

3. In 2008, service and maintenance costs for the Council's entire CCTV systems were in the region of £2,400 per annum. These costs have increased over the years to approx. £5,500 in 2014, although competition for this type of contract is very competitive which has helped to keep the costs down. However, airtime agreements, additional lighting services, line rental and broadband services, licences and high tech equipment failure have seen expenditure increase year on year.

4. Over the years, and in line with the Council's original CCTV Action Plan developed in 2008, all CCTV equipment has been upgraded to meet required Council and national standards, and CCTV has been expanded at a large number of sites, including, Langston Road and The Broadway, Loughton; Queens Rd, Buckhurst Hill; Norway House, North Weald and all of the Council's sheltered housing schemes. In most cases, the respective service areas met the capital costs for either new or replacement CCTV equipment and for improvements. However, the revenue budget has generally not been increased to cover the associated increased costs of maintenance, repairs and management of these extended and new sites.

The Current Position

5. This rapid expansion, which has been much welcomed from a service and community safety perspective has resulted in the Council now having a total of 37 sites across the district, with 480 cameras (as of June 2015). In addition, 7 rapid deployment CCTV cameras and three covert surveillance systems are also managed by the Community Safety Team, on behalf of

teams from across the Council. (see attachment containing details of locations and number of cameras).

6. The Council is able to provide and charge for footage supplied to insurance companies, in accordance with agreed policies and procedures, in cases, for example, of damage to vehicles whilst parked in Council car parks and income generated through this amounted to approximately £1,000 in 2014/2015. This small income stream is likely to increase if new CCTV systems are introduced across local EFDC car parks as currently planned.

7. However, the equipment at many of the original sites is now coming towards the end of its 'Mean Time Before Failure' (MTBF). CCTV systems are known to start to decline between 5-7 years and the effects of this can include cables perishing, lenses degrading and moving parts that operate 24/7, wearing out. This has been exacerbated by recent climate change, with heavy rainfall in particular. In view of the importance and reliance now placed on CCTV for crime prevention and detection - which can potentially include very serious crimes such as serious assaults, rape, child abduction and murder - it is clearly essential that the Council has reliable, good quality and well maintained equipment.

New CCTV Systems Identified as Requiring Installation

8. The Council's CCTV Operations Officer within the Community Safety Team is currently undertaking an exercise to identify locations in the District where the current CCTV equipment has reached the relevant criteria for 'discontinued use' (meaning that it is no longer considered necessary to continue to provide CCTV in that area). However, removal of CCTV needs much wider consideration based on a number of factors including the possibility of an incident and failure to capture this, a rise in fear of crime for the public and local businesses and loss of a physical deterrent.

9. In addition to maintaining the general operation of CCTV across the District, the CCTV Operations Officer is responsible for planning and procuring new CCTV systems according to requests from Directorates across the Council. The projects that are currently underway, or have been identified that would benefit from new CCTV installations over the next two financial years include;

- Expansion of CCTV at North Weald Airfield;
- Re-provision of CCTV following the EFDC Museum development and expansion works;
- Cover for all EFDC Car Parks;
- Additional CCTV at Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell;
- Additional CCTV at the Civic Offices; and
- New CCTV at Town Mead Depot, Waltham Abbey.

10. If all of these projects go ahead, this would further increase the number of sites to be monitored and maintained and would see a total of 500 cameras across the district by the end of 2017. However, there is currently an insufficient revenue resource available to properly maintain both the Council's current CCTV systems and these new installations that have been identified as being required.

The Benefits of CCTV

11. Members will be aware that across all sites in the District, CCTV cameras record images continually over the 24 hour period, although only key locations are proactively monitored under certain circumstances between 9am – 5.00pm. This tends to be where the Council is working with Essex Police in the monitoring of potential crime hot spots, or in response to local intelligence. These monitored locations can however be changed as and when required. In the last year, this monitored-CCTV coverage helped Government agencies to identify criminals involved in major crime in the District.

12. It is evidenced that CCTV is certainly a deterrent to crime and with systems such as the Council's, which are well managed and maintained, CCTV footage is frequently utilised by the Police, resulting in many perpetrators of crime being brought to justice. In 2013 & 2014 Essex Police requested view of footage on 452 occasions and in 2015, requests are averaging approximately 20 per month. In addition, the Council is receiving approximately 2 requests per month from insurance companies for which a fee of £120 is charged per request and this will potentially increase, as CCTV cover is rolled out across more car parks in the district. Areas of surveillance where CCTV has been particularly useful include Night Time Economy crime and capture of footage related to several cases of financial abuse of elderly people living in the district.

13. Some recent examples of how CCTV has either played a role in, or has been the main source of evidence in criminal cases in the district are as below;

- Fly-tipping Prosecution where the perpetrator was given a £3567 + £120 costs fine and a 26 week suspended jail sentence and night time curfew. (CCTV evidenced 2 separate incidents by same individual which made up part of the prosecution);
- EFDC Prosecution is pending for unlicensed taxi driving (CCTV provided vehicle registration evidence enabling a prosecution to go forward);
- Local nightclub closed down after repeated serious levels of violence from stabbings, beatings, offensive weapons and intentional harm with a vehicle. CCTV was instrumental in this closure; and,
- Serious Fraud (CCTV provided to HM Customs & Revenue). This is ongoing.

14. In November 2014 the Surveillance Camera Commissioner (SCC) launched a Self-Assessment Tool that was developed in close collaboration with the Security Systems & Alarms Inspection Board and National Security Inspectorate. This self-assessment tool will help the Council judge how it is complying with the 12 guiding principles in the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. These include 'evidential value' and 'legitimate aim'. This will further help justify any pressing need for new CCTV and its costs.

15. The primary objective of the CCTV Service is to ensure that the Council's systems are compliant, credible and fit for purpose. Value for money is constantly sought and new, cost effective technologies researched and implemented. This includes installation of new products such as 'H Turbo', which effectively converts old systems with low quality image production into high quality images.

Future Approach and Strategy

16. In view of the increasing reliance on CCTV, the number of new systems being installed, and the need to invest capital expenditure on replacing old equipment and to fund increased servicing costs, the point has been reached when Cabinet needs to consider whether or not, in principle, it wishes to continue to provide and invest in CCTV for the future. Or, whether it would prefer to decommission existing systems when they reach the end of their useable life, not provide new systems planned for the future at key sites and, over time, decommission and eventually cease to provide a CCTV service to the community.

17. This is an important consideration since, although the benefits to local residents of continuing to provide CCTV within the District are clear and undeniable, the Council faces having to make further revenue savings next year to meet the requirements of its current Medium Term Financial Strategy. Therefore, the increased CSB costs resulting from renewing and increasing CCTV systems would need to be offset by increased savings (or income) from other areas.

18. If the Cabinet does wish to update the Council's old systems when required and install new ones in locations already identified as being required, it will be necessary to make additional ongoing capital provision to meet the renewal/replacement costs for old systems and increased revenue provision for the repair and maintenance of current and future installations. For new installations, it is proposed to continue with the current practice of service directorates being responsible for the capital installation costs from their own budgets or project budgets, or them seeking new/additional budget provision from Cabinet if necessary.

19. The Community Safety Team is currently formulating a plan to identify when each CCTV installation needs to be renewed, together with the anticipated future repair and maintenance costs of all current and proposed systems. It is proposed that, if the Cabinet wishes to continue to provide and invest in CCTV for the future, the Director of Communities formulates a fully-costed CCTV Strategy and Funding Plan, based on the anticipated future costs and proposed new installations, for consideration by the Cabinet at a future meeting, in advance of the budget cycle, so that the increased costs can be incorporated within the future budgets.

20. Any future strategy for CCTV could include a scheme whereby the Council provides a service to parish councils and other landowners, at a cost, whereby they could link their systems in to the Council's CCTV network.

Resource Implications:

It is proposed that a fully-costed CCTV Strategy and Funding Plan be formulated, based on the anticipated future costs and proposed new installations for consideration by the Cabinet at a future meeting.

In the meantime, it is anticipated that the new maintenance contract for the Council's existing CCTV provision will be slightly higher than in previous years at approximately £5,500. Future costs will be dependent on the number and level of cameras and equipment purchased.

Income for 2014/15 amounted to around £1,000 and this will likely increase if additional CCTV coverage is provided in local car parks. There are also potential options for Invest to save which could be investigated.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Council provides CCTV footage to Essex Police as requested and over the last year, has provided evidence which assisted Government agencies to bring to justice perpetrators involved in major crime in the district amounting to £5 – 6 million.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

As stated, CCTV coverage is utilised across the district to identify issues of crime and disorder and enables the Council via its Environmental Health team and Essex Police to identify offenders and bring them to justice.

Consultation Undertaken:

None at present.

Background Papers:

None.

Risk Management:

The Council's CCTV cover currently provides local communities with reassurance that people will be deterred from committing crime and hence, this helps to reduce fear of crime amongst local residents. Therefore, if the Council takes a decision to remove or not replace CCTV equipment as it reaches the end of its serviceable use, it is possible that crime and public fear of crime may rise in these locations.

Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

The subject of this report does not impact on the Equality Act 2010.