

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Meeting Date: 13 February, 2018
Cabinet Member: Councillor Gareth Wyn Griffiths
Contact Officer: Gwyn Morris Jones, Head of Highways and Municipal
Contact Number: 32402
Item Title: Closed Circuit Television Service

Report to the Cabinet

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 To establish an Unmanned Closed Circuit Television Service (Option 2).

1.2 To allocate £489,000 capital from the Council's Invest to Save Fund for this purpose.

2 REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

There is a need to make a decision regarding the future of this Service which is in need of investment in technology and new apparatus whilst facing a reduced budget and contributions from others for its provision.

3 INTRODUCTION

The Closed Circuit Television (C.C.T.V) Service assists in preventing and reducing crimes and antisocial behaviour in densely populated areas of the County i.e. Bangor, Maesgeirchen, Caernarfon, Pendalar/Maes Barcer and Pwllheli. Having a CCTV Service is not statutory, however under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the Council has a general duty to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. This duty needs to be considered in reaching the decision.

The CCTV Service employs 5 full time operators and 2 relief operators. They are responsible for monitoring 73 cameras located at public spaces as well as other cameras located at Council depots. The CCTV monitoring room is located in Caernarfon. Monitoring is carried out every hour of the day and all days of the week.

North Wales Police (NWP) have confirmed that the CCTV Service currently provides them with assistance especially in dealing with antisocial behaviour and shoplifting. Figures from 2016 show that NWP made an average of 47 requests per month for surveillance footage from the Service. In recent discussions with NWP there was reference to Gwynedd's CCTV Service recently providing key and valuable assistance in dealing with more serious crimes such as manslaughter, drug related offences and sexual assault.

The Service has currently an annual budget of £190,000 and it attracts an income of £48,820 from internal functions such as monitoring the Council's depots, and a further £34,850 income from other contributors i.e. North Wales Police, Bangor City Council, Caernarfon Town Council, Pwllheli Town Council and the University of Bangor.

As a result of the Gwynedd Challenge exercise, the service's annual budget was reduced by £90k. Despite having a reduction of 3 posts, every effort was made to maintain a 24 hour, 7 day a week operation. Unfortunately this year, it has not been possible at all times to provide a 24/7 operation since Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd decided to cease contributing £35k a year for the monitoring of the Maesgeirchen and Maes Barcer estates.

The current CCTV system is comprised mainly of analogue cameras connected via a variety of transmission modes to an analogue switching/control matrix. The hardware (Maxpro), which forms the heart of the system, is a matter of concern since it is reaching the end of its operational life and is obsolete. In addition, several of the analogue cameras are also reaching the end of their operational life and the quality of images in certain cameras are not always good enough to be effectively used in prosecutions.

A specialist consultant was commissioned to advise on the technical requirements and having considered the matter in detail, 3 options were identified as being available to the Service i.e:

- Option 1: Single Manned Operation**
- Option 2: Unmanned Operation**
- Option 3: End the Service**

The Appendix to this Report contains a comparison of these options in terms of their likely effect on residents, other contributors, the provision, staff and budget.

4 REASON AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION

The option of ending the Service (Option 3) was considered during the Gwynedd Challenge engagement exercise and the consensus at that time was that the the Service should continue. North Wales Police also confirm that the Service needs to be retained as it assists them with their work in preventing crimes and dealing with antisocial behaviour.

With options 1 and 2, the Service continues but it will necessitate a substantial investment in the technology and apparatus required. Option 1 is superior to Option 2 in terms of the ability to respond to incidents, however, the anticipated financial savings with Option 1 is unlikely to be enough to counter the budget deficit created by the loss of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd's contribution to the Service.

There are significant effects on posts associated with Option 2 but it has advantages over Option 1 in terms of the use of wireless technology which would allow direct and remote access for the Police to the system. Option 2 will require high definition cameras (and more of them) which will enable the recording of better quality footage and in a format suitable for the use in courts today and in the future. With a wireless connection, Option 2 will allow for the opportunity to expand the CCTV Service to other location in the County if required in the future. Despite the higher capital investment required with Option 2, it will provide the greater annual savings for the Council if implemented.

Given the above consideration, it is recommended that Option 2 should be adopted.

If Option 2 were to be implemented it is not envisaged that it will have an effect on the Council's statutory duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988 since the provision will continue to be used to assist in the prevention of crime and disorder. With Option 2 the need to secure safe, cohesive communities as required under the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 will continue to be met. The provision will still offer the opportunities to work in collaboration with other public bodies in an integrated and inclusive way which is in keeping with the principles of the Act.

The Equality Assessment in the Appendix to this Report, shows that implementing Option 2 will not likely have an effect on people with characteristics protected by the equalities legislation (Equalities Act 2010).

6 NEXT STEPS & TIMETABLE

Subsequent to choosing the option to be taken, further consultations with the relevant staff and Unions will be held as well as with relevant Local Members and stakeholders.

Capital from the Council's Invest to Save Fund will need to be allocated for the purpose.

It is anticipated that the new CCTV Service will be operational in the 2019/20 financial year.

7 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

A meeting was held with representatives of North Wales Police to discuss the options being considered and the following observations were received:

We understand the challenging financial climate you are operating in and accept that the Service provision may need to be amended.

Consultations with the staff and relevant Unions have commenced and to date the following observations have been received:

Staff: Raised concerns regarding the loss of posts but had become aware that changes were imminent. They also stressed how important the Service is to the Police.

Unions: Option 1 (Single Manning) is preferred since it is better in terms of keeping employment. Also requesting that we consider re-training staff and re-allocating them, if at all possible, to other posts within the Council.

On making a decision which option to adopt, it is anticipated that further consultations with relevant stakeholders will be carried out in order to discuss and explain how the changes will be implemented and managed.

Opinion of the Statutory Officers

Monitoring Officer:

As noted in the report there are a number of factors to be considered in coming to a decision on the future of the CCTV provision. These are appropriately summarised in the report as well as assessing the possible implications of changing the provision.

Chief Finance Officer:

I agree with the finding as outlined in the Report and Appendices that Option 2 is the most advantageous in terms of financial savings and I am therefore supportive of the recommendations. This option also ensures that the Council's assets are up to date and fit for purpose. The use of the invest to save fund ensures that the service pays for the equipment without using the Council's scarce capital resources. If there are no opportunities to re-allocate staff, it is likely that there will be redundancy payments associated with this option and we will consider funding this by means of the corporate redundancy fund as required.

Opinion of the Local Member:

Not a local matter.