



Network Management

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Briefing Note

Proposal to consider the City of York CCTV System as a Scrutiny topic

Introduction

This note outlines the present state of the City of York CCTV system and discusses current and planned developments of the system. It also offers a view on the proposal to consider CCTV as a scrutiny topic within the coming year.

Current Position

The City CCTV system comprises of around 80 cameras located around the City (generally on street but also in car parks and Council buildings), a central control room staffed by trained operators and a Digital Video Recording (DVR) system that records all cameras for a rolling 31 days and allows the production of footage on DVD.

The Control Room, that was for many years located in Fulford Road police station, has recently moved to St Leonard's Place as a necessary first step towards to ultimate move to West Offices. The Control Room is staffed 24 hours a day, all year round (apart from Christmas Day) although due to the numbers of operators available there are times when it is left unstaffed. However, the system continues to record all the cameras on the DVR even when it is not possible to staff the control room. Generally, there are two operators in duty during busy times and one at other times. The control room has police, 'Shopwatch' and parking services in it, allowing the operators to react to incidents and events, direct police officers and provide intelligence.

The system also plays a central role in managing the City's transport network and is used on a daily basis by Network Management staff to monitor traffic conditions and respond appropriately.

The footage that the system provides is vital to the police's ability to investigate and prosecute crime, and manage public order. The DVR

system allows for instant review of footage and the production of evidential quality recordings on DVD. The police are currently recovering around 50 separate items of footage a month and use this on a daily basis as part of their operations.

We also have strong links with the police in terms of using CCTV in managing events in the City. Recent and upcoming events such the Queen's jubilee visit and the Olympic Torch Relay see the police deploy staff into the Control Room and work very closely with CYC staff.

Up-coming Developments

There are two major developments being planned that together, will amount to the biggest change in the way CCTV is operated in York since the service's introduction.

The move to West Offices includes new, dedicated CCTV and transport network control rooms for which completely new 'state of the art' equipment and furniture is being procured. This will involve the size of the CCTV Control Room increasing to four operator stations from the current two and the creation of a separate dedicated CCTV footage review suite. It will also see a separate control facility for managing traffic and transport created, in which all the 'live traffic' systems we operate, including CCTV, Urban Traffic Control and our various traveller information systems will be coalesced into a single facility.

In parallel with the move to West Offices, we are also starting to make use of the Council's new private fibre optic network. This has three main advantages; firstly, it allows the current cameras we operate to be migrated away from the expensive BT 'analogue' circuits we now use, which will allow us to reduce our ongoing revenue costs. Secondly, it allows new cameras to be installed more cheaply and quickly than is possible where BT circuits are used, and this will allow aspirations for new cameras which currently are not cost effective, to be considered more favourably. Thirdly, the move to digital operation means the image feeds from the cameras can be sent over the main CYC network and so routed and manipulated much more flexibly than is the case with analogue images. This means that we will be able to take feeds from CCTV systems in council buildings, Park and Ride sites, schools, libraries, etc, and control, monitor and record them centrally. This will allow for cost savings in the various services, (who won't have to pay for stand-alone CCTV systems at each of their sites) and will bring revenue into the CCTV service to support its ongoing operation and expansion.

Ultimately, the increased flexibility offered by the move to West Offices, and the revenue the service can attract by providing cost effective, high quality CCTV services to other areas of CYC (and beyond) will allow the service to grow. This could mean additional staffing to ensure true 24 / 7 / 365 monitoring is possible and that a minimum of two operators can be on duty at all times. This in turn would allow the service to offer a wider range of functions such as building management and security, and active traffic monitoring.

Proposed Examination of CCTV as a Scrutiny Topic

It is not considered sensible to scrutinise CCTV at the current time, as the service is about to undergo changes that will fundamentally alter it. For this reason, any recommendations and actions that resulted from the scrutiny process would have only limited relevance going forward.

Scrutiny of the CCTV service after April 2013 however, may well be worthwhile. By this time, the service will be settled into the new accommodation and will be using the new digital technologies outlined above. However, plans to use these developments to expand the service will still be at an early stage and so the opportunity will exist for the scrutiny process to influence them.