

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY EXTERNAL OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 8
JANUARY 2009**

PRESENT: Councillors Hotson (Chairman), Butler, Marchant, Nelson-Gracie, Schnell, Vizzard and Warner.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mrs Gibson, Mrs Parvin, Paterson and Williams.

66. Notification of Substitute Members

It was noted that Councillors Butler, Nelson-Gracie and Warner were substituting for Councillors Mrs Gibson, Mrs Parvin and Paterson respectively.

67. Notification of Visiting Members

There were no visiting Members.

68. Disclosures by Members and Officers

There were no disclosures.

69. Exempt Items

It was noted that the feasibility study for the extension and remodelling of the existing CCTV control room was exempt and if Members wished to discuss this in detail the meeting would be taken in private.

Resolved: That any discussion of the feasibility study for the extension and remodelling of the existing CCTV control room be taken in private.

70. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings held on 18 November 2008 and 24 November 2008 be agreed as correct records and duly signed by the Chairman.

71. Call-In: CCTV – Operations Appraisal

The Chairman invited Councillors FitzGerald and F Wilson to present their reasons for calling in the Cabinet's decision with regard to the CCTV Operations Appraisal.

Councillor FitzGerald presented a statement (attached at [Appendix A](#)) and stated that he was concerned over a lack of information in the Cabinet report with regard to camera replacement.

Councillor Wilson stated that the Best Value Review of CCTV carried out in 2007/08 had shown that CCTV was useful and effective in tackling crime, however there were serious shortcomings in the service particularly with regard to the control room location. The then-administration investigated whether moving the control room was possible, however the police had stated that the proposed new location was not adequately secure. Therefore it had been decided to keep the control room where it was provided issues such as the lack of floorspace for equipment and the conditions for staff were addressed. More detail was required on whether new technology could be used to save money or raise income, what new equipment was required, and what the cost benefit analysis was of having a Public Safety Unit on one site with the CCTV Control Room. Also, the police had withdrawn their opposition to the new location but the reasons for this were not explained. It was essential that the Council's CCTV operation was appropriate for the future, and the standard of service required needed to be established to ensure this was achieved.

The Assistant Director of Development and Community Services addressed a number of the points raised:

- The Cabinet report was not intended to recreate the Best Value Review and therefore details around service provision and camera replacement were not included. Negotiations had taken place to investigate whether the CCTV service could be provided with or for other authorities to address costs. There was an audit of CCTV cameras that informed the programme of camera replacement;
- The Best Value Review had identified what equipment was needed, including cameras, furniture, monitors and radios. This totalled £346,762;
- The original Best Value Review stated that the cost of improving the existing control room was £602,000. When Overview and Scrutiny considered this, Members requested that further work be carried out on health and safety issues, leading to the commissioning of the feasibility study. This identified improvement works costing £683,340. These improvements plus the cost of equipment totalled around £1,033,340, which was in excess of the available budget;
- Alternative sites for the control room were investigated and one potential site was identified. A feasibility study was carried out and the police were consulted again, leading to confirmation that the proposed site was viable. Discussions were held over combining the proposed CCTV control room with a Public Safety Unit which would cost an additional £150,000. The police had offered £50,000 to offset this cost (this was for the Public Safety Unit rather than CCTV).

However, the proposal was still in excess of the allocated budget; and

- The report to Cabinet put forward the costs of working within the budget, including construction costs to improve some of the key issues such as ventilation and fire suppression, professional fees and a contingency. This option also allowed £100,000 for camera replacement.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Chris Garland, stated that at the time the Cabinet decision was taken, £1.1 million had been considered too far over the £750,000 budget in light of the economic downturn and concerns over the potential costs of the new concessionary fares scheme, despite acknowledgement that a combined CCTV Control Room and Public Safety Unit was preferable. Assurance had been received that if the control room was moved at a later date, approximately 50% of the £600,000 required for the improvements to the existing site could be transferred to the new site. However, first quarter figures for the concessionary fares scheme had now been received and indicated that the full year cost was likely to be significantly less than that budgeted for. If this proved to be the case, the additional money could be used to fund the relocation of the control room. Councillor Garland therefore proposed that the decision be delayed until the full year cost of concessionary fares was known. Additionally, this delay would allow time to investigate the use of WiFi technology which could save £100,000, and there was also now a possibility of negotiating an improved rental deal for the proposed new location.

The Cabinet Member for Community Services, Councillor Marion Ring, stated her desire to improve the contribution of partners to the CCTV operation, and also to ensure that CCTV was operating effectively across the whole Borough.

The Committee then discussed the call-in with the witnesses, raising a number of points:

- The police had originally expressed opposition to the proposed location but now that more work had been carried out, they only had limited concerns;
- Members felt that the police should continue to be approached for financial contributions to CCTV;
- If the CCTV control room was moved, plans for the existing site would need to be carefully considered;
- A future report on proposals to move the CCTV control room would need to be clearer and more detailed; and
- A basic service level needed to be agreed to ensure that Members and officers were clear on the type of CCTV service that was to be provided for the Borough. If there were not sufficient funds to provide this basic level of service, a plan should be produced to phase it in over several years.

The Committee welcomed the decision made by the Cabinet Member for Community Services, in consultation with the Leader, to defer the implementation of the decision on the CCTV – Operations Appraisal and recommended that a basic service level be established to ensure appropriate service development in the future.

Resolved: That

- a) The Committee welcomes the fact that Cabinet will defer the implementation of the decision on the CCTV – Operations Appraisal based on possible additional funding becoming available, advances in technology and reduced accommodation costs; and
- b) Cabinet be recommended to develop a basic service level for the CCTV service, including an implementation plan to phase this in if necessary, to ensure clarity over the minimum acceptable level of service.

72. Duration of the Meeting

6:30 p.m. to 7:35 p.m.

CCTV CALL-IN

NOTES for the Scrutiny Committee

Can I first reiterate the statements I made at the recent Cabinet Meeting in respect of my concerns about the CCTV decision being recommended on the papers?

Because I felt sure the Cabinet would amend the recommendation or at least seek further detailed information I asked the Leader to confirm it was Cabinet's intention to agree Officer Recommendations. The decision he rightly said was still to be made after their debate and after I had made my representation.

I was and am disappointed with the report having waited some 13 months since the best Value Review for this CCTV operations appraisal that was presented to Cabinet on 10th December 2008. It has no supporting documents or indeed any background document listed.

Cabinet may well have had sight of the Feasibility Study issued by scrutiny for tonight's meeting but at the September meeting of Cabinet Cllr Pat Marshall asked publicly for a copy and this was sent to her but other members did not have the benefit of evaluating the consultant's study before Cabinet made their decision.

On 14th November 2007 the then Cabinet agreed the CCTV Service should be provided by the council and that subject to 'suitability' being addressed – the control functions remain in the current location and that an on-going investment of around £50,000 PER ANNUM will be provided thereby reducing revenues expenditure in the future. This is still currently in the budget figures for progressive years.

Suitability was to be addressed by the Feasibility Study for extension and remodelling of the existing CCTV control room that was commissioned, this also responded to the Scrutiny concern about Health and Safety and other conditions.

I met with Officers on the 14th May 2008 when I was informed of the detail of the study that showed a cost of £1,083,340, more than that allocated in the Capital budget, but I was not given sight of the report which I was told was being evaluated.

No more was heard until the Cabinet Meeting Cllr Marshall was at in September when it was agreed that a further Feasibility Study be commissioned which will revisit the relocation of the CCTV operation.

This brings me to the Cabinet Meeting 10th December 2008 where the papers showed that the only relocation site identified would cost £1,100,000. I asked where the evidence is and where is the commissioned study. The Officer did respond and say these papers were available and I did ask that both Cllr Wilson and I who have called this in are sent a copy.

These documents indicate that two sites were looked at and that the better option was the relocation site costed above. Scrutiny members might well wish to view these documents as part of the all-in.

What is important and I believe central to any scrutiny response is although the option was dismissed we must keep in mind 1.3.8 which provides the opportunity to bring together all aspects of a Public Safety Unit.

I also asked had partners been asked to help fund the CCTV unit I was told they had refused. I did ask for correspondence to substantiate this but have yet to see any detail – or were they only asked about CCTV control room and not a Public Safety Unit or not at all?

A Public Safety Unit is a vision that provides for the future both in respect of response and efficiency. (An ongoing saving to all our partners)

This brings me to the decision agreed by Cabinet and now subject to this call-in – it dismisses the feasibility study on the current location and it dismisses the feasibility study on any relocation all carefully consulted on and costed – but it accepts what I see as an artificial set of figures not substantiated not evidenced to stay at the current location without any expansion without reference to a consultant's view. The costs shown in 1.3.15 are some £532,740 – but in reality they seem plucked from the air.

It shows **no** consultant fees (identified in 1.7.5 as £20,000 to be set aside) **no** Planning fees, **no** building regulation fees, **no** temporary location costs. You still of course have to add the Camera Costs (£100,000).

The papers also recognised that the solution 'is not ideal and **does limit** access for disabled people'.

Should this Council be spending something in excess of £700,000 on a location that in the words of the consultant – who I did ask be invited to attend this meeting – as printed on page 13 Conclusions Recommendations of the first feasibility study:

7.01 The current CCTV Control Room provision is both sub-standard and inadequate with regard to floor space. The CCTV Control Room provision also has some shortcomings with regard to security issues.

7.02 Outside of the CCTV Control Room means of escape..is poor and requires upgrading to achieve the necessary **basic standard**. (no costs identified for this even to bring it up to basic standard).

The Cost plan for remodelling the existing control room includes a cost of £78,790 for out of hours working and this could be saved or amended against a temporary location as currently agreed. It also includes a contingency sum of 18% of £88,640 which is not included in the agreed option.

The total set aside for CCTV was £750,000 plus the £50,000 per annum.

I would ask Cabinet/Council to agree to review all three options and seek to attract support for a 4th option of a Public Safety Unit offering long term service and sustainability.

There is a range of options to consider for providing the additional funding required but first let's seek the support of our partners.

SOS Buses, street pastors, night time chaplains and Maid Safe are all worthy initiatives but they will all fail without the support of a modern CCTV system worthy of our time.