

REPORT OF CRIME AND DISORDER PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND REVIEW PANEL

(Meeting held on 10 April 2001)

1. CRIME AUDIT (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 27).

The Panel discussed the proposed consultation process to carry out the Crime Audit for the District. This was a statutory responsibility imposed by the Crime and Disorder Act. The Council would be working closely with its partner organisations to produce the necessary statistical information. Much of the information was prescribed by Regulation, but there was a degree of local discretion. It was important that the statistical information collected in the previous two audits remained a valid comparator – while refining the statistical base to allow resources to be targeted better.

The Panel supported the proposal to carry out the audit in two parts. The first stage would be “a broad and shallow” process, which was effectively the collection, collation and analysis of raw statistical data from the various agencies. This would then inform a “narrow and deep” phase, which would look at problem areas in much greater detail, including the possible causes of crime. Members noted that a report on proposals for the “narrow and deep” process of the audit would be brought to their meeting on 19 June 2001.

The Panel noted that the Government had imposed a special requirement for the Crime Audit to include consultations with defined “hard to reach” groups, such as gypsies and the homeless. Partner organisations would be particularly valuable in making the necessary contacts.

Members supported a suggestion that, as far as possible, statistical information should be divided geographically. The degree of division possible would vary, but the ideal was down to postcode level. This would allow better analysis of trends, and targeting of resources.

The Panel discussed the resources which were available to carry out the Crime Audit. It was noted that Hampshire Constabulary had allocated £10,000 and Hampshire County Council £5,000 for the process. This Council had budgeted £10,000. There was therefore a resource available to commission additional support. The Panel did not consider that the collection and analysis of raw statistical data was a cost-effective use of the Council's own staff resource. A consultancy, which was adequately briefed, could take over this process and release the Council's own staff resource to carry out “hands on” community safety work. This was a particular issue in the current climate where other audit processes, such as Best Value, were concentrating on the crime and disorder function and diverting resources away from directly productive work.

The Panel advised the Crime and Disorder Portfolio Holder that they:

- (i) Support in principle the two stage process for carrying out the Crime Audit with a “narrow and deep”, detailed evaluation following on from a “broad and shallow” statistical collection process;
- (ii) support the proposed arrangements for consulting with defined hard to reach groups;
- (iii) would advocate that, as far as possible, the statistical information is divided and recorded on a geographical basis; and
- (iv) would advocate the use of consultants to carry out the statistical collection, collation and analysis involved in the “broad and shallow” stage.

2. CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV) (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 28).

The Panel discussed the draft Code of Practice and technical specification for the operation of the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) control centre and camera systems in Lymington, Totton and Ringwood. Mr P Whettingsteel, of the Consultants, MFD International, who had helped prepare the bid, was present to answer Members’ technical queries.

The Code of Practice was an essential part of the bid process and must be approved by the Home Office. The Council’s draft Code had drawn on the best practice documents published by the National TV Users Group; the Local Government Information Unit; and the experience of Local Authorities already operating CCTV systems.

Members were satisfied that the technical specification, which had been developed in close consultation with the Police, Chambers of Trade, Local Members, and Town and Parish Councils, was as correct as possible at this stage. They indicated their support for the installation of a high quality system which had the potential to give maximum benefit. The camera positions would be double-checked using trial cameras during the installation process to ensure the best possible functionality. A combination of improved street lighting levels in central areas, and the use of infra-red cameras in quieter areas, would ensure good quality 24 hour per day coverage.

The key areas for examination and debate were the live monitoring hours in each town centre, and questions of privacy and use of the tapes. The hours of operation would be determined at a later date. Members were advised that there were strict statutory controls on the release of information from CCTV systems. Relevant legislation included the Data Protection Act, and the Human Rights Act. In essence, any person could require to see taped information on themselves. The Council could charge a fee of £10 for providing this service. The tape shown could not however reveal any identifying information on third parties, in order to protect their privacy. Tapes could be seized by the Police in respect of criminal proceedings, and requisitioned by the Courts in respect of civil proceedings.

In both cases however there were strict Codes of Practice in place both to maintain the privacy of all parties, and also the provenance of the evidence.

The Council would have to appoint a group of “lay inspectors” who had the right to enter the control room and inspect what was happening at any time. These lay people could not be Councillors and must be independent from the Council. In addition, computer logs and audit trails would help to maintain the probity of the operation.

Members were advised that the County Surveyor had started initial discussions with the Council to see if the CCTV system could feed information into the ROMANSE traffic monitoring system.

The control room would also have the ability to direct real-time camera views to the Police’s control centre at Netley.

The Panel was advised that “in principle” commitments had been made by various parties to contribute to the capital costs of the installation. They had been asked to make a definitive commitment by 28 April 2001. Revenue contributions would also be sought in due course.

Members noted that the bid included a requirement for the benefits of the scheme to be demonstrated. Relevant statistical information would therefore be collected and compared with baseline data which had been established by a survey in November 2000.

It was agreed that a visit should be arranged for all Members of the Panel to view operations of the Southampton CCTV control centre

The Panel supported the draft Code of Practice and Technical Specification, including the nomination of Graham Tombs as the single point of reference on behalf of the owners and John Bull as the System Manager, as set out in Appendix A to the Code. It was also agreed that a report would be submitted to the Panel, in due course, on the capital and revenue funding being secured for the system.

The officers were also requested to ensure the prompt transmission to Members of the Panel any information relating to the Council's CCTV bid or any other matter where time was of the essence.

**Cllr T M Russell
CHAIRMAN**

(CD100401)