

Monmouth Town Council

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CCTV Working Group

REPORT & RECOMMENDATION

1. PURPOSE OF WORKING GROUP

The CCTV Working Group was set up by the Finance & Policy Committee in order to provide a sound basis for the new Council to uphold or otherwise the decision of its predecessor Council in withdrawing financial participation from Monmouthshire County Council's ("MCC") CCTV Project and from their CCTV User Group.

2. MEMBERSHIP

Members of the Working Group were: Cllr N Hacket Pain (Chairman); Cllr T Christopher; Cllr R Hayward; and Cllr M Jones.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Working Group agreed to set their terms of reference as follows:

- 1) To investigate and satisfy themselves as to whether: (i) There is a tangible need for CCTV cameras in Monmouth and/or there is a discernable demand for them from Council Tax payers rather than individual groups, lobbyists or those who might merely have a pecuniary interest in their installation, (ii) The system being promoted by MCC is capable of delivering what is claimed it can deliver, (iii) The Project provides value for money and that it does what is required of it for Monmouth, (iv) This is an appropriate investment for the end user (the Police), and to determine as to whether they have the ability to make sufficient and proper use of the facility particularly with regard to rapid response, and (v) The location and working of the control room in Caerphilly is viable from a Monmouth perspective and to question the need for 24 hour cover in Monmouth.
- 2) To review: (i) Whether to rejoin the CCTV Strategy Group run by MCC, (ii) Our long-term stance that the Police should be a signed up member to the User Group, and (iii) Other Monmouthshire town's experience with CCTV.
- 3) Explore alternative systems and methods, including the financial viability of a local CCTV system established by MTC and/or establishing an integrated system based upon existing and proposed shop systems. In so doing seek views from traders as to the viability of sponsorship for any form of system.

4. WORK SCHEDULE

The Working Group initially hand delivered to each trader within the Monmouth Town Centre a questionnaire and an invitation for them to make representations to the Working Group. Additionally the Working Group met twice to form its recommendations and the basis for its recommendations; once for a site visit to the control centre in Caerphilly; and three times to undertake interviews. Those who attended the interviews included:

Police Superintendent Peter Keen (i/c Monmouthshire),
Police Inspector Jeff Smith (i/c Monmouth),
PC Andy Mason (local Police Safety Officer),
Cllr Martin Hickman (Abergavenny Town Council),
Cllr Dave Evans (Caldicot Town Council),
Cllr Marian Lewis (Chepstow Town Council),
Brian Ramsay (Monmouth Chamber of Trade);
County Cllr Bryan Jones (MCC Cabinet Member responsible for Community Safety),
Chris Norman (MCC CCTV Officer), and
Steve McCullen (Stryker Communications Ltd).

Additionally, Cllr M Jones undertook a study and analysis of locations of Police recorded incidents within the town for the period January to September 2008.

5. BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Working Group in coming to its recommendation evaluated its findings:

- 1) Local demand for CCTV
No discernable local demand for CCTV was found amongst the general public, traders or the Chamber of Trade. All traders were contacted but only three responses were forthcoming providing evidence of no active support for CCTV. The Chamber of Trade confirmed a total lack of enthusiasm towards sponsoring the project and also that a lack of CCTV has no bearing upon the Insurance Policies of local traders.
- 2) Local Need for CCTV
Research into Police reported incidents found that just 17 incidents (of all kinds) occurred within the area of the existing CCTV cameras during the period January to September 2008. The Working Group understands that this figure represents a very low level of crime; that these incidents whilst within the captive area of the cameras may not have all been within a camera's vision or viewable vision; and there is doubt as to whether most of these incidents would be prosecutable by the CPS through CCTV evidence. The conclusion is that there is/are no crime "hot spots" in the Town Centre. It is also apparent that Monmouth's night economy is far smaller than other Monmouthshire CCTV-covered Towns and that the vast majority of incidents covered by CCTV are of that nature.
- 3) Police Ability to Respond
The small size of shifts in Monmouth and the area covered by them (from Monmouth to Caerleon) suggests that the local Police do not have the manpower for rapid response to incidents. This puts in doubt the financial viability of the service provided through any Control Centre, this being one of the most expensive elements of the scheme.
- 4) Control Centre
Concern exist that a control centre based in Caerphilly is bound to lack required local knowledge. Concern also exists as to the cost effectiveness of a control centre based scheme because technology is continuously making cheaper and more flexible alternatives more viable.
- 5) Other Councils' Views
The commitment to the scheme by all the other Councils appears to be "flakey" with some actively looking at cheaper more localised alternatives. None of them are bound into the project as no User Group Agreement has or is expected to be settled (they are currently working under a Memorandum of Understanding) and budgets appear to be elastic.
- 6) Police Membership of User Group
The Town Council's stance for the past four years has been not to join a User Group unless the Police sign up to that Group. Supt Peter Keen stated that the Police would not sign up; Cllr Bryan Jones stated that he could not force the Police to join. The Working Group sees no reason why the Town Council should alter its view on this point.

7) Alternative Systems

Stryker Communications Ltd gave a presentation outlining developments in surveillance communication. It is apparent that technology is moving forward very fast and they already provide demountable, movable vandal-proof cameras which download information direct onto local Police laptops and smart phones.

8) Ownership of Project

Our research found that National Government has vested the remit for CCTV projects not with the Police but with the principal Local Authority in an area. For this the relevant Council has received grant aid from National Government. This fact reinforced the view of the Working Group that, with the current project, the Town Council would never have any control over the funds it committed to CCTV, nor could it make the end user (The Police) answerable as to the effectiveness and/or cost effectiveness of any CCTV cameras in the Town.

6. RECOMMENDATION

The members of the Working Group are unanimous in their conclusions and make the following recommendations:

- 1) The Town Council should uphold its former decision to withdraw from the CCTV User Group run by MCC and that it should not currently commit any future funds to this project in its current form.
- 2) As the current project is vested in MCC, the Town Council should only view any possible future involvement in such a project with MCC as a sponsor (or part sponsor) rather than as a partner, and any funds sought by MCC for the project should be considered by the Town Council on this basis.
- 3) The Town Council should remain mindful of a possible future need for CCTV in Monmouth and that its future involvement, whether jointly with MCC or as a local scheme run by the Town Council, should be reconsidered under the following conditions:
 - a) There is evidence of an improved commitment to the scheme by the Police through contributions in terms of both manpower and finance,
 - b) There is a more pro-active attitude towards the project from its main beneficiaries, particularly local traders and shopkeepers, and
 - c) Crime levels within the Town rise to justify such an investment.

7. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION

Whilst undertaking research for this report, it became apparent that the only significant crime cluster in Monmouth was in the area of Carbonne Close/Troy Way/Buchanan Close. The Working Group felt that this lay outside their remit but would wish to propose that this be highlighted to both the local Police and MCC and that they should jointly be encouraged to work through CSAT to expunge the problem.

12th January 2009