

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2021 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Brown (Chairman)

Cllr. London (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Barnes, Kitchener, London, Morris, Osborne-Jackson, Pender, Purves and Williamson

Cllr. McArthur was also present.

8. Final Report - In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group CCTV

The Chairman thanked the Working Group for their report on the In-Depth Scrutiny of the Council's CCTV Service.

Cllr Pender presented the final report as Chairman of the In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group. The Working Group had considered the effectiveness of the Council's CCTV service in supporting Community Safety and its impact on privacy. The Working Group had recommended that the cameras the Council currently maintained be assessed to establish whether there was a pressing need for them and that audio recording hardware of the cameras in the Council Offices be removed with most video surveillance also removed. Further recommendations and observations were set out within the report.

Members asked questions of clarification. It was confirmed that the CCTV Code of Practice had been considered in producing the report, however the Code had been considered the minimum requirement in the protection of privacy by the Working Group. It was queried whether businesses or the police who used the CCTV service had been approached to help cover the costs of the service.

Following questions on the benefits of CCTV to help find missing persons and deter crime, the Chairman of the Working Group advised that as addressed in the report, there were concerns that this was not sufficient justification to record all individuals in public spaces.

It was moved by the Chairman and it was

Resolved: That, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Appendices A, B and C of the report, on the grounds that likely disclosure of exempt information is involved as defined by Schedule 12A, paragraph 7 (information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime).

Members considered and discussed the exempt information as set out in the exempt appendices.

It was moved by the Chairman and it was

Resolved: That the public no longer be excluded from the meeting.

Members of the Working Group expressed concerns that there appeared to be little evidence to demonstrate benefits or disadvantages of the CCTV cameras for the Police. It was emphasised that cameras ought to only be in place if there was a “pressing need” for them.

The Head of Direct Services clarified that a log of what the operator was doing was maintained. Key performance indicators had been logged, but it was possible for more data to be recorded. The need for each camera had been regularly checked as required by the Code of Practice. Various factors relating to community safety had been considered during these checks, not just those relating to crime.

It was moved by Cllr London and duly seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet that further information be collected as evidence for the pressing need for CCTV, consideration be given for the removal or disabling of audio recording hardware of the cameras in the Council Offices, and consideration be given to approach third parties to recover costs of the CCTV service.

It was moved by Cllr Pender and duly seconded that it the motion be amended to recommend to Cabinet that instead of further evidence gathering, the cameras the Council maintained be assessed to establish if they demonstrate their pressing need.

Members debated the amendment.

The amendment was put to the vote and it was lost.

It was moved by Cllr Pender and duly seconded that the motion be amended to recommend to Cabinet that audio recording hardware within the Council Offices be removed or disabled and most video surveillance be removed.

Members debated the amendment.

The amendment was put to the vote and it was lost.

It was moved by Cllr Pender and duly seconded that the motion be amended so instead of recommending to Cabinet that consideration be given, it be recommended that audio recording hardware within the Council Offices be removed or an audio activation method be introduced.

The amendment was put to the vote and it was lost.

Members considered and discussed the motion. It was expressed that the safety of staff at the Council Offices was a priority.

The motion was put to the vote and it was

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) further information be obtained to assist in justifying the pressing need for CCTV;
- b) disabling or removing the audio recording hardware of the cameras in the Council Offices or the introduction of an audio activation method, be considered; and
- c) a request to third parties, such as the Police, for them to recover costs of running the CCTV service, be considered.