

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the CCTV Committee

Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
14:30 on 13 April 2018

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Allyson Barron, Baz Bemment (arrived 14:38), Tara Carlton, Neil Coleby, Peter Collecott, Ian Graham, Peter Knight, Graham Parker and Keith Patience

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk), Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Public: Conor Matchett (Reporter - Lowestoft Journal)

The Terms of Reference for this Committee were read out by the Mayor. All Councillors were happy to accept them and there were no comments or objections.

1. Election of the Chair

Cllr Parker proposed Cllr Patience for the position.
Cllr Barron proposed Cllr Graham; seconded by Cllr Knight.
Cllr Graham was elected as Chair.

2. Appointment of a Vice-Chair

Cllr Barron proposed Cllr Coleby for the position.
Cllr Coleby proposed Cllr Patience; seconded by Cllr Knight.
Cllr Patience was elected as Vice-Chair.
It was noted that meetings will be arranged to allow as many Committee members to attend as possible.

3. Welcome and Announcement on Reporting

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained and the meeting was welcomed.

4. To receive and consider acceptance of apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Ford, Frost, Green and Houghton.

5. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

None.

6. Public Forum

There were no matters raised.

7. Terms of Reference for the CCTV Committee

These had already been discussed at the start of the meeting and there were no issues.

8. Explore existing data on the current CCTV service

The Service Level Agreement with Norse does not cover CCTV. Currently, Lowestoft Town Council is paying £291,000 for the service.

A breakdown of the condition of the cameras was created by Norse and sent to the Council, however this was amended shortly before the public meeting and gave a slightly improved overview.

Cllr Bemment arrived at 14:38

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The breakdown of how the charges are applied each month has also been received, but in this financial year the overall charge will be apportioned equally, so the same amount will be payable each month.

Norse have been asked to provide a greater specification of each element of the service, such as the out of hours service, to allow the Council to determine which ones a charge can potentially be applied to. A meeting to discuss the assignment of costs is being arranged.

There are 42 cameras on the list which Norse provided. This was circulated to Councillors ahead of the public meeting and should match the Reorganisation Order. It was queried what the Council is paying for if some of the cameras are functioning poorly or not at all. It was noted that it is not specified in the SLA for all cameras to be functioning and cameras will not be replaced if they are no longer serviceable. There should have been capital funding to support this but Waveney District Council have not set this aside for some time.

It was noted that Lowestoft Town Council needs to ascertain exactly what it is paying for.

It was queried whether capital funding is in place to keep CCTV running. There is money in the budget to maintain the service in its current condition; but it was noted that this is not an effective use of public money.

The confidential condition report can be circulated to the Committee to review what service is currently in place and what changes can be made.

It was said that the police frequently refer to the CCTV service and use images for evidence in Court, however they do not make a contribution towards its maintenance. It was suggested that the Police and Crime Commissioner could be invited to a future meeting to discuss options, and their future plans for CCTV, following reports in the press of the police's intention to take ownership of CCTV across the county.

9. Findings of the public CCTV meeting on 16 February 2018

A CCTV service in the town is vital. It has proved invaluable in the prevention and detection of crime, and securing successful prosecutions. Police have even used cameras privately owned by residents to achieve this.

An increase of crime in the area has recently been reported, which also provides another reason to request a contribution from the police.

There has been no further update regarding the police potentially taking county-wide ownership of CCTV, but a scheduled meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner is being held at Riverside in Lowestoft, and this is open to the public.

10. Explore immediate options for financing and enhancing the current CCTV position

It was noted that the Transport Police already have their own CCTV in operation on public transport, and cameras situated at stations. An increasing number of newer privately owned vehicles also have built-in cameras. It was suggested that encouraging businesses and residents to install their own CCTV systems may provide a better coverage. There could however be an argument from residents that an element of the Council Tax they pay to Suffolk County Council funds police and crime prevention.

It was noted that Lowestoft Town Council is currently paying £56,000 per year for fibre optic lines alone, and it is thought that a wireless system would be much more cost-effective.

It was suggested that Waveney District Council could be asked to make a contribution, as they receive business rates which are not passed on to Lowestoft Town Council.

It was suggested that Norse could be asked to provide more detailed data on the value of CCTV and how many successful prosecutions have been secured as a result.

It was also suggested that the Finance and Governance Committee assess the current contract.

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It will cost £291,000 this year to maintain the service in its current condition. Norse have previously provided Waveney District Council with approximate costings for a wireless system, although Lowestoft Town Council's requirements may be different.

There are however other CCTV providers in the town and there may also be Government funds available under the crime reduction programme to help finance CCTV.

In the interim, the Council could request that Norse relocate some of the cameras, as they have several covering their depot. It was suggested that a representative from Norse could be invited to attend the next meeting to look at technical improvements and the possibility of changing the camera locations. The cost of relocating cameras is required to compare to the cost of a new camera.

11. Determine next steps for exploring CCTV options for the future

Clarification is required as to who is currently paying for the out of hours service, as Waveney District Council have said it is them, whereas Norse have said it is Lowestoft Town Council.

It was queried whether an out of hours service would be required by the Town Council, but the requirements can be assessed if a brand new service were to be created.

It was suggested that contractual arrangements can be reviewed to see if these can be amended to suit the service that the Council would like. If not, six months' notice can be given and that period used to explore alternative options.

As Norse currently monitor the system the Council could look to extend it to other parts of the town to generate more revenue to improve the system, whilst maintaining the same staffing costs. This could be considered with the new retail park.

The Committee needs to give further consideration to whether it wants the Council to be a CCTV provider or just the asset holder.

With regard to making site visits to look at other CCTV services, it was suggested that Great Yarmouth Borough Council should be considered. St Edmundsbury Borough Council will not allow Councillors into their control room due to data protection issues, but the Clerk should be given clearance, subject to the appropriate checks. It was noted that at least one Councillor has already had the checks completed.

Enquiries are being made with Norse to ensure the service is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation, as the rules are now becoming more stringent

Enquiries have also been made with Beccles Town Council regarding their system. It has been recently modernised and they are happy for Councillors to make a visit.

Felixstowe Town Council's CCTV service is managed by the police, and the Council contributes a modest sum towards it. They rely on volunteers to monitor the service at peak times.

It was suggested that the hours the service in Lowestoft is monitored could be cut to save costs now. However, this would impact on people's livelihoods and careful consideration should be given as to when the service is monitored.

It was noted that Channel 5 are interested in the CCTV service for one of their programmes.

12. Date of the next meeting

It was suggested that a meeting could be held one morning to see if that would enable more Councillors to attend. Lowestoft Town Council also currently incurs a charge for any evening meetings held at Hamilton House. There are however Councillors who work during the day and there may be an issue with the public being able to attend.

The date and time were decided as 26 April at 10am.

The Finance and Governance Committee can look at financing at their next meeting, as this will be in advance of the CCTV Committee meeting.

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It was queried whether the meeting should still go ahead if a representative from Norse cannot attend. The Committee can still look at the locations of the cameras and the preferred locations so it was agreed that it would.

Cllr Barron gave her apologies for the next meeting.

13. Items for the next Agenda

Reviewing the locations of the cameras and technical upgrades with Norse

Exploring assignment of costs for commercialisation and contributions which other stakeholders are making, such as Sentinel and Lowestoft Vision

To find out if staff who monitor the service are also monitoring for other clients

14. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

All in favour to go private

Mr Matchett left the meeting at 15:38

The Clerk left the room at 15:38

The Clerk returned at 15:39

The condition of the cameras was discussed and the various issues with quality. It was noted that it would be beneficial to obtain a greater understanding of the terms 'good' and 'perfect' when applied to the cameras and what criteria they are assessed by.

It was queried whether Councillors could visit the CCTV centre at Norse's depot, and possibly use their conference room to coincide the visit with a meeting. There is only limited space in this room though to accommodate the public.

The Chair closed the meeting at 15:44.

Signed:.....

26 April 2018