

	Committee and Date Cabinet 17 th July 2024	Item
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Consultation on a new model for the Council's Out of Hours calls triage and Shrewsbury Town Centre CCTV monitoring

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr Dean Carroll, Housing and Assets/ Cllr Chris Scofield, Planning and Regulatory Services Cllr Robert Macey, Culture & Digital		

1. Synopsis

Approval is sought for a six-week public and stakeholder consultation on the options which set out how Shropshire Council and partners (Shrewsbury BID, Shrewsbury Town Council and West Mercia Police) could run and fund CCTV for Shrewsbury Town Centre in the future, while separately ensuring the Council's statutory out of hours emergency call handling is covered.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Shropshire Council's Customer Service Centre (CSC) oversees management of a team who provide both the 24/7 CCTV monitoring for Shrewsbury town centre and the Council's out of hours call support and triage for highways, homelessness, parking emergencies, some social care calls and other services.
- 2.2 Given the Council's financial challenges and need to make £62.5m in savings in 2024/25 to remain within budget, the Council must review all non-mandatory services it provides. The Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by the Council in February

2024, identifies a £334,000 saving against a new model for the delivery of Shrewsbury Town Centre CCTV monitoring and out of hours call triage.

- 2.3 CCTV is not a service the Council is required by law to provide. The CCTV service supports both community safety and economic growth agendas, around crime reduction and Shrewsbury town centre businesses through links to Shopwatch, Pubwatch and Ranger schemes to reduce crime and increase the effectiveness of shop security and public safety. The operating costs of CCTV monitoring are met solely by Shropshire Council, which acts as the responsible authority under the relevant legislation and regulator the Surveillance Camera Commissioner. In other locations in Shropshire, CCTV is run by the relevant town or parish Council who also meet the costs of this. Shrewsbury is the only area in Shropshire where this Council provides and funds this service.
- 2.4 This report separates out the costs of the two roles the CCTV team provides, CCTV and out of hours call handling and triage, and provides options for consideration that allow the council to achieve the savings it must find, while giving partners the option to maintain as much of the service as they are able to by funding the running costs of CCTV monitoring and maintenance. These options offer different models of CCTV operation, dependent upon the level of partner support. However, it is clear that the current “gold standard” of 24/7 actively monitored CCTV cannot be maintained. Active monitoring at a reduced level, with partner funding, could continue. Other options also require partner funding to maintain the current CCTV system and service. A “best endeavours” approach could also be applied. This would see some level of monitoring by call handlers as time allows. However, this would only happen with an acceptance that out of hours calls for council services would take priority over CCTV monitoring and any time required for retrieval of CCTV footage as requested by police. A “best endeavours” approach therefore offers no guarantee of a monitored service. It would be challenging with reduced resource to handle our out-of-hours emergency calls and simultaneously monitor CCTV. Where there are substantial grounds to believe that an individual or the public is in danger, the team could do its best to provide live monitoring, dependent on available resource. Specific protocols would be created in the event of a threat to life incident, to ensure monitoring can take place.
- 2.5 Partners views have been sought in developing these options to explore their viability and partner discussion are ongoing around contribution towards maintenance costs. Shrewsbury Town Council (STC) and Shrewsbury BID have both said they would actively support any initiatives to provide any volunteer-led support to monitor CCTV. A similar system is for example in operation in Oswestry. While this could take some time to establish, this is reflected in Option 2. West Mercia Police have also indicated for specific events in Shrewsbury, for example higher risk “derby” Shrewsbury Town football matches, active CCTV monitoring would be required. Any additional costs from this would be sought from Community Safety Partnership or other relevant funding streams.
- 2.6 For CCTV to continue operating in Shrewsbury requires ongoing investment in maintenance of the camera network and system. These costs for the last three years have been met by Shropshire Council and the current funding arrangements are a legacy following local government reorganisation and the formation of Shropshire

Council in 2009. The whole system has been recently updated with new additional cameras continuing to be added. However, the council has no budget to continue this beyond 31 July 2024 and has requested partner funding to cover this, which is being considered along with other requests for funding support for non-statutory services currently funded by Shropshire Council. Without such maintenance, Shrewsbury's CCTV system will degrade and cameras over time would cease working.

- 2.7 The options for providing CCTV are detailed at Section Eight of this report. As all would represent a significant change in service, these would need to be consulted on before a final decision is reached.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet agree to consult on the options set out in this report with the preferred option being Option One.
- 3.2 Following consultation, a report will come back to Cabinet for final decision.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 In reaching the recommendations for cabinet, we have identified and addressed the associated risks as follows:

Risk	Mitigation
The move to a passively monitored CCTV system could potentially impact negatively on levels of crime and may be viewed negatively by the public and businesses.	<p>CCTV would remain in operation 24/7 which will continue to be deployed with other interventions; this is proven to be an effective deterrent to crime, with footage made available on request to police or other law enforcement. This is in line with other towns in and outside the county.</p> <p>The CCTV system has recently been upgraded with new cameras installed. These focus on hotspots and can be adjusted as required to meet need.</p> <p>Under agreement, West Mercia Police's Serious and Organised Crime Unit retain the ability, as required, to access the system for live monitoring.</p> <p>Partners have been offered the opportunity to fund other approaches, which would allow some active monitoring to remain.</p>

	<p>Working with partners, volunteers, who with the necessary training, could provide a level of active monitoring.</p> <p>Subject to partner funding, active monitoring could be provided through volunteers or for specific higher risk events as identified by police, such as Category 1 football matches, through overtime arrangements.</p> <p>An appropriate communication plan will be developed to address this as part of the council's measures to review non mandatory expenditure in light of its budget challenge.</p>
<p>Additional costs of maintenance and upkeep of the CCTV equipment are not met, and system degrades.</p>	<p>The Council has made a considerable investment in repairing and refurbishing the hardware and infrastructure of the CCTV system which is now in good shape.</p> <p>Partners have been approached to meet the costs of maintenance and replacements and their ability to support this to ensure the system does not degrade.</p> <p>Further cameras are due to be added to the system during 2024 following a successful funding bid.</p>
<p>Several council services, who could benefit from CCTV coverage will no longer do so.</p>	<p>This is not borne out in the requests received by the CCTV team in 2023 data.</p>
<p>Changes to the Pubwatch and Shopwatch scheme offered by Shrewsbury BID affects the service provided to BID members</p>	<p>The CCTV team's active monitoring is just one element of the Safer Streets support scheme offered to businesses.</p> <p>Many aspects of the Watch schemes run by Shrewsbury BID are not dependent on the CCTV team. For example, radio contact between members would continue as it does now. These schemes can continue with a passively monitored CCTV.</p>

4.2 An Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been conducted to screen the proposed options for consultation for anticipated equality impacts, whether neutral, negative, or positive. This is attached at Appendix 1. Adoption of the preferred option (Option 1) would bring an anticipated neutral impact for people across Protected Characteristic groupings in the community, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, with a likely neutral to low negative impact for those that may be considered to be vulnerable. This is because, alongside the active monitoring of CCTV to promote community safety, the CCTV team also answers calls to the council made outside office hours and would continue to do so. These are emergency calls that cannot reasonably or safely wait until offices are next open, mainly calls for urgent highways issues that may involve risk to health or safety, calls

from people who face immediate homelessness that evening and the overflow of calls to social care where vulnerable adults or children may be at risk. The emergency out of hours provision is a vital service that needs to continue. Withdrawing the service would have a negative impact on vulnerable individuals and members of the public who could be at risk. Therefore, it is imperative that we continue this service to support those in crisis. The preferred option for consultation maintains the out of hours service and CCTV recording provision, and overall impact may therefore be anticipated to be neutral. However, as it is at a different level to the current "gold standard" service there may be perceptions amongst communities and groupings in communities that they will become more vulnerable as a result of any changes to the service. Assessment of any such perceptions would be a useful element of the consultation, as it would enable the council to gauge depth of views and utilise the findings to aid decision-making processes

- 4.3 The impact on health and wellbeing is expected to be neutral. We do not envisage any change to the ability to answer and appropriately triage public and professional contacts received for our out of hours service which will still be handled by experienced and appropriately skilled staff. The preferred option would still provide a CCTV system recording 24/7 for Shrewsbury town centre and this is comparable with the level of CCTV monitoring in many other similar towns and other major towns in Shropshire.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The current service provision costs the council c£600k per year. This covers both CCTV support and out of hours calls to the council, and the out of hours social work support team.
- 5.2 This report proposes reducing the scope of services and increasing the charges to other local councils and so reducing the overall cost to the council to £250k, a reduction in cost of £350k. These costs exclude the regular maintenance and accommodation costs incurred in maintaining the CCTV system, around £40k per year (e.g. for broken or malfunctioning cameras and wiring etc). There is also an outstanding saving from the 2023/24 MTFS of £75k in relation to partner contributions. Discussions with partners around this are ongoing and this would be required to cover ongoing maintenance of the CCTV system and infrastructure.
- 5.3 Following consultation and analysis of the feedback, including any partner commitment to support the funding of CCTV monitoring, a report will come back to Cabinet to decide on an option to implement..

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 There are no direct implications for climate change because of this report and full implications and considerations of climate change as a result of any changes to the approved approach will be reviewed at that time.

7. Background

- 7.1 Shropshire Council CCTV team provides 24/7 CCTV monitoring for Shrewsbury town centre, as well as the Council's out of hours emergency call handling and triage that

operates when offices are closed, across 365 days of the year. These out of hours calls are mainly contacts for highways, homelessness, stair lifts repairs and locked in car parks, as well as some social care and lone worker calls. These are calls that cannot reasonably or safely wait for normal office opening times.

- 7.2 Since April 2022, to make best use of their shift-working status, in addition to real time CCTV monitoring, the CCTV team has provided the out of hours call triage service for most council services. In 2023, the team received 4,691 out of hours calls.
- 7.3 The CCTV network has 39 fixed camera locations in and around Shrewsbury town centre. 31 are located within the river loop with the remaining cameras in the Abbey Foregate, Coleham, Frankwell and station areas. During 2024 additional cameras are being installed within the river loop, following a successful funding bid. The team also monitors cameras at Monkmoor on behalf of Shrewsbury Town Council.
- 7.4 During 2023, there were 3,144 occasions where the CCTV team took control of a camera to actively monitor a situation or were asked to retrieve footage. This includes both real time and reactive incidents, where evidence has been requested after an incident by police. A total of 36% of the calls were police review and footage requests, 33% relate to safer streets and 31% are other incidents recorded by CCTV monitoring.
- 7.5 The council does not hold information as to the outcome of any CCTV intervention as to whether it has contributed to successful prosecutions or prevented criminal activity or anti-social behaviour.
- 7.6 The council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, seeks to review all non-mandatory functions the council provides and identify areas where savings towards the council's £62.5m savings target can be identified. CCTV provision is a non-mandatory function with the current service operating at a "gold standard".
- 7.7 The Council provides no similar service in other parts of Shropshire. The nearest comparable system is in Oswestry operated by Oswestry Town Council. This uses volunteers and is run on a predominantly reactive basis. Shropshire Council has separated out the respective costs of the CCTV team's work to put costs against their key tasks of answering out of hours calls and supporting these mandatory functions and CCTV monitoring and provision, a non-mandatory function.
- 7.8 This has allowed the Council to develop a costed financial ask to the partners in Shrewsbury, so that they can consider the financial support required to maintain a functioning system for the town centre and whether they would wish to maintain a system with active monitoring or a reactive service and any contribution towards the system's maintenance.
- 7.9 This ask has been put to partners to determine their willingness to take on financial and other responsibilities for operating CCTV. These are listed in Options Two and Four and includes the additional costs required of partners.
- 7.10 The total staffing costs for CCTV monitoring and handling Shropshire Council's and social care out of hours calls is £602,700. Whilst this does provide three functions, those costs are not sustainable going forward.

7.11 CCTV or public space surveillance camera systems have an essential role to play in keeping people safe. To ensure good surveillance they must conform to a set of standards including deploying appropriate equipment and, while CCTV schemes incorporating active monitoring generate the highest impact on crime, schemes deploying multiple interventions such as those in operation in Shrewsbury town centre including Pubwatch, Rangers and policing presence alongside CCTV generated a larger effect than schemes deploying single or no other interventions alongside CCTV. This is the case in many similar towns to Shrewsbury and is the case in the other towns in Shropshire.

8. Additional Information

8.1 To support the recommendations in paragraph 3.1, a number of different options have been drawn up following discussions with partners. It is proposed that these, subject to approval, are put to public consultation with Option One as the council's preferred option

CCTV delivery Options

8.2 An option to hand over responsibility for CCTV to partners was discussed but has not been included as this was not supported by partners and is therefore not considered a viable option to consult on.

Option 1	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred Option A passive monitored CCTV system.</p> <p>Cameras record 24 hours a day, 365 days a year but no active monitoring.</p> <p>Out of hours calls triaged and dealt with by one team.</p> <p>Best endeavours CCTV monitoring by OoH team as call volumes allow</p> <p>6x FTE requirement.</p> <p>Cost of maintenance, replacement of cameras and hardware and room hire £40K (Partners ask)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV service remains - still passively recording. • Retrieval support for police as available • No potential for any misuse of surveillance or breach of legal protocols • Out of Hours mandatory requirements are covered • MTFS saving achieved • Best endeavours would provide some limited capacity to monitor CCTV. However this comes with no guarantees and priority would be given to dealing with out of hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No active monitoring for CCTV to spot "live" incidents or support emergency services. • No capacity for real-time support for Shop and Pub Watch systems operated by Shrewsbury BID • Council remains responsible authority for CCTV • Council would remain liable for equipment, room costs and manage access to the control room. • Ongoing maintenance costs require partner funding. Without this system will degrade • Limited redundancies in CCTV team

	emergency calls for council services	
Option 2	Pros	Cons
<p>As Option 1 but enhanced with some volunteer led active monitoring</p> <p>Use any capacity that out of hours call handlers may have when not handling emergency calls for council services to provide a best endeavour monitoring of CCTV, supported by volunteers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for some level of active monitoring • Build on current volunteer programmes operated by partners – Shrewsbury Ambassadors or Street Champion equivalent • Best endeavours would provide some limited capacity to monitor CCTV. However this comes with no guarantees and priority would be given to dealing with out of hours emergency calls for council services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment, retention and scheduling challenges - no guarantees when using volunteers • Responsible authority status remains with Shropshire Council • Additional training and management required
Option 3	Pros	Cons
<p>Cease CCTV monitoring and recording altogether.</p> <p>Out of hours call handling provision by CCTV team with less opportunity for call triaging.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTFs budget saving fully achieved. • All running costs cease. • OoH handling would be separated from CCTV allowing simpler work patterns and rotas • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unless taken on by another agency, no surveillance is provided, and this is likely to have wide ranging impact on the town. • Risks around crime and public safety may increase. • No support to Police for both “live” incidents and evidence gathering. • CCTV system degrades over time due to lack of maintenance • Redundancies in CCTV team as smaller team is required
Option 4	Pros	Cons
<p>As Option 1 with additional resource of 2 FTE staff, to provide active monitoring as rotas allow.</p> <p>This additional resource would require partner funding for the extra active monitoring resource- .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV recording remains 24/7. • Allows for significant amount of active monitoring time during an 8 week rota period. Example: • 24/7 monitoring - up to 28 days • 11.5 hours/day monitoring – up to 28 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional hours requires extra partner funding of £85k. • Ongoing maintenance costs of £40k require partner funding. Without this system will degrade • Additional costs for overtime and bank holidays

<p>This could be for a short-term period to allow Option 2 to be established and a body of volunteers to be recruited and trained</p>	<p>day (hours dependent on rotas).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amounts reduced by any leave or sickness during rota period • If 2 FTEs work exclusively on CCTV, monitoring reduces to 11.5 hours/day • CCTV Retrieval support for police • No potential for any misuse of surveillance or breach of legal protocols • OoH calls mandatory requirements are covered. • Minimal impact on CCTV team • Budget saving of £63k, dependent on partner support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower resilience for staff sickness and leave than current arrangement.
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9. Conclusions

- 9.1 An actively monitored CCTV service provides many benefits in towns such as Shrewsbury. However, the cost of providing a non-mandatory service at the current level is not sustainable given the council's budget position and the need to prioritise mandatory services in the face of the £62.5 m savings the council must make and continued rising demand particularly for social care.
- 9.2 The council has had a number of discussions with partners prior to this report to explore the options and opportunities for partners to fund the costs of operating and maintaining a CCTV service to achieve the best possible outcome for Shrewsbury's businesses, residents and visitors alike.
- 9.3 The council should therefore proceed to public consultation with a default option that would allow the service to continue in a different format to how it is delivered now as this is not financially sustainable.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: *Cllr Nat Green*
Cllr Alan Moseley
Cllr Julian Dean
Cllr Dean Carroll
Cllr Mary Davies
Cllr Kate Halliday
Cllr David Vasmer

Appendices

Appendix 1 - ESHIA