

DECISION NUMBER: PCCG-2013-116

OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS
HELD AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CROESYCEILIOG, CWMBRAN
ON 2ND OCTOBER 2013**

Present: Mr Justin Johnstone (Chair)
Mr Brian Thomas
Mr Arthur Elliott
Miss Ivy Forkin
Mrs Joyce Morgan
Mr David Howells
Mr Eric Smith
Mr Brian Williams

Also in attendance: Chief Inspector Daniel Taylor
Inspector Iain Thomas (Newport Custody)
Inspector Robert Toghil (Newport Custody)
Mrs Sian Curley (Scheme Manager)
Ms Michelle Vaisey-Baker (Assistant Scheme Administrator)

Apologies were received from Mr Ian Johnston Police & Crime Commissioner, Mr Paul Harris Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner, Maria Chapman (Scheme Administrator) and Inspector Robert Thompson

The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m.

Action

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

1. The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record.

It was recommended that if any of the volunteers intend going to Vantage Point to have new ID Badges issued could they contact Sian Curley beforehand to enable her to ensure that People Services have the relevant paperwork to hand in advance so as to expedite the process. (Since the meeting we have been informed that badges will be provided at Police Headquarters, Cwmbran).

CUSTODY UPDATE

2. Inspector Thomas was introduced to us, he will be the new Inspector for Newport Custody replacing Inspector Toghill; they are currently in the handover period. Chief Inspector Taylor also advised us that Inspector Thompson (Ystrad Mynach) will be retiring next year. **Action**

We were informed that custody had been very busy during the summer months when Newport was closed due to Niche training. The implementation of Niche is still on-going and will hopefully be in place towards the end of November. We were advised that once this change takes place there will be delays when detainees are booked in and out of custody as staff get used to the new system. However it will improve and create quick processes in the long term. Visitors however should see no impact in respect of accessing custody when they conduct visits.

We were advised that any detainees with mental health issues get sent to St Cadocs in the first instance unless they are red flagged whereupon they come into police custody. However it was explained that if they are red flagged for example because they have previously been in possession of a weapon and are found to not possess a weapon on this occasion the red flag will be taken off and they will be transferred to St Cadocs. In the last month over 100 detainees went straight to St Cadocs. A policy is in place in respect of this.

Chief Inspector Taylor informed us that a high volume of calls is received by both custody suites many of which do not necessarily need to be routed there. As such they are trying to reduce the number of external calls that come in by working with the Force Control Room to resolve queries before they get any further. They are also trying to get a queue system on the phones so that they don't continually ring and people know what number they are in a queue similar to the ICT Helpdesk. It was noted that phone numbers displayed at the reception area are facing outwards towards the public but are for internal use only, can this be turned to face inwards as volunteers have been told that the phone it is displayed next too isn't for their use either. Chief Inspector Taylor advised **DT** that he would look into this.

We were informed that Chief Inspector Taylor has today told the SEO's in Newport Custody that they are required to escort any Independent Custody Visitor who attends through to the custody suite and hand over to a Custody Officer in a bid to prevent delays in accessing the custody suite.

It was noted that many detainees are detained for long periods however this is mainly due to the CPS or the courts and not the police. We were informed that custody staff do feed back problems to the court when they have issues via Kathy Ikin who is Head of CJD.

Mr Williams commended some of the newly trained police officers who have been showing volunteers around recently; they have been particularly helpful and have given enough distance too when ICV's are talking to detainees. Chief Inspector Taylor advised that a new review is underway to decide whether police officers will stay in custody. Mrs Curley informed everyone that they will be kept updated on this – it has been acknowledged that there will be potential concerns arising from the CDO's who have been made redundant if CDO's are brought back into Custody.

Mrs Morgan queried if it is possible to provide hearing facilities at meetings as she has been unable to hear much of the discussions today. Mrs Curley confirmed that in future she can arrange for the hearing loop to be turned on. **SC**

SCHEME UPDATE

3. Membership

We were informed that Mrs Chapman the new Scheme Administrator had written the Scheme Update but was unfortunately unwell today so couldn't present the report. Mrs Curley informed us that the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner were both at an Estates meeting today so had been unable to attend, however Mrs Curley had been requested to feed back any issues the volunteers wished to raise. It was requested that it be passed back to them that it would be beneficial for them to attend in future for the start of meetings as had been confirmed previously by both the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. **SC**

Mrs Curley advised us that following a recruitment process herself, Mrs Chapman and Miss Forkin interviewed two candidates for the ICV role; Julie Morgan and Anthony Angell. Both were successful and will be joining the scheme once vetting and training is finalised. Mr John Thomas will also be re-joining the scheme at the same time, whilst he will not be required to undergo the training again he will need to be security vetted again. A new rota will be sent out once all these processes have taken place. The two new custody visitors will be placed with existing members to conduct visits to give them a broad knowledge of what is required. It was noted that there is potential to conduct another recruitment drive in the future if required, this will be reviewed in six months time.

The security vetting forms that were recently completed by all volunteers were queried. Mrs Curley explained that under the legislation all volunteers are now required to be security vetted, it is a national Home Office form so we have been unable to edit it to remove any specific sections so unfortunately all questions do need to be answered.

Administration & IT

It was confirmed that on completion of custody visiting forms that if no issues are raised on the form then it does not need to be a Custody Sergeant who signs off the form, it can be a CDO.

Mrs Curley advised that the Commissioner's office had requested a briefing on Niche to see how it was going to work. We were informed that South Wales Police have successfully used the system for some time and it will be beneficial in that different forces who utilise Niche will be able to share data.

CONFERENCES

4. We were informed that Mrs Chapman had attended the Custody Visitors Training in South Wales on Saturday and will be asked to circulate a briefing note on this to all volunteers. **MC**
Mrs Chapman has also been working on a revised handbook that will include the revised codes of conduct. This will be circulated to all upon completion, copies will also be sent to both custody units to make sure all staff are aware of the requirements. **MC**

We were advised that Mrs Chapman and Mr Brian Thomas will be attending the National ICVA Conference in Brighton in November so will provide feedback on this at the next meeting. Mr Thomas is also attending the Volunteers Training Day in Dyfed Powys on 9th October so will be able to provide us with an update on that too. **MC**
BT

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5. We were informed that the Commissioner is currently recruiting for a new Chief Constable, the closing date is this Friday and interviews will take place in the next few weeks. The chosen Chief Constable will then be required to go in front of the Police and Crime Panel for a confirmation hearing on 8th November, if they give approval to the selection the Chief Constable will then be officially appointed.

Mrs Curley advised us that the Commissioner had recently launched the Victims Charter, Baroness Newlove, the Victims Commissioner attended and spoke at the event.

As of 22nd November 2013 Commissioners will have been in post for a year as such there may be some media interest around this.

We were informed that a review is on-going in relation to PACT as the Commissioner doesn't believe this works very well; attendance at meetings is poor and it tends to be more police orientated than an engagement meeting with communities and partner agencies. Some potential ideas are for officers to start attending groups rather than holding their own meetings to engage with the community, e.g. pensioners groups and mother and toddlers groups. It was noted that whilst CSO's are very helpful at the PACT meetings it would be more beneficial to also have officers of a more senior rank attend too when decisions are required.

We were informed that there is a new Lord Chief Justice – Sir John Thomas from Powys.

A new Communications Manager will be starting with the OPCC in the next few weeks. Since the election we have had staff on a rota basis from the Press Office within Gwent Police, this new post will enable the Commissioner to have someone focus entirely on his role and his office to assist in engaging with local people.

The Commissioner's Partnership Fund is now open for various groups and organisations to bid for money, details of which are on the OPCC website. Applicants need to be able to demonstrate what they will do with the money to benefit the community and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. The closing date is 18th October 2013.

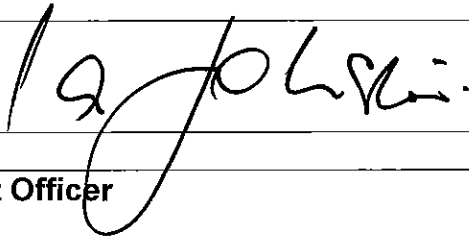
DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6. Regional Training for all Gwent Independent Custody Visitors will take place in Meeting Room 4 at Police Headquarters at 10:30am on Tuesday 14th January 2014. This will be followed at 3pm by the Independent Custody Visitor Meeting in Conference Room 1.

Ian Johnston QPM, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

I have monitored the Independent Custody Scheme minutes as per my statutory responsibility under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and am satisfied with progress.

Signed



Date

28.10.13

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Background papers	None