

DECISION NUMBER: PCCG-2014-079

OFFICE OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

TITLE: Police Station Front Desk Provision

DATE: December 2014

TIMING: Pressing. Implementation before 31 December 2014

PURPOSE: For decision

1.	<u>RECOMMENDATION</u> The Police and Crime Commissioner is asked to consider this report and decide whether to confirm the opening times of the police stations listed within the report as a permanent arrangement.
2.	<u>INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND</u> The Development of the Estate Strategy has progressed since May 2009 and the outcome of Stage 1 was presented and endorsed at the Police Authority meeting on 29 May 2009. At that meeting, the Members agreed a programme of developments relating to the estates strategy which included the development of a Head Office and a review of the use of neighbourhood police stations, property stores and custody provision. An Estate Management Group was established to progress this work and more recently this area of work was reported to the Commissioner's Estates Meeting. In 2010 the Force announced their intention to restrict access or close elements of front counter provision available.
3.	<u>ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION</u> When the Commissioner took office in November 2012 he embarked upon a Gwent-wide series of engagement activities from which it became apparent that the closing of front counter services was not popular with the community. This was supported by feedback he received during his election campaign. Between November 2012 and mid-January 2014, the Commissioner and his staff attended over 400 public engagements. In addition, there have been numerous press and social media stories relating to police stations and their use. At the Strategy and Performance Board meeting of January 2014 and as a direct result of the feedback from the public, following consultation with Local Police Unit Commanders, Local Authorities and the Chief Constable, the Commissioner, agreed a plan to re-establish public access to some police stations which were previously not open to the public or had limited opening times. This initiative was reported to the Police and Crime Panel in January 2014 when the Commissioner detailed the contents of a report which included proposals to re-open front enquiry offices in several police stations on a Monday-Friday 9am to 5pm basis, and the sharing of resources and opening times amongst other police stations. Some police teams have recently or a currently in the process of relocating to new premises (such as Newbridge Memo and Caerphilly Library), with the old premises offered for

sale. Some police stations, whilst having no published opening hours, are available to meet visitors on an ad-hoc basis when officers are in attendance, with contact details for police officers also displayed externally and via the Gwent Police website. Several police stations remain closed following review and remain offered for sale.

In April 2014 the front counter services at nine of the existing police stations re-opened as part of a pilot scheme to enhance front counter service provision within Gwent Police. The following are open five days a week, operating an 9am – 5pm service:

- Brynmawr (3 days)
- Abertillery (2 days)
- Pontypool
- Ystrad Myanch
- Risca
- Caerphilly (operating out of current shop front premises)
- Maindee
- Chepstow
- Monmouth

The above supported the existing arrangement of 8am-8pm front counter services at Abergavenny, Ebbw Vale, Cwmbran, Blackwood police stations and a 24/7 service within Newport Central. The Commissioner stated that he would review and evaluate the new arrangements within 12 months.

Since making this decision, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) has continued its engagement activity and commissioned the Force to carry out an evaluation of the re-opened stations. Two evaluations have been undertaken between July and October 2014.

The consolidated findings from these evaluations show a fairly consistent level of demand with the exceptions of Pontypool and Maindee stations, which saw an increase in footfall during the periods measured, and Caerphilly and Risca, which experienced a reduction.

The most common answers for why people chose to visit a station over another method available were:

- It is the closest station (46%)
- It is the most convenient way (32%)
- Wanted face to face contact (28%).

The average score for satisfaction with the service at the station was 9.4 out of 10 (Where 10 is completely satisfied), only one person gave a score of less than five and they did not give a reason for why they were dissatisfied.

The Force also ran a Public Confidence Survey which contained two questions relating to station opening. In July and October 2014, members of the public visiting chosen stations were asked to complete an evaluation survey questionnaire. A total of 275 questionnaires were completed across 10 stations and as part of the survey, the following questions were asked:

(a) Where is your nearest police station with an operational front counter? This is where you can visit the police station without an appointment and there will be a member of staff on hand to assist you with your enquiry.

Of the stations being evaluated, Cwmbran received the highest number of responses (14%), followed by Newport (11%). The least number of responses were received for Chepstow (5%) and Abergavenny stations (6%).

(b) Do you have any comments to make about your local police station front counter service?

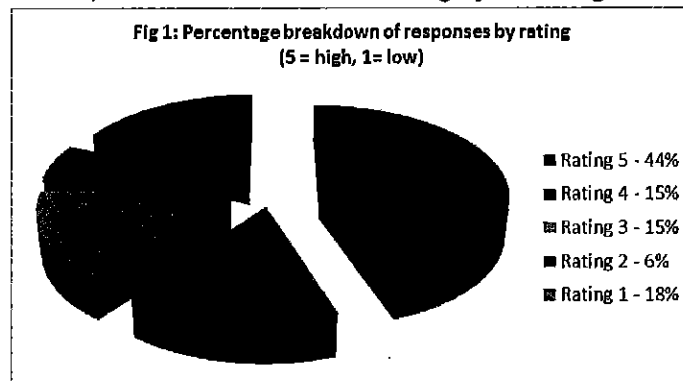
Overall, respondents' comments were supportive of the decision to offer front counter services. Most people felt that they had received a good service when they had used/ visited stations and that the provision should be permanently reinstated. However, a few respondents reported that their experience was "not very nice" due to, for example, feeling they had received a poor service during their visit. Comments were also made around a lack of awareness of the provision and that opening times should be better or more widely publicised.

A localised OWL (Online Watch Link) survey was also commissioned during a two week period in September and October 2014. In total 2,883 responses were received with 85.9% of respondents saying that they agreed that they valued the Commissioners decision to re-open a number of police stations across Gwent.

By way of triangulating all the findings previously received, the OPCC included a question relating to station access in the recent Precept Questionnaire made available to the residents of Gwent (October –November 2014).

1,345 people accessed the survey with 355 leaving a comment in response to the question; *How much do you value the Commissioner's reopening of a number of police stations across the Gwent area?*

Of these respondents, 59% valued the decision 'highly'. See Fig. 1 below.



There are of course a wide range of other methods available to the public should they wish or need to contact the police and the station provision is an integral part of the options menu.

Public feedback in relation to the January 2014 decision to re-establish access to police stations suggests that they are supportive.

4.	<p><u>NEXT STEPS</u></p> <p>All engagement activity and consultation feedback that relates to station access, received by the OPCC, indicates that public perception is supportive of the decision made to make more police stations accessible to the public.</p> <p>The Commissioner is asked to consider the feedback from the evaluations and to decide whether to formalise the current opening arrangements.</p>
5.	<p><u>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</u></p> <p>The financial implications of the Commissioner's decision to provide/extend opening times for the nine stations have been assessed for both pay and non-pay costs, and then further assessed as to whether the cost was a 'new cost' (i.e. not previously budgeted for and therefore not already in the Commissioner's budget for policing) or whether the cost was an 'opportunity cost' (i.e. already budgeted for in the Commissioner's budget for policing, but providing a service elsewhere, so required redirecting to provide this new enhanced service for station access). A further consideration for the 'opportunity costs' is whether these costs were specifically planned to be saved as part of the Staying Ahead Programme, and therefore, by redirecting them to provide for this new enhanced service, has precluded them from being saved in the future, with the effect that alternative saving schemes would have to be sought.</p> <p>A table identifying the above classification and value of the costs is shown at Annex A. This analysis of new and opportunity costs, coupled with future savings plans under Staying Ahead 8, determines that the financial implication of the Commissioner's decision to provide/extend opening times for the stations within the report amounts to £270,034 per annum, of which only £9,000 are estimated new costs to the Commissioner.</p>
6.	<p><u>PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS</u></p> <p>Should the Commissioner decide not to progress with the front desk provision there will be implications for staff employed in those areas. If the decision is to formalise the current arrangements the counter staff will remain in their current posts.</p>
7.	<p><u>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</u></p> <p>No legal implications have been identified in preparing this report.</p>
8.	<p><u>EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS</u></p> <p>This proposal has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Strategic Equality Plan and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 in preparing this report.</p>
9.	<p><u>RISK</u></p> <p>A thorough risk assessment of the strategy and implementation plan will be undertaken, taking into consideration the engagement with the community, public support, staff support and also political support.</p> <p>Risk will also need to be understood in relation to the financing of the plan and the availability of property to deliver the appropriate estate to meet our requirements.</p>

10.	<u>PUBLIC INTEREST</u> This document is available to the public.
11.	<u>CONTACT OFFICER</u> Neil Taylor – Head of Performance, Planning and Partnerships.
12.	<u>ANNEXES</u> Annex A: Table of financial implications of new opening times for stations

Annex A - Financial implications of new opening times for police stations


Station	Pay costs (£)		Non-Pay cost (£)		Total New Costs (£) (A) + (D)	Total Opportunity Costs (£) (B) + (E)	Amount of Opportunity cost planned as part of SA (£) (I)	Net Cost of Decision (£) (G) + (I)	
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)					(E)
	New	Opportunity	Total	New	Opportunity	Total			
Abertillery	0	16,573	16,573	1,000	71,601	72,601	1,000	24,795	25,795
Brynmawr	0	16,573	16,573	1,000	54,704	55,704	1,000	19,726	20,726
Caerphilly	0	27,622	27,622	1,000	40,439	41,439	1,000	17,656	18,656
Risca	0	27,622	27,622	1,000	54,672	55,672	1,000	21,926	22,926
Ystrad Mynach	0	27,622	27,622	1,000	1,173,221	1,174,221	1,000	5,524	6,524
Chepstow	0	27,622	27,622	1,000	66,602	67,602	1,000	25,505	26,505
Monmouth	0	27,622	27,622	1,000	87,110	88,110	1,000	31,657	32,657
Maindee	0	27,622	27,622	1,000	171,173	172,173	1,000	56,876	57,876
Pontypool	0	27,622	27,622	1,000	172,818	173,818	1,000	57,369	58,369
Totals	0	226,500	226,500	9,000	1,892,340	1,901,340	9,000	261,034	270,034

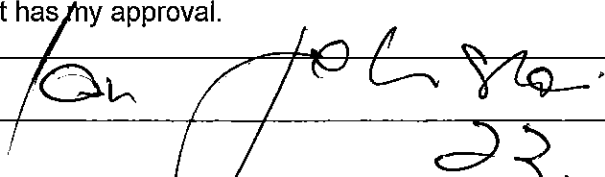
Notes

1. All costs are on an annual basis.
2. Non-pay costs exclude allocated central budgets, as these are heavily weighted towards providing services at HQ.
3. Non-pay costs include an annualised assessment of the capital and revenue maintenance requirements over a ten year cycle.
4. Column (D) assumes a cost of £1,000 per station, in order to re-provide ICT infrastructure. E.g. new PCs on front desks.
5. Simplistically, Column (I) assumes that 20% of the staff currently employed would be lost through staying Ahead 8 (based on current flightpath projections).
6. Simplistically, Column (I) also assumes, that with the exclusion of Ystrad Mynach which is a PFI Scheme, 30% of Estate costs would be removed through Staying Ahead (based on Staying Ahead 8 PID).

For OPCC use only

Consultation:	Tick to confirm (if applicable)
Financial The Chief Finance Officer has been consulted on this proposal.	✓
OPCC (insert name) Neil Taylor - HPPPO has reviewed the request and is satisfied that it is correct and consistent with the PCC's plans and priorities.	✓
Legal The legal team have been consulted on this proposal.	N/A
Equalities The Equalities Officer has been consulted on this proposal.	N/A

Chief Executive/ Deputy Chief Executive: I have been consulted about the proposal and can confirm that financial, legal, equalities etc... advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate report to be submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent.
Signature: 
Date: 11/12/14

Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct. The above request has my approval.
Signature: 
Date: 23.12.14