

DECISION NUMBER: PCCG-2019-008



OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS
HELD AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CROESYCEILIOG, CWMBRAN
ON 6TH SEPTEMBER 2018**

Present: Mr Justin Johnstone (Chair)
Mr David Binding
Mr Michael Hallinan
Mr Richard Holland
Ms Lesley Ball
Mr Jeffrey Seabourne

Also In attendance: Mr Jeff Cuthbert (Police & Crime Commissioner)
Miss Jessica Tiplins (Scheme Administrator)
Inspector Nicola Williams (Custody)

The meeting commenced at 3.00pm

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1: Apologies were received from Ms Michelle Valsey-Baker (Assistant Scheme Administrator), Ms Jean Munton and Ms Ruth Coulthard.

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

2. Justin Johnstone (JJ) welcomed the Commissioner (PCC) to the meeting. The PCC thanked the group for their work.

CUSTODY UPDATE

3. Inspector Williams (NW) provided an update from Custody. We were made aware that this would be NW's last ICV meeting as she would be shortly moving to another role within the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). She confirmed that a new Inspector would be joining the unit shortly to support Inspector Stephen Williams who was remaining in post. NW confirmed she would continue to link in with the Inspectors to ensure a smooth handover process.

NW also confirmed that a number of Sergeants had been successful in their Inspector boards meaning that Custody would soon be losing a number of highly experienced individuals as they progress in their careers. As a result of this, three new Sergeants had recently started in the Unit and with another course taking place in October, more would be joining in the near future. These new members of staff were to be mentored by experienced Custody Sergeants for 48 hours before fully beginning their new roles.

NW confirmed that discussions had begun regarding the re-opening of the Ystrad Mynach Custody Unit. This was largely as a result of a sustained increase in demand on the Unit. Presently, Newport Custody Unit was receiving around 800 detainees per month. As such, discussions have begun as to whether one Custody Unit was still the most effective option. An update on this would be provided in due course.

JJ praised the Custody staff on how they have been handling the increase in demand stating that he had encountered an extremely busy period during a recent visit, but that staff had handled it superbly.

NW went on to provide a performance update.

- We were made aware that arrest figures were sustaining at high levels with around 800 arrests per calendar month. The Inspector made us aware that this increase could be because of a number of reasons including the recent intake of Police Constables.
- We were also made aware that waiting times in the Custody Unit had increased from an average of 12 minutes to 25 minutes. This was a visible effect of the increased demand on the unit. The Inspector was confident that if the Ystrad Mynach Custody Unit was to reopen, these waiting times would reduce.
- In regards to hospital referrals, the figures remained steady despite an increase in detainee numbers. This was positive and reassured the group that detainees were being looked after effectively in the Unit. David Binding (DB) queried whether Ystrad Mynach hospital was able to receive detainees should the Custody Unit there reopen. It was confirmed that the hospital could.
- Average detention times were 13.5 hours. This was around the norm due to the increased demand and was another driving force towards reopening the Ystrad Mynach Unit.
- Critical staffing levels of three Custody Sergeants and five Custody Detention Officers (CDOs) have been maintained over the last quarter which it was noted was very positive.
- DB queried the levels of Juveniles in the Unit. NW confirmed that these levels had remained stable.

NW informed the group that a Sergeant had been given the responsibility of reviewing custody records to ensure that the most appropriate action was being taken in all detentions. This was to ensure that the early work in regards to investigation and interviewing was conducted as soon as possible in order to process detainees through the Unit in the most timely manner.

CDO recruitment was continuing and NW was confident that after the next recruitment process, the Inspectors would not only backfill positions currently vacant, but also have access to a pool of individuals should CDOs leave in the future.

JJ made the group aware that he had visited the virtual reality suite in his capacity as an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) member. It was agreed ICVs would be invited to see the suite once the Custody package had been completed.

On behalf of the group, JJ praised the staff within the Unit for their hard work and commitment during an extremely busy time.

The PCC and NW left to attend other engagements.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7TH JUNE 2018

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

SCHEME UPDATE

5. The Scheme Administrator (JT) provided the Scheme Update. She made the group aware that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) had gone through a restructure.

We were informed that the restructure presented a prime opportunity to carry out a thorough review of the ICV Scheme following which it was identified that the Gwent ICV Scheme did not match the level of independence identified nationally. As such, a few changes had been made to the structure of the Scheme to ensure the highest level of independence and to ensure that volunteers had as much ownership over the work they carried out. One of these changes was the introduction of a Vice Chair to support the role of Chair. Responsibility of day to day volunteer management, designing of the rotas and low level complaints would sit with these roles. The OPCC would continue to manage high level complaints and issues raised during visits. These changes have been widely accepted by the group.

In regards to the administration of the Scheme from within the OPCC, responsibility had been reallocated from the Engagement Officer to the newly created role of Governance Officer. This would take effect once the Governance Officer was recruited and in post.

JT reassured the group that the OPCC was still there to fully support the ICVs and that it would continue to administer the Scheme's meetings, manage issues raised on visits, process report forms and provide Scheme Updates, however, this new structure ensured true independence and complied with national best practise.

A discussion was held around the process of nominating a Vice Chair. It was agreed that ICVs would email JT should they wish to put themselves up for nomination for the role. JJ would then email a list of confirmed names out to ICVs so they can confirm their 'vote'. These would be collated and the successful nominee would be announced at the next meeting. Michael Hallinan (MH) confirmed he did not wish to be nominated for the role **ALL**

It was agreed that ICVs would email either JJ or JT to confirm which time they felt would be most suitable to hold a meeting as attendance at 3pm meetings was consistently low. A discussion was held as to whether meetings could be held at Newport Central or Ystrad Mynach. It was agreed that this would be looked into further once suggested meeting times had been received. **ALL**

In regards to performance, the following updates were provided:

- JT made the group aware that 12 out of 14 visits were completed. One visit was missed as cover was not found, the second was missed as a volunteer was not yet ready to recommence visits.
- Visiting times remained heavily centred around Thursday and Friday mornings. ICVs were asked to continue to take this into account when conducting their visits.
- No major issues have been raised during visits.
- There had been an increase in waiting times for ICVs accessing the suite, however no complaints had been received about this as ICVs have commented how busy the Unit was.
- Visitors were reminded to note on the visit forms when consent had been given by detainees to view custody records in cases where the detainee was able. It was noted that the section within the Scheme Handbook relating to custody records had been updated.
- ICVA's campaign for female detainee dignity was gathering momentum. ICVs were made aware that the Home Office was currently consulting on a change to PACE which would see ICVA's recommendations brought into legislation. ICVs agreed that they would like to receive a copy of the ICVA weekly newsletter. **JT**

Performance Framework


6. We noted the performance framework.

Any Other Business

7. No further business was identified.

Next Meeting

8. The next meeting is scheduled to be held at **3pm** on **Thursday, 6th December 2018** in **Conference Room 1, Gwent Police HQ.**

Jeff Cuthbert, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent	
I have monitored the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Minutes and am satisfied with progress.	
Signed 	Date 5/2/19

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Background papers	None

