

DECISION NUMBER: PCCG-2013-021

OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF CUSTODY VISITORS
HELD AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CROESYCEILIOG, CWMBRAN
ON MONDAY, 17th DECEMBER 2012

Present: Mr Ian Johnston, QPM (Police & Crime Commissioner)
Mrs Sian Curley (Acting Chair & Scheme Administrator)
Mr David Howells
Mr Arthur Elliott
Mr Justin Johnstone
Mr Brian Williams
Ms Ivy Forkin

Also in attendance: Chief Inspector Daniel Taylor (Custody)
Inspector Robert Thompson (Ystrad Mynach Custody)
Ms Michelle Vaisey-Baker (Assistant Scheme Administrator)

Apologies were received from Mr Eric Smith, Mrs Joyce Morgan, Mr Brian Thomas and Inspector Evans

The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m.

Action

INTRODUCTION TO POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

1. The Commissioner introduced himself and welcomed all attendees. He expressed his thanks for the fantastic job all Custody Visitors have been doing and updated everyone on his current priorities. The Commissioner noted that the numbers of custody visitors has dropped recently and that it may be beneficial to increase the number of visitors on the scheme. Mr Williams advised that the number of visitors at present actually feels more beneficial as they regularly get to conduct visits now. It was noted however that for resilience reasons it may be advisable to have more than eight visitors on the scheme. It was agreed that instead of having a targeted recruitment campaign Mrs Curley would put a section on the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner's (OPCC) internet page asking for anyone who is interested in the role to contact the office. Visitors could also potentially raise it in any other forums they attend to inform any interested parties.

The Commissioner queried whether there were any issues the scheme wanted to specifically feed back to him. It was agreed that in general the scheme works fairly well and there are no real complaints. It was acknowledged that access to

Newport Custody used to be an issue with nobody answering the phone to give Visitors access but this has now improved.

Action

The result of the HMIC Custody inspection was queried as no feedback had been received as of yet. Mrs Curley advised that she chased this up today, whilst the inspection report is not finalised yet there has been a factual accuracy report sent through for checking which has now gone back to HMIC. It is anticipated the full report will be received some time in the New Year. Mr Elliott confirmed that he had spoken to HMIC on the phone during their inspection. Miss Forkin and Mrs Morgan had also been interviewed by HMIC during a custody inspection visit and had seemed happy with the feedback provided. Mrs Curley advised she will ensure all visitors receive an update on the findings of the report once it has been received, together with an update on the action the force is taking in respect of any areas for improvement.

SC

It was queried whether staffing levels at Custody units would be lowered following the custody review. Chief Inspector Taylor advised that the number of Custody Sergeants has gone up by one person. He also explained that the reduction of CDO's is being backfilled by Police Officers so numbers in custody will remain at thirty; fifteen CDO's will remain and fifteen will be redeployed within the force. We were advised that many CDO's had already taken other jobs and it is hopeful that all those who go on the redeployment list will gain other posts. Chief Inspector Taylor informed us that the benefit of having Police Officers rather than entirely CDO's is the flexibility it offers as it provides more resilience, e.g. they will be able to assist with other neighbourhood policing duties during quieter periods.

The Commissioner informed us that since taking office he has received more than 300 emails from a pressure group that circulates email queries in respect of police privatisation. In response to this the Commissioner has prepared a statement which the media have yet to run; the statement outlines that whilst Mr Johnston is in office policing functions will not be privatised.

Visitors queried whether the Commissioner will be attending future meetings. The Commissioner confirmed that if beneficial he would (diary permitting) attend all meetings, for the first ten to fifteen minutes to address any issues that visitors may have. All visitors confirmed this would be very beneficial

The Commissioner left the meeting.

APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIR

Action

2. Mrs Curley advised that a chair would need to be appointed and asked if anyone wished to put their name forward. No members expressed interest. Mrs Curley was nominated as Chair which was agreed.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th August 2012 were confirmed as a correct record.

SCHEME UPDATE

4. Membership

Mrs Curley advised that the decision to potentially recruit more members was based on John Thomas and Christine Stonelake leaving the scheme. As discussed earlier a specific recruitment campaign will not be conducted but a notice will be put on the OPCC website asking for anyone interested in the role to contact the office. We were informed that the Commissioner will be doing a lot of engagement work so will be able to raise the profile of the scheme during his engagement activities.

Visits

We were informed that on the whole the majority of visits scheduled had been conducted. The few that had not taken place were due to work commitments and sickness. It was confirmed that a rota for the new year had been circulated to all visitors.

Issues Raised

We noted that there were no major issues in respect of visits, the main issues that are highlighted on the forms are generally estates matters. Visitors were advised that whilst not all estate work is done straight away the routine maintenance work is added to the Estates work program.

Mrs Curley advised that the HMIC had conducted an unannounced visit in September. The questions they raised were very matter of fact and answers were provided to all. Chief Inspector Taylor advised us that Custody had viewed the draft report from HMIC which was very positive. We were informed that any areas that were highlighted in the report for action would be incorporated into an action plan.

Mrs Curley advised that a new issue of Visiting Times has come out, copies will be circulated to all Visitors and Custody Units shortly.

**Action
MVB**

CONFERENCES

5. We were informed that Brian Thomas had attended the morning session of the National ICVA Conference in November and Arthur Elliott had attended the Regional Conference in South Wales. Copies of the presentations from the National Conference were available for Visitors to collect at the meeting.

Mrs Curley advised that as part of the subscription to ICVA visitors are entitled to one training session a year, therefore should any visitor have any ideas on what training would be beneficial could they update Mrs Curley so that she can liaise with Anna Jarrett of ICVA. Some potential ideas raised were; changes in PACE, Direction of Police & Crime Commissioners, and an update on the Executive Board. Mrs Curley advised that as far as the Gwent Commissioner was concerned no specific changes would be made to the ICV Scheme, however if any visitors have any questions regarding the Scheme they can contact the Office at any time.

ALL

The matter of expenses was raised. It was confirmed that 45p per mile was still the HMRC guidance rate which meant that no tax was payable. It was also confirmed that any car parking fees, bus or train fares could also be paid by the office if receipts were retained in respect of any custody visiting work.

CUSTODY UPDATE

5. We were informed by Chief Inspector Taylor that performance measures in custody are being looked at and that instead of solely focusing on things that are going wrong they also want to start focusing on things they are doing well, therefore they will be using custody visitor reports to assist in this by dip sampling reports providing feedback to officers and expanding good practice.

Some issues were raised in respect of the correct etiquette for CDO's as many insist on introducing the visitor to detainees because of safety implications when in fact the visitor is supposed to introduce themselves. Many also often stay within earshot commenting on issues the detainees raise. It was noted that this is a training issue that would need to be addressed as it is being done with the best intentions however it may be that little training has been received by the CDO's

on self introduction to ICV's in general. It was also noted that some CDO's often give the full custody sheet to visitors which details personal information, whereas the visitors are only required to know the cell number, detainee reference number and whether the individual is a Juvenile / PACE / Home Office detainee. It was agreed that Inspector Thompson would circulate an email to all custody staff outlining their requirements copying Mrs Curley in for information. Additionally, when training is conducted for the new Police Officers replacing CDO's Mrs Curley will be involved in the training. There is also potential for continuation training for CDO's. Inspector Thompson will liaise with Mrs Curley on this. It was requested that CDO's also be advised that it is their responsibility to ensure cell doors are shut after visitors have seen them for safety reasons.

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It was queried whether CDO's were able to sign off the custody visitor forms as it specifies a Sergeant needs to sign it off. It was noted that a Sergeant should always sign it off if there are any issues raised but there is potential for CDO's to sign them off if there is nothing of concern noted on the form. Mrs Curley will look into the matter to see if this is permitted and update visitors accordingly.

SC

We were informed that the Custody Review is now at the implementation phase. All CDO's have been interviewed and they are now awaiting decisions on who will remain and who will be redeployed. The next phase will be looking at what will happen when the Police Officers are in place as of 1st April 2013 e.g. how to use them most efficiently, how to manage them and their flexibility.

A request was made that during training it be highlighted that the risk assessment record sheet (buzzer book) be passed to visitors at the start of every visit. This enables them to be aware if a full check of all cells has been conducted (e.g. buzzers checked). If a full check has been conducted visitors will then randomly check various cells, whereas if no full check has been conducted visitors will conduct a full check themselves. It was agreed this request would be passed along to all staff.

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6. Mrs Curley advised that the forms being completed were of a good standard but highlighted that the main area that needs to be clear is the officer's number and surname.

Visitors were advised that enquiries are on-going to establish if the pre-paid Police Authority envelopes can be modified with

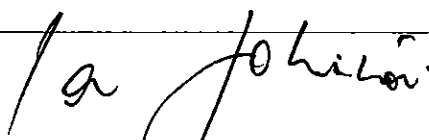
a label to say Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner. However for the interim period visitors can still continue to use the envelopes.

Action

It was queried whether visitors would need to get new badges with Police & Crime Commissioner on instead of Gwent Police Authority. Visitors were advised that they can attend Vantage Point in Cwmbran to organise replacement passes, however they can continue with their badges for the time being.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11. The date of the next meeting is 26th March 2013 at 3pm in Conference Room 1 at Headquarters.

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 11.2.13

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Background papers	None