

Decision Number: PCCG-2016-063

OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS
HELD AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CROESYCEILIOG, CWMBRAN
ON 25th AUGUST 2016**

Present: Mr Justin Johnstone (Chair)
Mr Brian Thomas
Ms Julie Morgan
Mr Arthur Elliott
Ms Haylie Griffith
Ms Eleanor Weare
Ms Jean Munton
Mr David Binding

Also in attendance:

Ms Michelle Vaisey-Baker (Scheme Administrator)
Miss Jessica Tippins (Assistant Scheme Administrator)
Inspector Mark Smith (Custody Inspector)

The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m.

Action

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies were received from Mr Richard Holland, Mr Stephen Spokes, Mr Anthony Angell, Ms Ruth Coulthard and Mrs Siân Curley,

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26TH MAY 2016

2. The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record with the following exceptions:

Page 3 – Mr Arthur Elliott (AE) informed the group that his concern was not regarding a previous report form being left in a tray, but that there was no longer a post facility within the Ystrad Mynach custody suite itself, which meant that Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) were required to post their report forms via the front station enquiry desk.

Page 1 – Mr Brian Thomas (BT) made the group aware that he had faced a delay in being granted access to the custody suite at Newport on a recent visit. Inspector Mark Smith (MS) advised that Custody Staff have been made aware of the requirement to admit ICVs immediately, sometimes a delay is caused as ICVs need to report to front counter staff first but that custody staff will collect them straight away upon receiving the call from the front desk. Unfortunately front counter staff are unable to escort ICVs to the custody unit. Mr Justin

Johnstone (JJ) explained that on a previous visit, he had encountered a delay from the front counter staff, but that this delay had been explained.

CUSTODY UPDATE

3. MS provided the group with the custody update. He reassured all ICVs that he personally reads all visit reports and addresses any issues raised on them. He did ask that if any issues were identified, to continue noting them on the visit forms for his attention. He also commended the staff in both custody units for their hard work.

We were provided with a detailed update regarding the upcoming Newport custody suite refurbishment. He confirmed that the work was due to commence mid-September and would last between 10 and 12 weeks. During this time, all detainees would be moved to the Ystrad Mynach suite. The Bail Clinic currently situated in the old Pill police station was also undergoing a refurbishment in September.

We were made aware that the following changes would be made:

- CCTV and Life-sign monitoring would be placed in each cell.
- Intercom facilities would be placed in each cell. This would allow custody staff to interact with detainees from the CCTV monitoring office alleviating demand from staff physically going to each cell.
- The medical room opposite the front charging desk was to be replaced with three holding cells. These would have one sided glass so that the custody staff could monitor detainees.
- A section of the current waiting area will be designated for detainees being escorted back from interview.
- The wall situated behind the charge desk was to be removed. Two booking in terminals would be placed where the current charge desk was, with another desk behind those for the Custody Sergeant. These terminals would have Perspex fronts with computers placed behind them.
- A dedicated forensics sampling room was to be built in the suite. The current room used for this facility was to become a nurses/medical room.
- A food preparation area was to be built, replacing one of the shower rooms. The second shower room was to remain. This would allow food to be prepared on site.
- Air conditioning and new flooring was to be installed in the CCTV monitoring office. Larger screens were also to be fitted to ensure that all cells could be monitored at the same time.
- Screens were to be placed throughout custody so that cells could be monitored by all staff.

- Two more interview rooms were to be built.
- A storage area was to be built in the suite near to the Inspector's office. This would also house a new bedding store.
- Drug workers were to have a dedicated working area.

Mr David Binding (DB) asked MS whether the intercom calls would be recorded and it was clarified that they would not. Mr Justin Johnstone (JJ) asked whether the intercoms would replace the current buzzer system. It was established that this would not be the case and that the buzzers would also remain.

We were made aware that July had seen a 9% reduction in adverse incidents. The Independent Police Complaints Commissioner (IPCC) had recognised the positive attitude to Gwent's recording of incidents in custody. MS confirmed to us that he met with the Custody Nurse and Sergeant once a month to review any incidents in custody. He also attended a quarterly force health and safety meeting which reviewed any incidents and arising matters.

We were informed of some changes to staffing within the custody unit. This included:

- One new nurse.
- Two Custody Detention Officers (CDOs) had left, one had been recruited.

We learnt that the next custody training session was to take place on the 8th November and that the IPCC was attending. A pool of resilience officers would be placed in custody on this day as all custody staff were required to attend. JJ praised the force on their last training day in which he played the part of a detainee.

MS confirmed that he was aware of a shortage of blankets within the custody unit. He had therefore agreed that laundry services would be supplied three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Since this new service had come in to place, there had been no further issues.

JJ asked MS whether the ICVs would be able to check the intercoms as they do the buzzers. MS confirmed they could, but asked that ICVs check with the front desk before doing so to ensure that staff have the capacity to facilitate this. If ICVs were unable to check the intercoms themselves, they were reassured that they could review the custody unit logs to ensure these had been checked.

BT thanked the inspector for his very detailed update.

SCHEME UPDATE

4. Ms Michelle Vaisey-Baker (MVB) provided the group with the scheme update. We were made aware that the new Deputy Police & Crime

Commissioner (DPCC) had been recruited and would be commencing her duties week commencing 29th August 2016. The successful candidate was Ms Eleri Thomas MBE who previously held the role of Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Children's Commissioner for Wales. She was awarded an MBE in 2009 for her services to children and young people whilst head of the Children's charity, Save the Children in Wales. As the new Deputy she would contribute to the development of the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) initiatives and lead on the delivery of major projects.

We were informed that Mr Anthony Angell had made a full recovery and as such, would be returning to visiting duties.

We were also notified that three visits had been missed since the beginning of May of which the Assistant Scheme Administrator (JT) had been notified. Another two visits were assumed missed as JT had not received the report forms. JT confirmed she would be contacting the relevant individuals shortly to confirm whether these visits had taken place. MVB reminded all visitors to contact the OPCC directly if they had missed a visit. JT

MVB advised that a number of ICVs had queried whether visits to Ystrad Mynach could be reduced following the change in custody provision in May, as the majority of visits found that no detainee was at the custody unit when visitors attended. MVB confirmed that following advice from ICVA, visits to Ystrad Mynach Custody suite would now be reduced to monthly visits from September onwards. MVB reminded ICVs that if on these monthly visits there were no detainees in the custody suite during their visit, could ICVs still ensure that they conduct environment checks to ensure it remains fit for purpose. MVB advised that the Custody Inspector would be required to keep the OPCC informed on any increase of use at Ystrad Mynach so that visits could be increased in the future should it be more frequently used again. It was established that Ystrad Mynach would become the primary suite during the Newport custody suite renovations from mid September to early December, as such visits to Ystrad Mynach would take place on weekly basis throughout that period.

We were made aware that a new report form had been created and sent to all ICVs and both custody suites. It was asked that these new forms be used with immediate effect. All ICVs were reminded to complete all fields on the form and to log all instances where custody records had been checked. BT raised an issue which had arisen at a recent visit where he was told by a member of staff that detainees had to sign before ICVs could view their custody records. MS clarified that this was not the case and that he would raise the matter with the officer concerned. MS

MVB provided the following updates to the figures provided within the

performance framework, in the last quarter:

- Number of aged under 18 detainees who were kept in detention post charge – 8
- Number of aged under 18 detainees who were kept in detention post charge due to no alternative secure accommodation available – 2

The group was notified that the training being provided by the South Wales scheme on 1st October 2016 would include a session on learning disability and autism awareness in the Criminal Justice System. Any individuals interested in attending this training course were asked to contact JT as soon as possible. The Dyfed Powys scheme had also arranged for their scheme to have learning disability and autism awareness training on Friday 18th November. Any individuals interested in attending this training course were also asked to contact JT as soon as possible.

MVB informed the group that she and JT would be attending the Independent Custody Visiting Association's Annual Scheme Managers Conference in October. A full update on this would be provided at the next meeting.

MVB

ICVs were asked to contact either JT or MVB if they had any ideas for training. DB commented that the refresher training he had attended with South Wales had proved very informative. JM also raised the subject of interacting with youth detainees. MVB agreed to take these topics forward as future training ideas and would update the group in due course.

MVB

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

5. The contents of the performance framework was noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6. JJ praised the custody training he took part in recently and said that it may be useful for other visitors to take part in future training sessions. MS agreed that this could be beneficial and advised he would inform MVB and JT once the future training dates had been confirmed.

MS

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8. The next meeting has been scheduled for **3pm** on the **24th November 2016** in **Conference Room 1** at **Gwent Police Headquarters, Croesyceiliog**.

Meeting concluded at 3.45pm.

Jeff Cuthbert, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

I have monitored the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Minutes and am satisfied with progress.

Signed



Date

27/9/16

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Background papers	None