

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Police	Friday 1 June 2012
<b>Subject:</b> Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk	<b>For Information</b>
<p><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>This report completes the requirement to update Members on the progress of the City of London's Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme, presenting the Panel's Annual Report and informing Members of some of the recent issues raised by the ICV Panel in relation to custody provision in the City. Issues raised at the Panel meetings over the past year include access to the custody suites, how the Visitors are introduced by custody staff, increasing visits during the Olympics period, and how best to time their visits.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> Members are asked to note the contents of this report.</p>	

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

1. The existing Independent Custody Visiting Scheme has been operational, in its current form, since November 2007. As part of the Scheme, Members agreed at your meeting in May 2009 that a regular report would come to Committee on an annual basis, and this report fulfils that requirement.

#### **Visits to the Custody Facilities**

2. Members will recall that Custody Visitors make unannounced visits in pairs to custody suites to monitor and report on the treatment and conditions of individual detainees on an entirely independent and confidential basis. They are there to look, listen and report on conditions in custody at the time of their visit, and report what they see through to the Force and the Committee. The City Visitors have all been trained in conjunction with the Independent Custody Visiting Association.
3. The visits take place on a weekly basis for Bishopsgate Police Station and a minimum of quarterly for Snow Hill as agreed in the Scheme. Each visit is recorded by the two visitors who complete a short form covering any issues for

concern following meetings with the detainees. Copies of each completed form are then sent to the Divisional Chief Superintendent, the Scheme's Administrator in the Town Clerk's Office, and the Commander for action if necessary.

4. Meetings of the ICV Panel continue to take place on a quarterly basis and are attended by all Custody Visitors together with representatives from the Town Clerk's Department and the City Police, as well as the Committee's representative Mrs Deputy Nash.
5. The Panel then reviews the record of visits since the last meeting and is able to ask detailed questions of the representatives of the Force with custody responsibilities about any issues which concern them. Finally, the Panel considers more general aspects and the administration of the Scheme such as the visit rota and availability. With Max Jack's three-year tenure as Chairman coming to an end last July, the Panel subsequently elected Peter Tihanyi as its new Chair and your officers would like to record their thanks to him for his contribution to the Scheme over the past year.

## **2011/12**

6. This year the Panel has produced its third Annual Report, which is attached at Appendix A. This reports on the Panel's performance over the last 12 months, provides information about the visits made and issues raised as a result and, finally, sets out the Panel's objectives for 2012/13. Issues raised at the Panel meetings include the following:
  - a. **Access to the Custody Suite** – The issue of access to the Custody Suite caused considerable debate over the year, with Visitors keen to ensure that they were not delayed at the station front desk and still able to perform unannounced visits. Consultation with other Forces indicated that immediate access was not in place elsewhere owing to safety concerns and ultimate a balance was struck whereby Visitors are able to enter the suite after a brief check to ensure it is safe whilst not being delayed any further than absolutely necessary so as to maximise the 'surprise' nature of visits.
  - b. **Introduction to Detainees** – following the introduction of an agreed standardised format for Custody Officers to use when introducing Visitors, the level of take-up by those in custody has increased significantly. Visitors are still able to self-introduce whenever they feel it is appropriate, and it is felt that this approach combines the best of both options.
  - c. **Healthcare Provision** – the Panel continues to take a great interest in the way healthcare is provided and will continue monitor the arrangements in the coming year following the recent change in service provider.
  - d. **Custody Usage** – the Panel receives regular data from the Force on the usage of the Custody Suites and compares this against the timing of their visits on a regular basis so as to ensure that the timing of future visits better reflects the usage of the Custody Suites.
  - e. **Design of Custody Forms** – the form used to record visits has been redesigned in line with Visitors' desires and is now in use.

- f. **Training** – Visitors are keen to ensure that they are kept up-to-date on issues affecting custody in addition to receiving regular updates on more general issues.
- g. **Olympics Period** – given the anticipated influx of people to the London area, it was agreed that a greater number of visits should be undertaken during the Games period.

### **Legal Implications**

- 7. In accordance with Section 51 of the Police Reform Act (2002), the City Corporation is required to have in place an Independent Visitors Scheme.

### **Community Strategy & Other Significant Implications**

- 8. The ICV Scheme supports the ‘safer and stronger’ aspect of the sustainable Community Strategy.

### **Conclusion**

- 9. The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is now well established and the Panel is pleased to present its annual report to the Police Committee. Further updates on this Scheme will continue to be provided to Members on an annual basis.

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