

Committee:	Date:
Housing and Almshouses Management Sub Committee	25 April 2016
Subject: CCTV Installation in City Housing Estates	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report Author: Lochlan MacDonald, Asset Programme Manager	

Summary

At its meeting on 18 January 2016, members of the Housing and Almshouses Management Sub Committee received and approved a report from the Director of Community and Children's Services to appoint a contractor to carry out the installation of a closed-circuit television (CCTV) system on the William Blake Estate.

The report generated interest and discussion amongst the members who, subsequently requested that a further report be brought back to this Committee outlining the City's overall approach to the installation of CCTV systems including the justification and benefits and the options for monitoring them.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and make any observations and comments as it sees fit.

Main Report

Background

1. In April 2014, Committee approval was given to appoint a specialist consultant to draw up proposals for increasing CCTV coverage across 7 of the City of London's housing estates as part of the City's HRA Investment Programme.
2. In order to assess the practicalities of installing a new CCTV system in terms of complexity, ease of installation, compatibility, cost, performance in use and response from residents, it was subsequently decided that the William Blake Estate in Lambeth would be used as a pilot project. The outcome of this pilot project will determine whether or not to proceed with installations on the other 6 estates identified.
3. The William Blake Estate was chosen for the pilot project because it is a relatively small estate and the cost of installation will be less than the other 6 estates. In addition, a survey of the estate carried out back in 2011 showed that 80% of the residents that responded to the survey were very much in favour of having CCTV installed.

Discussion

4. The City of London has, in the past, adopted an ad hoc approach to the installation of CCTV systems on its housing estates, which means that some of its estates have the benefit of full coverage, some have partial coverage and some have no coverage at all.
5. The proposals for increasing CCTV coverage across 7 of the City of London's housing estates as part of the City's HRA Investment Programme will start to bring a more structured and uniform approach that will ensure, over time, that residents on all our estates will benefit from the installation of CCTV.
6. The 7 sites that are earmarked for new or upgraded CCTV installations have been previously prioritised on the basis of issues relating to criminal activity and anti-social behaviour and the requests and concerns of our residents and staff.
7. CCTV is widely recognised as an effective deterrent to criminal and anti-social behaviour. Officers have contacted the City of London and Metropolitan Police Forces to ask for their views as to whether they support the principle of CCTV as a deterrent and aid to prosecution but, disappointingly, no response has as yet been received. However, the Metropolitan Police has previously advised the City as follows:

“If CCTV is installed in prominent positions and supported by clear and obvious signage, this alone could put offenders off from committing crime. Also, the security and safety measures that come with CCTV bring a sense of comfort and reassurance to the local community, helping to force out crime and the fear of crime.”

8. CCTV is considered an essential tool in aiding the identification and conviction of offenders. It helps clear up any misunderstandings between witnesses and gives courts a clearer understanding as to what has taken place.
9. In the context of the City of London's housing estates, the installation of new and the upgrading of existing CCTV systems will bring considerable benefits to our residents including:
 - a deterrent to potential crime – CCTV systems are widely acknowledged as contributing to a reduction in crime as potential criminals will choose to target areas that are not protected by security systems;
 - contributing to a safer environment;
 - a reduction in anti-social behaviour; and
 - reducing the fear of crime – knowing that they are well protected gives residents a greater sense of security.
10. Reliable and effective CCTV installations will also be of considerable benefit to City of London staff both in terms of their own safety when visiting and working on the various estates and also in terms of assisting with issues of anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes.

11. At the last meeting of this Committee in January, there was a debate around whether or not the CCTV systems installed on our estates should be manned and monitored at all times so that incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour can be addressed and reported immediately. Whilst there is no doubt that 24-hour monitoring will produce the best results, it is felt that this is simply uneconomical and unnecessary in terms of the benefits that are likely to be achieved.
12. The cost of manning a CCTV system on a 24-hour permanent basis is extremely prohibitive and is something that is likely to encourage challenge from our leaseholders who are likely to be required to make a contribution through the service charge process.
13. Other measures can be combined with CCTV to help make areas even more secure. These can include improved lighting in public places, door entry systems and regular grounds maintenance to help prevent areas from becoming overgrown thus providing hiding places for miscreants. These additional measures will be considered as part of the agreed CCTV works.
14. The information Commissioner's Office has issued a detailed Code of Practice (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) covering CCTV and the use of personal information. There are strict rules as to who can have access to recorded images and it is essential that members of the public feel that CCTV is there for protection and is not seen as invading privacy.
15. The Data Protection Act and Protection of Freedom Act regulate how information is used, stored and accessed so that this may only be used for designated purposes. This applies to CCTV images as well as other forms of data and, as such, due consideration needs to be given to the regulations in the design and installation of new CCTV systems.

Appendices

Appendix 1: A Data Protection Code of Practice for Surveillance Cameras and Personal Information (available online - <https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1542/cctv-code-of-practice.pdf>)

Background Papers

Housing and Almshouses Management Sub Committee Report (18 January 2016)

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