

Committee(s)	Dated:
Independent Custody Visitor Panel – for information Police Committee – for information	26 April 2017 18 May 2017
Subject: Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2016/17	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Information
Report author: Craig Spencer, ICV Scheme Manager, Town Clerk's Department	

Summary

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, the response times for repairs and maintenance work and how best to time their visits.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

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.
2. Members may 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.
3. The City Visitors have all been trained in conjunction with the Independent Custody Visiting Association and the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime. Further refresher training is given to the Panel on specific topics such as use of force or mental health.
4. The visits take place on a three in two week basis for Bishopsgate Police Station 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 Custody Manager, the Scheme's Administrator in the Town Clerk's Office, and the Commander for action if necessary. The Panel should be commended for completing all their visits over the previous year even with the increase in the regularity of visits that was agreed.

5. 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 as well as the Committee's representative Nick Bensted-Smith.
6. The Panel reviews the record of visits since the last meeting and visitors are able to ask detailed questions of the representatives of the Force, which is often the custody manager, about any issues which concern them. Finally, the Panel considers more general policy aspects and the administration of the Scheme such as the visit rota and availability.
7. Finally the ICV Panel would like to record their thanks to Chairman Peter Tihanyi for his contribution to the Scheme over the past year as well as the past Chairman Max Jack who left the scheme this year. The current Chairman is intending to step down later this year and we are currently accepting nominations for his successor.

Panel Issues in 2016/17

7. This year the Panel has produced its seventh 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 2016/17. Issues raised at the Panel meetings include the following:

a. Access Rights to the Custody Suite - entrance to the Suite has been a long standing issue for the ICV Visitors, who would prefer swift access to allow for more efficient unannounced visits. There is now an agreed entrance procedure between custody staff and ICVs:

Upon arriving at the public enquiry counter, independent custody visitors must identify themselves and explain the purpose of their visit. At this point, they must be admitted immediately to the custody area. Independent custody visitors must accept that they may have to wait their turn to receive attention by the counter clerk. The current process means they may not interrupt a person who is in conversation with the counter clerk, but will be the next to be attended to in this situation.

This process has been agreed by the City of London Police and the ICV Scheme Manager. The ICV Guidelines (which were approved by the Police Committee in January) and the Standard Operating Procedure the Police use have been edited in accordance with the agreed procedure. This has helped in reducing delays with consistently short times when waiting for access to the custody suite.

b. Healthcare Provision in the Custody Suite – the Panel continued to take a great interest in the way healthcare was provided. Visitors are satisfied with the current health care provision provided to the detainees. The Panel will continue to monitor the provision of the new healthcare contract for custody which has now been signed from April 2017.

c. Repairs & Maintenance - The Panel raised a number of concerns about the time taken to institute repairs to the cells. This has been a persistent concern for the last few years. The Force has always responded rapidly to the concerns raised by our visitors; however the current Mitie contract has meant that these concerns have not always been addressed immediately.

A new contract for repairs and maintenance is due to start within the next few months. The ICV Scheme Manager will continue to feed any issues with maintenance into the City Surveyor's Department to ensure more rapid repairs take place.

d. Custody visit throughputs – The Panel has been successful in having a spread of visits across the week which is more appropriate to the usage levels in the custody suites at particular times. There is further work to encourage later visits and visits on the busier days (Thursday and Friday).

The Panel has several volunteers for the next quarter to undertake visits during the Midnight to 6am period to ensure 24 hour coverage. There were unfortunately no visits undertaken during this slot in 2016-17. The Panel aims to undertake at least four visits annually during the Midnight to 6am period in 2017-18.

Legal Implications

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

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.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – ICV Annual Report 2017

Background Papers

ICV Guidelines – January 2017 Police Committee

Craig Spencer

ICV Scheme Manager – Town Clerk's Department

T: 0207 332 1501

E: craig.spencer@cityoflondon.gov.uk

