

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Housing and Environment

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Wards affected: all wards in Abingdon and Wantage

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To: CABINET

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Replacing Abingdon and Wantage CCTV cameras and upgrading cabling

Recommendations

- (a) that Cabinet approves the spending of the capital budget allocated to maintain Vale CCTV equipment, so that all analogue cameras in Abingdon and Wantage can be replaced with digital ones and the cabling can be upgraded to enable digital data transmission.
- (b) that Cabinet agrees for the procurement of the replacement CCTV cameras to be signed off by Individual Cabinet Member Decision to help maintain service continuity.

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval to spend the capital budget allocated to maintain Vale CCTV equipment, so that all analogue cameras in Abingdon and Wantage can be replaced with digital ones and the cabling can be upgraded to enable digital data transmission.
2. To seek agreement for the procurement of the replacement CCTV cameras to be signed off by Individual Cabinet Member Decision to help maintain service continuity.

Corporate Objectives

3. This work contributes to the council's objectives of building healthy communities and building stable finances.

Background

4. Vale of White Horse District Council manages the public space town centre CCTV schemes in Abingdon and Wantage. The schemes are relied upon by Thames Valley Police to help with the detection and prevention of crime as well as to protect and locate vulnerable and missing people. Teams within the council also make use of CCTV, for example when monitoring for emergency planning purposes in the event of flooding or other emergencies; and the car parks, environmental services and licensing teams when obtaining evidence during their investigations.
5. The CCTV control room is based within Abingdon Police Station. The equipment and staff are shared with South Oxfordshire District Council. The equipment within the CCTV control room is used to monitor all 29 CCTV cameras in Abingdon and Wantage as well as 57 cameras within South Oxfordshire District Council. All cameras operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
6. In Abingdon, the district council operates 23 CCTV cameras; 21 of these are analogue cameras which were installed in 2007. In Wantage, there are six analogue cameras that are over 13 years old. All these cameras are reaching their end of life, which is evident from the number of problems that occur with them and the engineer's maintenance reports. With analogue now being an old technology, these cameras all need replacing with high definition digital cameras which provide greater image quality.
7. We also want to replace a camera on Wallingford Street in Wantage that was removed a number of years ago when the site where it was located was redeveloped; the town council, police and CCTV operators strongly support the reintroduction of this camera to help with tackling crime in the town centre.
8. The approximate cost of replacing all these cameras is around £70,000 and will be subject to the full procurement process required for any high value contract.
9. In order to install digital cameras in both towns and maximise the benefits of the newly installed, fully digital CCTV system in the control room, we need to upgrade the cabling between the cameras and the equipment to move from analogue to digital data transmission. This work can only be carried out by BT Openreach who own the cabling network and there are no other suppliers of this service. Therefore, this would not be subject to a procurement process. An appropriate exception to the Contract Procedure Rules would be relied upon. We anticipate that the cabling work will cost in the region of £105,000.
10. Thames Valley Police are keen for the council to explore and consider the possibility of CCTV monitoring moving to a county hub model which would result in the CCTV cameras for each council in Oxfordshire being monitored from one location. This is part of a Thames Valley wide project with the aim of delivering a cost-effective use of resources to support better policing outcomes. Although no definitive timescales have been set with regards to a hub for Oxfordshire, having a fully digitalised CCTV network in the Vale of White Horse will help ensure our system is compatible with other Oxfordshire control rooms to facilitate the potential move to a hub in the future if needed.
11. At its meeting on 4 October 2019, Cabinet agreed to create a new capital budget of £185,000 for the procurement of new CCTV recording and monitoring equipment.

Options

12. An alternative option would be to not replace the CCTV cameras and cease to provide a CCTV public space town centre scheme in Abingdon and Wantage when the equipment fails. This presents a significant operational and reputational risk to the council. In addition, it may not aid long term discussions with Thames Valley Police regarding their county hub project.
13. The council could choose not to upgrade the cabling in the Vale from analogue to digital transmission. However, if we remained using an analogue transmission network to link our CCTV cameras in the Vale to the control room, we would encounter the following problems:
 - on-going faults with camera telemetry resulting from using analogue technology to transmit camera data to a digitalised system (this impacts on the operators' ability to respond to and monitor incidents as effectively as possible);
 - we would not be able to realise the benefits of having digital cameras in terms of securing enhanced picture quality.

Climate and ecological impact implications

14. New digital cameras have a significantly reduced power consumption requirement compared to the existing cameras. These will consume 12 watts when idle and up to 25 watts when being controlled by an operator to pan or zoom in on a subject, giving an average of 16 watts based on idle/operator control. The current analogue cameras use 73 watts. Therefore new cameras will provide a 78 percent reduction in power consumption.
15. In addition there is a reduction in the power requirements for digital transmission compared to analogue transmission, with new equipment requiring 5-10 watts instead of 40-50 watts.
16. The cabling work required to enable digital data transmission does not require any excavation work.

Financial Implications

17. The allocation of a capital budget for these works was approved by Cabinet on 4 October 2019.
18. Failure to replace the CCTV equipment and the resulting reduction in service would lead to loss of income from partner agencies.
19. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For Vale, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2021 showed that the council is due to receive £2.6 million less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2021/22 (with the balance coming from reserves including unallocated New Homes Bonus).
20. This funding gap is predicted to increase to over £5 million by 2025/26. As there remains no certainty on future local government funding, following the announcement

of a one-year spending review by government, and as the long-term financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic remain unknown, this gap could increase further. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisance of the need to eliminate this funding gap in future years.

Legal Implications

21. There are no legal implications with this report.

Risks

22. If we are not able to replace the CCTV cameras in Abingdon and Wantage, the equipment will fail beyond repair and the council will not be able to provide CCTV in our town centre public spaces. This will create an operational risk for all those who rely on CCTV. It is also a reputational risk for the council.

Conclusion

23. There is a need to replace the analogue CCTV cameras in Abingdon and Wantage as the current equipment is reaching its end of life and there is a risk that if it is not replaced, the CCTV service will not be provided.

24. The approval to spend the capital budget on the purchase and installation of modern digital cameras and the upgrading of the cabling will help the council to continue providing a professional, reliable and effective CCTV service to help prevent and detect crime and keep people in our communities safe.

Background Papers

- [CCTV report for Q3-Q4 2020/21](#)