

Police and Crime Commissioner

for Hertfordshire

MEETING	POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
DATE	12 th November 2015
TITLE OF REPORT	Annual Reports and recent developments in the Independent Custody Visitor and Dog Visiting Schemes
SUBMITTED BY	Deputy Chief Executive, Officer of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire (OPCC)

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose the report is to present the Annual Reports of the Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) and Dog Visit Schemes and to update the panel on recent developments within these schemes.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Under the current legislation, the Police and Crime Commissioner is required to run a custody visiting scheme. The scheme gives the public reassurance that detainees are being treated fairly by carrying out independent checks on the welfare of detainees. The scheme draws volunteers from across the county and is administered by a member of OPCC staff.
- 2.2 The death of a police dog whilst in training in Essex in 2003 resulted in an understandable loss of public confidence in police dog training methods. In response to this the ACPO Police Dog Sub-Committee embarked upon a thorough review of police dog training and handling. As a result, an Animal Welfare Lay Visiting Scheme was introduced and has been running successfully in Hertfordshire since 2006. This is now a joint scheme between Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire and is administered by a member of the Hertfordshire OPCC staff.

3. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Independent Custody Volunteers

- 3.1 Following re-issued guidance from the Independent Custody Volunteer Association (ICVA), a review of the Hertfordshire Scheme was carried out. It was determined that, whilst Hertfordshire had a good number of dedicated and experienced volunteers, the existing volunteer base did not accurately reflect the wide range of communities in the County. As at March 2015, there were 55 ICV's of which 70% were over 60 and 72% had been volunteers for over 10yrs (the ICVA recommend ICVs serve no more than 9 years). As a result of the review, existing ICVs were requested to re-apply for their role and a recruitment campaign was launched to attract a more diverse range of volunteers. Working in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire, this recruitment campaign attracted over 80 applicants.
- 3.2 Following a rigorous selection process and appropriate vetting, 19 new ICVs were appointed and have since been trained and paired with an experienced ICV to commence their probationary period. These include a number of students from the University and a much broader range of ages, backgrounds etc.
- 3.3 The existing volunteers have also undergone their annual refresher training and a number of ICVs recently received Code of Ethics training from Hertfordshire Constabulary which is being delivered to all Police Officers, staff and volunteers. A further training programme is being developed which will include subjects such as Data Protection, Equalities Act etc.
- 3.4 The scheme now has more than 40 trained and active volunteers who visit each custody suite unannounced at least twice per week and report their findings to the OPCC. This allows OPCC staff to quickly identify and work with the Head of Custody to resolve any emerging issues.
- 3.5 In response to feedback from ICVs and as a way of trying to improve the feedback process, the options for an electronic reporting mechanism are being explored with ICT. It is hoped that this will facilitate faster and more detailed reporting than is currently afforded by the paper based system. In addition, ICVs are being issued with fleeces and jackets which make them clearly distinguishable from the Custody staff.

Dog Welfare Scheme

- 3.6 The scheme is currently administered by staff from the Herts OPCC and currently has 4 volunteer dog welfare visitors (1 in Beds, 1 in Cambs and 2 in Herts). These volunteers are trained by the Dogs

Trusts and undertake visits to all police dogs on a regular basis. The Dog Welfare Visitors observe, comment and report on the condition of the dogs and how they are transported to provide an independent check on the welfare of dogs in police care.

- 3.7 A review of the dog welfare scheme has recently resulted in an updated Policy and Procedure Manual being produced which has been agreed by the OPCCs of Herts, Beds and Cambs as well as the Head of the Dog Unit. A panel meeting of volunteers was held recently and no issues with the running of the scheme were identified although it was agreed that additional support and engagement with the volunteers would be welcome. As a result, the Herts based dog volunteers will be invited to attend appropriate training alongside their ICV colleagues and the Scheme Administrator is exploring ways of working more closely with the volunteers.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:

- (a) the Panel **note** the Annual Reports of the Independent Custody Visitor and Dog Welfare Schemes; and
- (b) the Panel **note** the report.