

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CUSTODY VISITORS COMMITTEE HELD ON
MONDAY, 24 MAY 2010**

Present:

Mr A Byrne
Mr R Chapman (Substitute)
Mrs V Jenkins (Chairman)
Mr J Perry-Warnes
Mr D Reeve

In attendance:

Miss S Bryant	Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator/ Research Officer, Norfolk Police Authority
Chief Inspector R Wiltshire	Custody, Norfolk Constabulary
Miss N Wotton	Committee Administrator, Norfolk Police Authority

1. Election of Chairman

Mr D Reeve nominated Mrs V Jenkins to the position of Chairman, seconded by Mr J Perry-Warnes. There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

That Mrs V Jenkins be appointed as Chairman of the Custody Visitors Committee for the ensuing year.

2. Appointment of Deputy Chairman

Mr D Reeve nominated Mr J Perry-Warnes to the position of Deputy Chairman, seconded by Mr A Byrne. There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

That Mr J Perry-Warnes be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Custody Visitors Committee for the ensuing year.

3. To note any apologies

There were no apologies received. Due to the ongoing vacancy on the Committee, Mr R Chapman was attending the meeting as a substitute on this occasion.

4. To note any declarations of interest

There were none.

5. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2010 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. **To note whether any items have been proposed as matters of Urgent Business**

There were none.

7. **Independent Custody Visiting – Support Services**

The Committee received an overview of key matters in relation to the management and administration of the Custody Visiting Scheme.

It was noted that since the last meeting, one Custody Visitor had resigned from the scheme due to personal circumstances and two were currently on a three month break from the Scheme due to increasing work commitments and/or personal circumstances. Members were pleased to note that following successful interviews and initial training, two applicants had been offered appointments with effect from the 1 April 2010. It was reported that these visitors would be assigned to the Western 2 Panel and Eastern 2 Panel. The Committee noted that the total number of Custody Visitors was 36 as of 1 May 2010.

Members noted the ongoing work to raise awareness of the Scheme and to promote the work of the Independent Custody Visitors in the local community. It was noted that a poster had been designed, which would be displayed on community notice boards in supermarkets, hospitals Public Enquiry Offices and other areas of public interest. In response to a query from a Member, it was noted that an article on the Scheme had been sent to all Parish Clerks in the County, for inclusion within their local newsletters, earlier in the year.

In respect of training, the Scheme Administrator advised that the formalised training plan for all Custody Visitors had been refreshed and re-circulated to individuals for information. It was noted that at the recent round of Panel meetings in April 2010, a brief training session on the role of the Appropriate Adult was delivered to the Central Panel (the remaining Panels had received training at previous meetings).

The Scheme Administrator reported that 2 training days had taken place in March, with the purpose of the day being to provide information and advice for custody visitors, focussing on 'back to basics', discussions with Detained Persons and how the Police deal with detainees with mental health issues in custody.

The Committee noted that the initial training afforded to Independent Custody Visitors had recently been reviewed and a new approach had been piloted, whereby 3 shorter sessions were delivered over a 3 week period (one morning, one afternoon and one evening). Members were apprised that since the revised training package had been delivered, extensive feedback had been obtained which was very positive and any learning points received would be incorporated within future training sessions.

Members were updated on the Regional Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) meeting which had taken place on the 3rd March 2010. The meeting had discussed feedback from the ICVA Executive, the Regional Conference, Flash Cards and Reporting Matrix. In response to a query from a Member, it was noted that the Custody policies and procedures within Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies were being aligned in readiness for the opening of the new Police Investigation Centres.

Members were apprised that the ICVA Regional Conference would be taking place on the 12 June 2010 at Hertfordshire County Hall, Hertford. It was noted that all custody visitors were invited to attend, along with the Scheme Administrator and Members of the Custody Visitors Committee.

The Scheme Administrator introduced the draft Independent Custody Visiting Annual Report for 2009/10. Members read through the document and endorsed the text and design, subject to changing an image on Page 2 of the document.

It was reported that the Scheme Administrator had attended an ICVA pilot course "Leading the Way" on the 31 March 2010, the purpose of which was to learn about governance responsibilities, strategic implementation and data protection issues relating to the ICV role. Members were also informed that the Scheme Administrator continued to periodically attend the Constabulary's fortnightly Custody Management Group meetings to provide an update on issues pertaining to custody visiting.

Members noted that in preparation for the Police Investigation Centres (PICs), the Authority and Constabulary were keen for the policies and practices of both Norfolk and Suffolk to be aligned in preparation for the PICs, to ensure a smooth transition to the new facilities. The Committee were pleased to note that all matters relating to recruitment, selection and interview of Custody Visitors had been aligned and both Authorities would be following these agreed processes for the reconstitution process and beyond. The Scheme Administrator undertook to update the Committee in more detail as part of agenda item 8.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the contents of the report;
- ii) To endorse the appointment of ICVs to the Eastern 2 and Western 2 Panels;
- iii) To endorse the text and design of the ICV Annual Report for 2009/10, subject to changing an image on Page 2 of the document.

8. **Norfolk Custody Visiting – Scheme Guidelines**

Members were advised that following a Home Office review of the Code of Practice for Custody Visiting and, in preparation for the Police Investigation Centres and aligning practices with Suffolk Police Authority, a thorough review of Norfolk's Independent Custody Visitor Scheme Guidelines had been undertaken.

The Committee considered in detail the full contents of the document, noting that many of the changes highlighted by the review of the Codes of Practice sought to improve the transparency of the Custody Visiting Scheme. The Scheme Administrator highlighted that, in 2007 because of insurance policy limitations in place at the time, a decision was taken to incorporate an upper age limit of 85 years for visitors within the Norfolk Scheme. Members were provided with an overview of current insurance arrangements and following extensive discussion, it was agreed that the upper age limit for the Scheme be removed, given that it was no longer required for insurance purposes. Members also discussed the local policy that

ICVs should not act as Appropriate Adults or Lay Observers and agreed that this decision should be maintained, given the conflict of interest the roles provided.

The Committee also requested that they be kept apprised of any amendments to the Custody Visiting Scheme Guidelines, made by Suffolk Police Authority.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the contents of the report;
- ii) To approve the Custody Visiting Scheme Guidelines for issue to all Custody Visitors in Norfolk, and agreed to remove the upper age limit for the Scheme (given that it was no longer required for insurance purposes), and maintained the policy that ICVs could not act as Appropriate Adults or Lay Observers (given that it created a conflict of interest).;
- iii) That Members would be kept apprised of any amendments to the Custody Visiting Scheme Guidelines, made by Suffolk Police Authority.

9. **Independent Custody Visitor Panel Reports – January to March 2010**

The Committee received reports from the Eastern (1), Eastern (2), Western (1), Western (2) and Central Panel Co-ordinators.

a) Western (1)

The report of the Western (1) Panel was received, and Members noted that the percentage of detained persons visited during the period was 47% (in comparison to 28% in the previous quarter).

Members noted that a breakdown of visit times over the last quarter had been submitted, which was very useful in highlighting that patterns regarding visiting times were not occurring. The Scheme Administrator undertook to provide similar statistical information for all Panels' in future reports.

The Committee were pleased to note that weekly visits were being maintained and that relationships with Custody Staff were good.

b) Western (2)

The report of the Western (2) Panel was received, and Members noted that the percentage of detained persons visited was 43% (in comparison to 23% during the previous quarter).

Members were pleased to note that weekly visits were being maintained and it was reported that all queries were dealt with quickly. It was noted that a visit had taken place to Dereham Custody Suite to ensure that the facility was of the required standard, albeit the facility was 'moth balled'.

c) Eastern (1)

The report of the Eastern (1) Panel was received, and Members were pleased to note that the percentage of detained persons visited was 46% (in comparison to 51% during the last quarter).

The Scheme Administrator informed Members that one officer had been singled out by several detainees as being particularly helpful and this information had been passed on the Ch/Inspector Wiltshire.

Although not part of the remit of the ICVs, they had noted that on one visit, the staff rest room had been full of chairs which had left no space to allow staff to take a break. Following an investigation into the matter, it was noted that the chairs had been stored there on a temporary basis and were removed later on the same day.

(iv) Eastern (2)

The report of the Eastern (2) Panel was received, and Members noted that the percentage of detained persons visited during the period was 58% (in comparison to 63% during the previous quarter).

It was reported that the Panel was working well as a team and any issues which had been highlighted were dealt with expeditiously by Custody Staff at the time of the visit. It was noted that a new ICV had joined the Panel as of 1 April 2010 and they had been welcomed into the team.

(v) Central

The report of the Central Panel was received, and it was noted that the percentage of detained persons visited during the period was 49% (compared to 34% during the previous quarter).

It was reported that the Flash Cards had been used again during the quarter and had been positively received. Members were apprised that 2 visits had been missed, despite having a full quota of ICVs.

Members were updated that the Central Panel would be losing 2 visitors during the next quarter as they were leaving university and moving onto pastures new and Members wished them well for the future.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

10. Custody Update

Chief Inspector Wiltshire updated Members on the latest developments regarding the Police Investigation Centres. Members noted the completion dates for the PICs and were pleased that the building contractors were making good progress.

The Committee noted the ongoing negotiations regarding shift patterns and workplace preferences and it was reported that the joint Chief Officers Group would be meeting on the 8th June 2010 to make final recommendations in this respect.

Members were informed that selected staff within each of the current custody suites would be a 'PIC Champion' and would be used to evaluate equipment and act as an information conduit, to ensure that any concerns colleagues may have are

addressed. It was reported that a mock up of the custody suite had been developed in order that colleagues could see how the new facilities would operate in the future. Members were updated that the custody staff at Bethel Street were undertaking a pilot scheme, to look into new ways of working in a larger and busier environment and the findings would be reported in due course. In response to a query from a Member, it was noted that Members would be invited to have a tour of the new Wymondham PIC later in the year.

The Committee was reminded that Dereham Custody Suite was not in regular use but was retained in readiness for any detainees that were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. It was reported that the legislation surrounding such cases differed to that for other detainees and over the last few months the Constabulary had increased the number of Custody Officers trained to deal with detainees arrested under this Act. Members were apprised that one of the cells at Dereham had been fitted for the use of a forensic 'pod', which would allow the suspect to be searched in a sterile environment, however the fittings were such that the cell could be used normally when the pod was not erected and the facilities were available for non-terrorism detainees, where a forensic search was desirable.

Members were apprised that the Constabulary had been working in partnership with local businesses to promote the use of intruder spray as a crime prevention measure. It was reported that all custody suites had recently had their ultraviolet lamps upgraded and all detainees were subject to an ultraviolet scan as part of the standard searching process.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the contents of the report;
- ii) That Members would receive a tour of the Wymondham PIC later in the year.

11. **Any other Items of Business**

There were none.

12. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

RESOLVED:

That, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

13. **Exempt items for Decision**

There were none.

14. **Notes of the Custody Visitors Co-ordinators meeting held on 28 April 2010**

In receiving the notes from the Custody Visitors Co-ordinators' meeting held on 28 April 2010, the Committee was informed that the issues raised/highlighted for action had subsequently been resolved or were being progressed accordingly.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

15. **Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on **Wednesday 14 July 2010 at 2.00 p.m.**

(The meeting closed at 11.10 a.m.)

CHAIRMAN