

To: Cambridgeshire Police Authority
From: Chief Constable
Date: 21st December 2009

CUSTODY PROVISION AND OPERATIONS

1. Purpose

- 1.1 That the Authority are provided with an update in relation to the provision of custody facilities across the force area.
- 1.2 That Members are able to scrutinize the progress and actions plans for the improvement of custody operations both in respect of the August 2009 inspectorate report and compliance with the National Detention Standards.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 makes provision for “designating” police custody suites. A designated suite has greater facilities and can be used for the detention of prisoners in excess of six hours. Non designated police stations can be used for detention up to six hours only. A variation in facilities can be differences in accommodation, staffing, or a combination of both.
- 2.2 A review in 2001 identified the requirement for custody facilities to be prioritised in four areas of the Force area, namely Peterborough, Huntingdon, Wisbech and Cambridge. This framework is essentially still valid although a combination of planning issues and operational requirements has made the situation more complicated. The Constabulary has clear plans for its requirements including the need for flexibility, although the current financial climate will impact on potential solutions.
- 2.3 The operation of custody suites is governed by both the PACE Act as regards to criminal justice rights of detainees and the Safer Detention and Handling of Persons in Police custody (SDHP) national guidance. Forces should be compliant with SDHP by April 2010.
- 2.4 Nationally the joint inspectorates of Constabulary and Prisons (HMIC/P) are embarked on an inspection programme of all custody suites in the country. The HMIC/P inspection of Cambridgeshire custody facilities took place in November 2008 with a report published in August 2009. A previous report to the Authority on 30th September 2009 provides important further background to the SDHP and HMIC/P response.

3. Custody Facilities

3.1 Cambridgeshire Constabulary has seven designated Custody Facilities, four primary sites at March (11 cells), Thorpe Wood (29 cells), Huntingdon (10 cells) and Parkside (15 cells). These are staffed 24/7. The remaining three facilities at Bridge Street (10 cells), St Neot's (5 cells) and Ely (4 cells) provide operational resilience and are opened as required.

3.2 The four primary sites effectively provide capacity consistent with the four areas of the Force needing full time provision. During 2008/09 the custody estate was upgraded to allow continued use of the facilities for a further five years. The works were focussed on safer detention and particularly any ligature points. Wisbech cells were not able to be upgraded and further custody accommodation is planned for joint use with Norfolk at King's Lynn as well as additional capacity having been implemented at March.

3.3 Notwithstanding that the current estate is adequate, further developments must be considered these are best described on a division by division basis.

3.3.1 Northern

- Thorpe Wood has the minimum number of cells to meet demand; ideally they should be increased from 29 to 40. The current configuration was arrived at by augmenting the original cell block at Thorpe Wood with some additional modular cells to meet urgent operational requirements. The number of cells is therefore sufficient to meet most operational demand, although the arrangement of the prisoner processing area interview rooms and other facilities is poor as a consequence of the incremental build. The Constabulary is keen to increase the capacity and improve the work flow at Thorpe Wood, although initial plans to achieve an ideal solution have been costed in the region of £6m, if implemented. Further outline alternative options are now being developed and will be presented to the Finance & Resources Committee in due course.
- Bridge Street provides an ideal contingency for Peterborough City Centre. It is not intended to do other than the minimum necessary maintenance to keep this facility operational.

3.3.2 Central

- The facilities at Huntingdon have recently been refurbished and provide good custody accommodation. Feasibility studies have been completed in relation to extending the custody capacity at Huntingdon and St. Neots. While this will be useful both schemes are determined to be aspirational rather than necessary in the current financial climate and are not being further pursued.

- During the last five years considerable partnership work with Norfolk and Suffolk was entertained with a view to a joint custody provision across all three counties. In the event Cambridgeshire stepped back from this project for a range of issues including those related to planning and potential finance. But the principle of providing a joint solution for the communities of Wisbech and King's Lynn has nevertheless been pursued. Norfolk and Suffolk continue in their joint project to build a custody suite at King's Lynn and provision has been made for one third of the capacity of the King's Lynn custody suite to be available for Cambridgeshire. Cambridgeshire Constabulary will thereafter be responsible for one third of the running costs of that facility. Notwithstanding the above plans the state of Wisbech custody was felt to be inadequate and has now been closed from a Police perspective, and full rights transferred to the local magistrates who are refurbishing the cells for their own use. This presented an operational requirement for further capacity in the East of the County as a result of which additional modular cells have been incorporated into March police station. This modular capacity has a minimum life expectancy of 25 years, and it is now the intention of the Constabulary to maintain both the March and King's Lynn facilities when the latter comes on line in 2011, and to monitor their use against required demand on an ongoing basis.

3.3.3 Southern

- The cells at Parkside Police Station in Cambridge are the poorest cells still in use within the County. Their use is operationally prioritised and the poorest cells used for detainees who are likely to be in custody for the least amount of time, e.g. some cells at Parkside have no natural light and their use is avoided if at all possible for other than the shortest periods of detention.
- Consideration of building a bespoke custody facility for Cambridge City was included in the joint work in Norfolk and Suffolk. However, after the unsuccessful attempt and the consideration of twenty six different sites, the conclusion of the Constabulary was that the only practicable solution for revised custody in Cambridgeshire was to incorporate a custody suite within a new divisional headquarters – the Parkside building is in need of substantial refurbishment or replacement, which is being considered elsewhere by the Police Authority.
- The Constabulary is very clear that it requires a substantial custody facility in Cambridge City and plans for a new divisional headquarters with custody capacity are in train.
- The cells at Ely will be maintained without substantial further development as an operational contingency.

3.4 Members will wish to note therefore that the Constabulary has an adequate custody estate provision at this time overall, but that there are a number of separate pressures currently bearing on the different sites in the force area. Proposals for the development of these sites are incorporated in the current planning to be brought forward to Finance and Resources Committee in due course.

4. Custody Operations

4.1 Following the inspection report from HMIC/P and a subsequent report from the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) in relation to progress towards compliance with SDHP, the Constabulary set up two comprehensive action plans to ensure appropriate progress. A total of 96 and 82 tasks were identified in relation to these linked but separate action plans. The task completion rate is in total now approaching 80%, and the new Force Custody Manager, Chief Inspector Gary Martin is currently rationalising any overlap between the two actions plans which will be closed at the end of 2009, and a refreshed action plan brought forward for the consideration of the Custody Strategic Group under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Constable John Feavvour, to review progress in the new year.

4.2 Several key themes were identified in the NPIA SDHP review which needed further work. These underscored similar things within the HMIC/P report. The first relates to a more comprehensive programme of training for all members of staff working in custody and this is now included in the learning and development training schedule going forward.

Work continues with Addenbrookes Hospital with a view to endorsement of protocols in relation to the treatment of drunk and incapable detainees, persons believed to have swallowed packages, violent detainees and security of OSDs requiring hospital treatment. Beyond this the overall staffing model currently applied to Custody is also being reviewed with a clear steer from the Deputy Chief Constable that corporate standards and processes will apply in all custody suites around the county.

4.3 A custody conference was held in December 2009, with attendance by custody managers, custody officers and detention officers. The theme of the conference was dealing with vulnerable detainees, with presentations from a range of mental health and other professionals to provide guidance for proper welfare support of people whilst in custody. The Deputy Chief Constable also presented personally at the conference emphasising the need to treat everybody in custody with sensitivity, integrity and respect at all times. In doing so he recognised how difficult it can be for colleagues working in that environment dealing with detainees with varying demeanours, mental health and substance abuse problems and others who are violent towards the police. He reinforced the necessity for professionalism at all times and pointed to the fact that the vast majority of the custody estate is covered by CCTV, thereby affording the best protection to prisoners and staff in relation to all events happening in custody.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Two main themes have been covered in this paper. The current custody suite provision within the Force area has been set out and ongoing issues identified in terms of pressures on the estate. Custody operations have been described insofar as the robust response into recent inspection reports and the ongoing high profile review of the constabulary to those reports. Notwithstanding the progress made thus far it is suggested that with the importance of those action plans the Police Authority would wish to continue to monitor progress and that a report will be presented at the next meeting which will identify in more detail each line of the outstanding elements on the action plans concerned.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Authority are invited to note the update and future pressures in relation to custody provision.
- 6.2 The Authority are invited to note the progress against the action plan.
- 6.3 The Authority are invited to request a detailed report on the action plan for consideration by the Custody Visitors' Panel meeting in March, and an overview report by the full Authority at its April meeting.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Document (s)	Contact Officer	Location
Safer detention and handling of persons in police custody (SDHP) (Item 6), Police Authority, 30 th September 2009	John Feavour Deputy Chief Constable (01480) 422532	Cambridgeshire Constabulary Hinchingsbrooke Park, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 6NP.
<p>Originating OfficerDCC Feavour</p> <p>Is it considered that this report contains 'exempt information' and should be considered in private? No</p> <p>If the answer is "YES", please state the nature of the exempt information and the relevant clause(s) in Part 1 of revised Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>The attached report has been cleared with the undermentioned Officers: (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>Chief Constable and Chief Executive</p> <p>Others</p> <p>Submitted on9th December 2009.....</p> <p>A report will not be sent to the Authority unless this box has been satisfactorily completed and all necessary consultation carried out - the responsibility for which rests with the originator (except for consultation with the Chairman and this will be undertaken by the Chief Executive).</p>		