

Extract from minutes of -

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19th FEBRUARY, 2010

“Human Resources

Security Unit Update

(Mr. G. Wright, Head of Facilities Management, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Committee may recall that, during its meeting of October 2009, a number of questions were raised by individual members in respect of matters concerning the security unit. These questions related to the provision of CCTV in the City Hall, working conditions in the Control Room and more general issues surrounding the unit's operations. As a consequence, the Head of Facilities Management agreed to bring a report in early 2010 updating the Committee on all relevant issues and the relevant details are set out below.

Industrial Relations

Members will recall that a package of changes to numbers, working hours, duties, locations, pool cover, pay & grading and contractual overtime arrangements etc. was developed and put to staff by way of ballot in late 2009. The Security Officer grade (30 staff) voted overwhelmingly to accept the proposal and it was duly implemented. The Control Room grade (8 staff) initially rejected the proposal - largely due to issues around the requirement for some modest lone-working in the new shift structures - but in a subsequent ballot have recently also voted to accept the package, which has now been implemented. These changes will not only result in enhanced efficiency and flexibility but will also reduce overall overtime expenditure by approx. £75,000 per annum.

CCTV infrastructure

Most of the CCTV cameras in place inside the City Hall until 2007 were removed during the recent refurbishment. The opportunity was also taken at that time to enhance cabling in order to permit the use of IP-based CCTV cameras (meaning that the images could be viewed using standard internet protocols from anywhere with a broadband connection) and a provision of £225,000 was made in the capital programme to purchase replacement cameras and associated infrastructure and hardware.

However, in the light of emerging financial constraints and the consequent need to re-prioritise the projects within the capital programme, the CCTV item was removed following discussions with the then Director of Corporate Services.

This in turn meant that, for a relatively brief period of time, the building has had to operate with a 'skeleton' CCTV system which is limited in coverage and is clearly not ideal. However once this situation arose it became necessary to consider possible alternatives, and it has been identified that the BCC Waste Transfer Depot at Duncrue has a modern, relatively new and fully functional CCTV control matrix and associated equipment which has recently been decommissioned, as this property has now transferred to the corporate land-bank.

We have sought and obtained permission to transfer this CCTV equipment to the City Hall, and this will allow us to provide CCTV coverage both inside and outside the building, providing coverage almost as comprehensive as before, and for a revenue cost of just £18,000 (including the purchase of some new high-resolution monitors etc). This equipment is IP-compatible and will therefore allow us to improve the system over time by means of relatively modest additional revenue expenditure without the need for a large capital financing requirement, and this is obviously a highly desirable outcome as it has resulted in a saving to the council of nearly £1¼m.

Control Room

It is also our intention to proceed with a fairly significant refurbishment of the Control Room area, in order to render it more useable for staff. This will involve increasing the size of the area by opening up the adjacent room (formerly the emergency management room) and re-designing the area to re-position and improve kitchen and other facilities.

It is recognized that the Control Room is not an ideal location for staff as it is located in the basement, has no natural light and can be quite restrictive in terms of its size and layout. This project will make significant improvements in terms of increased size, enhanced kitchen and washroom facilities, better lighting and air-conditioning, rationalized layout and the removal of old cabling and infrastructure etc, but it must be emphasized that it is not a complete refurbishment as it is constrained by the available revenue funding of approx. £80,000. Control Room staff will be consulted about design and layout issues before the plans are signed off and work commences, which we anticipate will be mid-April 2010.

New Security Manager

Members will be aware that we have had no Security Manager in post for quite some time, and that this role has been covered by temporary arrangements of various types, with varying degrees of success. We are therefore very pleased to confirm the appointment of Mr Maurice Baillie, formerly Security Manager at Queens University, to the post. Mr Baillie commenced employment on 8th February 2010.

Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note and endorse the actions, planned improvements and associated expenditure as set out above.

Resource Implications

The costs associated with the installation of the transferred CCTV equipment and some additional procurement of monitors and cameras will be approx. £18,000. The building and associated work necessary on foot of the refurbishment of the Control Room will be in the order of £80,000.

Both sums are provided for in the relevant revenue budgets of the Section, and it will not now be necessary to seek capital funding for the replacement of the CCTV back-office infrastructure.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:-

- (a) the Committee notes and endorses the transfer of existing CCTV equipment to the City Hall together with the associated expenditure; and
- (b) the Committee approves the carrying out of a substantial refurbishment programme in the Control Room area, together with the associated expenditure.

Decision Tracking

If approved the new CCTV system should be fully operational by 31st March 2010, and the refurbishment of the Control Room should commence in April and be complete by June 2010."

Several Members expressed concern that the installation of the closed circuit television equipment had not been included within the contract for the refurbishment of the City Hall and sought clarification in this regard.

In response, the Head of Facilities Management pointed out that while, the procurement of monitors, cameras and other equipment had not been included in the contract, the rewiring associated with the installation of the equipment had. He explained that the Waste Transfer Depot at Duncrue had been declared surplus to requirements and therefore the equipment at that property was no longer required. The closed circuit television equipment which was being relocated to the City Hall was approximately two and half years old but contained all the features which were necessary in order to offer adequate protection to the City Hall.

With regard to a number of questions in relation to the re-staffing of the Security Unit, he indicated that the operational changes and associated financial settlement had resulted in a one-off buy-out cost of approximately £250,000. However, this would effect savings of approximately £100,000 in the first year, with savings of £75,000 to £80,000 per annum thereafter. He explained that the new structure provided sufficient cover for a standard working week but that overtime payments would be required to be paid depending on the types of events and functions which were being held in the City Hall.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.