

Cheshire West & Chester Council
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Body Cameras Consultation Report

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Cheshire West and Chester Joint Strategic Needs Assessment



 Cheshire West
and Chester

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1: Introduction

Cheshire West and Chester Council is preparing to launch Body Worn Video Cameras (BWVCs) for use by its civil enforcement officers (CEOs) across the Borough from summer 2016. The Council's CEOs mainly enforce parking restrictions, although they are also sometimes involved in other enforcement work, including Blue Badge fraud. In April and June 2016, focus groups were held with local residents and CEOs to gather their views about the introduction of the cameras. The discussions with residents were held with members of the council's View West citizens panel at four different locations across the Borough - Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Frodsham. Two focus groups were held in Chester to obtain the views of the officers. Alongside these discussions, an online survey was made available from Friday 29th April for eight weeks for local residents to convey their views.

2: Summary and Key Messages

Overall, both residents and officers were in favour of the use of the body cameras. There was also much agreement over a number of issues discussed with both groups, with officers and residents identifying the need for guidelines stipulating when the cameras should be turned on and off. Both groups also recognised the importance of staff training.

2.1: Residents discussion groups

- Many residents were in favour of the body cameras and had empathy for the officers, recognising that they can be subjected to abuse and aggressive behaviour from members of the public – making them quite vulnerable in their role.
- There were mixed views about the effect of the camera on people's behaviour, with some participants feeling that it will have a positive impact on people's actions, whereas others felt it would inflame the situation.
- The wording used, and sensitivity of the officer, in informing people they are switching the camera on was seen as important as this might diffuse or inflame a situation.
- A lot of participants felt the cameras would be good for evidential purposes as they offer protection to both a member of the public and the officer involved, thus preventing misrepresentation of either party.
- Some people had concerns, however, that the camera will not show what the officer is doing, only the public.
- There were not many concerns expressed about privacy issues as most people felt there is already a lot of filming going on with CCTV.
- Some people felt that keeping the footage for 31 days is not long enough in some cases.
- There was a lot of discussion about when officers should switch the camera on and off. For example, whether officers should keep the cameras on throughout the whole of their shift,



turn them on whilst writing a ticket, or when approached by a member of the public. It was agreed that clear guidelines are needed.

- There were mixed views over whether there should be any flexibility for officers when deciding to put the camera on. Some people felt that the decision should be dependent on officer discretion and common sense, whereas others thought that clear guidelines should be strictly followed at all times to ensure consistency.
- Some also felt that officers may forget to turn the camera on in certain situations. There was also concern that officers may 'pick and choose' when to turn the camera on, which could misrepresent situations to their benefit.
- The job role of the officers was discussed, with people either commenting that the officers could use the cameras to film other incidents whilst walking around, or expressing the opposite viewpoint that operating the cameras in difficult situations is beyond the remit of their role.
- Raising awareness of the cameras was seen as important by residents, with lots of suggestions for how to publicise the cameras including officers distributing information postcards.
- Various training aspects were seen as very important by lots of participants, for example, conflict resolution and how to operate the cameras in general.

2.2: Staff discussion groups

- Officers were in favour of wearing the body cameras, and some felt they would act as a deterrent against potential aggressive behaviour.
- Staff felt the cameras would be good for evidential purposes.
- There were concerns, however, relating to someone's reaction to being filmed, when to switch them on/off and the viewing of footage.
- The subject of when the camera is to be switched on and off was seen as a key consideration. Most officers were in favour of having a set of guidelines for use, as long as there is still a degree of flexibility for them to be able to decide themselves, using their own professional judgement, whether or not to turn it on.
- There was a lot of debate around the issue of at what point to turn the camera on – whilst observing a vehicle about to be issued a ticket, or when approached by a member of the public. More support was expressed for the first option.
- It was debated whether or not it is necessary to inform a person they are being filmed, if they are already being nice and polite to the officer – the potential of upsetting the individual and needlessly aggravating the situation was seen by some as inappropriate.
- It was discussed whether or not officers would turn the cameras on at all in some situations (these discussions were based around example case studies of different scenarios - more details of these can be found in the Appendix).



- Using the same scenarios, the groups came up with key phrases they could use to inform members of the public that they are, or are about to be filmed. It was agreed by all that phrases should be short, simple and to the point.
- There was a great deal of concern about who will be able to view the footage and for what purpose. Some officers felt there should be a stipulation in the guidelines that footage should be viewed on an incident only basis, and for no other reason.
- There was some agreement, although not by all, that 31 days is not long enough to keep the footage – a period of 60 days was suggested instead.
- Training requirements were discussed, with officers feeling that they need more conflict management and self-defence training, along with specific information about how to respond to questions about the cameras from the public. Some felt that having this information on a small card they can carry around would be useful.
- Publicity and ways to raise awareness was discussed in depth – officers felt that people don't always read or understand signs, and local press statements should be issued along with the use of social media.
- Some officers were in favour of including a courtesy card with an issued Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), which could contain information about officers wearing cameras, and contact details for further information.

2.3: Online survey results

In total, 25 people completed an online survey to give their views about the body cameras. Respondents were generally in favour of the cameras, with some people feeling that they would help to protect officers' safety, as well as provide evidence of incidents.

3: Background

Body Worn Video Cameras (BWVCs) have been in use in the UK since 2005, with Devon and Cornwall Police being the first force to use the technology. Five years later, the vast majority of police forces were using the cameras to varying degrees. BWVCs are also in use by councils, primarily for civil enforcement officers, and by the ambulance services' Hazardous Area Response Teams. The Council's CEOs mainly enforce parking restrictions, although they are also sometimes involved in other enforcement work, including Blue Badge fraud.

The cameras will be worn by the CEOs as part of their uniform and can be activated by CEOs as appropriate. It is thought that full training in the use of the cameras will be provided. The reasons for the introduction of the cameras are as follows:

- The prevention and detection of crime in relation to a CEO's health and safety. CEOs are particularly at risk of verbal abuse and occasionally even physical assault because of the nature of the work they do and the fact that they often work alone.



- Investigating complaints made by members of the public. The cameras will improve transparency and accountability in the event of complaints (for example, about officer conduct) by providing a record of the interaction in question between the CEO and the complainant. Currently, when a complaint is received, it is often very difficult to establish the facts because it is one person's word against the other person's. If an immediate and exact record of the interaction is available, the Council will be able to investigate complaints much more quickly and effectively and improve the response to the public.
- Protecting public safety by recording other situations as they arise. Officers are also approached by members of the public requesting assistance (for example, after they have been the subject of an assault) or they witness incidents involving third parties.

It is believed that BWVCs have the potential to significantly improve the safety of officers and the public by encouraging people to moderate their behaviour and by deterring abuse and aggression or, if necessary, by providing evidence of any abuse or aggression that has taken place.

4: Focus group participants

4.1: Discussions with residents

Towards the end of April 2016, focus groups were held with local residents in four different locations around Cheshire West and Chester, to obtain views about the introduction and use of the BWVCs. Due to the level of interest expressed by the citizens panel, there were two focus groups held on the same evening at two of the locations - Chester and Ellesmere Port. Each focus group was facilitated by one officer, with some discussions recorded using the Research Team's in-house audio recording equipment, whilst others had an officer taking notes. The table below shows attendance information for each location:

Table 4.1: Details of focus groups with residents

Date	Location	Number of attendees
Tuesday 19 th April	Northwich Memorial Court	12
Wednesday 20 th April	Chester HQ Building	20
Monday 25 th April	Ellesmere Port Civic Hall	18
Wednesday 27 th April	Frodsham Community Centre	11

4.2: Discussions with officers

During mid-June 2016, focus groups were held with the Civil Enforcement Officers who are going to be wearing the cameras. Both focus groups were held in Chester, this being the most convenient location for officers as their base is in Chester. Views about the introduction and use of the BWVCs were obtained from officers, including specifics about operating the cameras, ways to publicise them and training requirements. The table below shows attendance information for the two groups:

Table 4.2: Details of focus groups with officers

Date	Location	Number of attendees
Wednesday 15 th June	Riverside Innovation Centre, Chester	10
Friday 17 th June	Quaker Meeting House, Chester	6

5: Findings from residents' focus groups

5.1: Initial thoughts about the use of body cameras

Participants were asked what their initial thoughts were when thinking about council staff using body cameras.

5.1.1: Safety and protection of the officer

The initial feeling from residents in general was positive, with many in favour of the implementation of the cameras. Participants expressed quite a lot of empathy for the officers, understanding that they are subjected to abuse and aggressive behaviour every day in their role. In light of this, they felt that if the cameras help to protect officers' safety by acting as a deterrent for bad behaviour, this can only be a good thing.

5.1.2: Provision of evidence

Some residents said that the cameras would be very useful for evidential purposes by providing an accurate account of the behaviour of both parties involved in an incident. Many residents also expressed that there are already a lot of cameras around, so the public is being filmed all of the time anyway. They felt that this should not be a problem for any reasonable person, and CCTV can sometimes even make you feel safer.

'I think the more cameras we have, the safer we're all going to be in the long run'. – Male participant from Ellesmere Port.

5.1.3: Training and guidelines

Some residents talked about training needs at this point, in relation to when to use the cameras. Some participants expressed strong opinions that strict guidelines need to be followed for consistency, whereas there was some strong feeling that a 'common sense' approach needs to be adopted by the officer when deciding whether or not to turn the camera on.

5.1.4: Areas of concern

There were also some concerns expressed about the cameras. A few residents felt that the use of the cameras will be an invasion of people's privacy, and may feel a bit like 'Big Brother'. Some people raised the issue that some members of the public already have a negative opinion

of parking officers, so this may aggravate people even more (especially those who have received a parking ticket), possibly to the point of violence so will endanger the officer even more.

The cost of the cameras was discussed as well, with some questioning over whether the benefit of having the cameras is worth the cost – the majority of people felt it was.

5.2: Reasoning behind the use of body cameras

In advance of the discussions, participants had received information about the reasoning behind the introduction of the cameras so that they had time to read it. This was then reiterated at the focus groups and various aspects discussed.

5.2.1: Safety and protection of the officer

Participants generally felt that staff safety is important, and officers are often vulnerable to verbal and/or physical abuse in their job, having to deal with members of the public face-to-face on a daily basis when assigning parking tickets. People agreed that some of these members of the public can be particularly aggressive or abusive towards officers, with some participants agreeing that the presence of a camera may help in protecting the officer from these types of incidents, so were therefore in favour of them.

5.2.2: Public reaction to the camera in terms of officer safety

There were some mixed views with regards to the effect the cameras would have on officer safety. It was felt by some residents that upon receiving a parking ticket, if the recipient becomes angry and abusive towards the officer, being told that they are being recorded by the body camera will have a calming effect and induce better behaviour from the individual.

Some participants however, had an opposing view, and felt that being informed that they are being recorded will have the opposite effect and will only inflame the situation further.

‘The fact that he had a camera and had a video of what had taken place, could actually put him in more danger.’ – Male participant from Northwich.

‘I honestly believe that the Enforcement Officer making the comment that, ‘I’m turning the camera on,’ is going to be a major wind-up, to be honest.’ – Male participant from Northwich.

It was also mentioned that the presence of a body camera will have no impact whatsoever on the reaction of the person, as if they are already irate they will not be deterred from continuing to act this way.

Some people felt that a person’s reaction can be dependent on whether they are in the wrong or not.



It was agreed by some participants that the manner in which the officer communicates that they are about to switch their camera on will have an impact on the reaction of members of the public. Therefore, taking a polite and tactful approach is essential in these situations. It is also important to say a phrase that will not exacerbate or potentially cause an aggressive situation. This could be a phrase to indicate that recording is already in progress rather than insinuating that the officer feels the need to turn the camera on for that particular individual. For example:

‘I think the statement should be that he should already have turned it on and we should be informed. ‘The camera’s recording what’s taking place,’ not, ‘I’m going to turn it on.’ – Male participant from Northwich.

The question was raised by a few participants, as to whether or not the officer should have to verbally inform the person that they are recording, as even if the individual objects, the officer is not obligated to then turn it off.

5.2.3: Provision of evidence

There were some mixed views about whether or not the camera recordings would provide sufficient evidence following an incident. Some participants felt that the camera is a good way to obtain proof of exactly what has happened during an incident, instead of having to rely on one person’s word against another. It is protection for both sides, so shows the behaviour of the officer as well as the member of the public, this being a reason why residents were in favour of the cameras.

‘It only gives you more information rather than less, it takes it away from being one person’s word against another, to being something-, you’ve got something that people can see and judge for themselves, so I don’t actually see any downside to actually having that camera there’ – Male participant from Frodsham.

People also felt that the camera could provide evidence that the officer is in fact doing their job properly if a complaint about an individual is received:

‘...I think it would protect the employee though from allegations...I’m sure they’re not very popular people’ – Male participant from Chester.

There was however an opposing viewpoint, with some people feeling that the situation is not balanced as even though the officer is in possession of the camera, he/she is still in control of switching it on and off, therefore favouring the officer. It was suggested by some that a member of the public should be able to request that the officer turns the camera on.

It was also raised that even when the camera is on, there is no way of telling what the officer is doing behind the camera.

‘...they could be making funny gestures, couldn’t they, from behind the camera?’ - Female participant from Ellesmere Port.

It was suggested by some that a form of two-way recording should be allowed, i.e. a member of the public should be within their rights to record the situation themselves on their mobile phone.

5.3: When to turn the camera on and off

In the lead up to the discussions, participants had already received information about how the cameras are likely to be operated, including when they will be switched on (as soon as the officer is approached by a member of the public) and off. This was then reiterated by the facilitator. For each group there was a lot of discussion around this subject, with a mix of views with regards to when the cameras should be switched on. It was agreed by all that this is a vitally important aspect for consideration, and the crux of the body cameras' success.

5.3.1: Consistency – Clear guidelines versus discretion

There was strong agreement from all groups that clear set guidelines are needed to stipulate when the officer should turn the camera on. There was a great deal of discussion about whether turning the camera on should be wholly dependent on these strict guidelines, or whether the decision should ultimately be down to officer discretion. There were mixed views on the subject, with some participants feeling that guidelines must be adhered to, to ensure consistency so all members of the public are treated equally.

'...the camera needs to go on all the time, not just when he decides to put it on.' – Male participant from Ellesmere Port.

'There should be clear guidelines, it shouldn't be down to discretion because if they then have got a complaint against them they haven't recorded it.' – Female participant from Chester.

'...they'll turn it on for somebody and not for somebody else, that might be quite, um, upsetting for the general public, because they're not being all treated the same.' – Female participant from Northwich.

'It becomes discriminatory' - Male participant from Northwich.

Whilst talking about the need for consistency, it was brought up by participants that if the decision to turn on the camera was down to the discretion of the officer, their own personality may have a bearing on whether or not they turn the camera on. The officer's judgement also comes into play, as this may differ by officer as to whether they interpret a situation as being abusive/aggressive, therefore resulting in some circumstances being recorded and others not.

'How good are they at differentiating between an assault and huge horseplay between teenagers?' - Male participant from Northwich.

It was also highlighted that strict guidelines are needed, because officers may choose not to switch the camera on if they are in the wrong. This was discussed in relation to the second case

study which involved an officer being accused by a member of the public as being ‘arrogant, abrupt and unhelpful’, therefore indicating a need for a recording to evidence if this was in fact the case. Details of this and the other example scenarios can be found in the Appendix of this report. A number of participants felt that the officer would not switch the camera on in these circumstances, as they would not wish to be caught on camera behaving in such a way. These people felt that officers should be obligated to film all situations with no exceptions, and in accordance with strict set guidelines.

‘...the enforcement officer is not going to turn it on if he’s not behaving as he should do, is he?’ – Male participant from Northwich.

‘He won’t turn it on, will he, if he’s going to be arrogant?’ – Female participant from Chester.

It was also brought up by some participants that if the officer doesn’t switch the camera on, this may actually weaken their case as it could be brought into question why they didn’t switch it on in the first place. This would result in a situation of there being one word against another, exactly what the introduction of the cameras is trying to avoid.

However, some residents did believe that the officers will be keen to put the cameras on for their own protection, and they will understand that it is in their best interests to do so.

Whilst participants agreed that clear guidelines are required, a lot felt that a degree of common sense and judgement is also needed. For example, an older or vulnerable person may not necessarily pose as a threat to the officer’s safety, so essentially does not need to be filmed and it may even exacerbate the situation by distressing the person.

‘Parking attendant should have a bit of discretion’ – Female participant from Chester.

‘You have got clear cut guidelines of what to do but at the end of the day it’s down to your discretion.’ – Female participant from Chester.

People felt that the officers need to be fair in their approach, not just to filming, but in issuing parking tickets.

5.3.2: Keeping the camera on throughout the shift

At each of the focus groups, there was some strong agreement that the cameras should be turned on throughout the duration of the officers’ shifts. It was felt that by doing this it will remove any potential for bias in the footage recorded, as there was concern that the camera will only be switched on when the situation suits the officer. If the camera is left on all of the time, there is no chance of the officer being able to pick and choose what is captured on film.

‘He could wind the person up and then put his camera on, when he’s got him going’. – Male participant from Northwich.



‘The camera’s got to be recording all the time, hasn’t it, basically?’ – Male participant from Frodsham.

It was also felt that it would help the officer by making sure incidents that occur with no warning are not missed if a difficult situation suddenly arises. During discussions about a particular case study involving someone purposefully driving at an officer, it was highlighted by a number of people that sometimes the officer may not have time, or could forget to switch it on in a panic situation.

‘...the officer in charge will have to be very quick-witted to switch his camera on.’ – Female participant from Frodsham.

However, it was noted by participants that as incidents do not occur very often, this may result in a lot of recordings which will either never be used or have to be sifted through to find a particular incident. The question was also asked whether the camera battery life would last the length of an entire shift.

The issue of how the officers would feel about having the cameras on throughout their shift was also brought up. Participants generally thought that staff wearing the cameras would not like them to be on permanently, as it would be a record of when they are taking a break and everything they are doing in between. However, it was commented that if they are doing their job properly and have nothing to hide, this shouldn’t be a problem.

5.3.3: Turning the camera on when issuing a ticket

Following the discussions surrounding filming throughout the shift, alternative approaches were also deliberated. Participants who felt that it would be acceptable to not have the cameras permanently on, or if it turns out it isn’t possible to do this, indicated that the next best option would be to turn it on when the officer starts writing out the parking ticket, regardless of whether a member of the public is there or not.

‘...it should be recorded from the minute he starts to write the ticket’ – Female participant from Ellesmere Port.

‘Every time he books a car he should put the camera on’ – Male participant from Northwich.

5.3.4: Turning the camera on when approached by the public

It was felt by participants that if an officer waits until they are approached by someone, they may miss the initial interaction between themselves and the individual, especially if, for example, they are approached from behind and haven’t seen them coming. It was also discussed that if the officer has to verbally state that they are about to switch the camera on, this delay could result in missing a vital part of the incident on camera.

At each of the focus groups there were three example case studies discussed, which detailed situations where a recording from a body camera would have been useful to have. One of these case studies was about a member of the public purposefully driving their vehicle at the officer after receiving a parking ticket – this generated a lot of discussion at each of the groups, with participants feeling that in a situation such as this which escalated quite quickly, the officer may not have the time to switch on the camera, or he/she may even forget if in a panic.

‘...do we really think that this officer would have chance to turn his camera on? I doubt that very much, because he’d have been leaping out the way of the car. So, none of this would have gone on a camera’ – Male participant from Northwich.

5.3.5: Turning the camera off

The importance of when to switch the camera off was also recognised by some participants. Those who mentioned this felt that the officer needs to make sure it is safe to do so, and it is clear that the incident is over and will not erupt again. It was suggested that maybe some guidelines are required, for example, a stated timescale, or safe distance when the individual has driven or walked away, therefore signifying that the incident is over.

5.4: Privacy issues about the use of the cameras

Participants were asked if they had any issues with the privacy aspects of using the body cameras. There were some mixed views, with most people conveying they had minimal concerns about privacy.

5.4.1: Concerns about being recorded

In general, the majority of participants did not have any concerns about being recorded, as if someone has nothing to hide they should not have anything to worry about. But more so, some residents were even surprised that body cameras are not already in operation, given the amount of CCTV already in place, and it is almost expected now to be filmed at any given time and the public are used to this as a matter of course.

‘...I was very surprised they weren’t already using them.’ – Male participant from Chester.

‘We have CCTV cameras all over the place.’ - Female participant from Chester.

‘...you’re recorded wherever you go now.’ – Male participant from Ellesmere Port.

‘I think the cameras are a natural progression’ – Male participant from Northwich.

The question was raised as to whether body cameras are even needed as there is already CCTV capturing enough footage, however it was pointed out that in fact CCTV is not present everywhere and there are blind spots.



Following on from these discussions, a few residents felt that there is a feeling of ‘big brother’ around the introduction of the cameras in addition to so much existing CCTV, and is only a further invasion of residents’ privacy.

‘I just think it’s a further intrusion into our privacy as individuals’ – Female participant from Frodsham.

5.4.2: Storage and confidentiality of footage

During the discussions, participants received an explanation that any recorded footage will be downloaded to an encrypted computer and viewed only by particular members of council staff. There were not many concerns expressed about this process, however there were some discussions about the amount of television programmes and online videos available for public viewing which contain footage from body cameras. Following this, some concerns were expressed that people’s names and/or recordings from the officers’ cameras may be released, or even sold by the council, and therefore will be made publically available.

‘Somebody somewhere will leak information.’ – Male participant from Northwich.

5.5: Length of time to keep the footage

The pre-discussion information document sent out informed participants that unless required for any further follow up, footage downloaded onto the council system will be deleted after a period of 31 days. This was then discussed at the focus groups.

5.5.1: 31 days is adequate time

Some participants felt that 31 days is an adequate amount of time to keep footage, provided it is not needed as evidence if a case progresses to court and then it should be kept for longer. It was also mentioned that if 31 days is the legal requirement, there is not much that can be done to change this and if this is the recommended time period, then it should be enough.

5.5.2: Concerns that 31 days is not long enough

Concerns were raised by more people that 31 days is not long enough. Participants wanted to know if this time is in line with the time allowed to pay a parking fine, so consistency is needed for both processes together.

It was also highlighted that if there is an altercation between a member of the public and an officer, for various reasons, people may not necessarily complain straight away. If this happens, the footage may have been deleted before it is needed. In relation to this it was brought up that people sometimes go on long holidays, so the matter may go unresolved and the recording be deleted in this time. It was felt that a lot may need to happen in this time, and depending on the complaints and appeals processes, they could take longer than 31 days. In response to this, there was a general feeling amongst some participants that the data should be kept for longer than 31 days.

5.6: Effect on the officer and their job role

There were discussions about how the officers feel about using the cameras, along with if the introduction could have an impact on their job role, i.e. if a lot more could be asked of the officers as a result of having the cameras.

5.6.1: Officers' opinions about the cameras

There was some discussion between residents about how the officers feel about the cameras, and if they are keen to use them. Residents were told that focus groups with staff would be taking place to gain their views, which they were happy to hear.

As there was quite a lot of conversation about keeping the cameras on throughout the shift, the discussions moved on to how the officers would feel about this and that they would not like it as it would be a record of when they are taking breaks and everything they are doing in between. It was felt though that if the officer is doing their job properly, they shouldn't have anything to hide so it shouldn't be a problem to film continuously.

5.6.2: The role of the officer

Some residents were keen for the cameras to be put to more use than currently intended, for example, whilst walking around, officers could film perpetrators who leave dog foul or litter on the streets, or even incidents of anti-social behaviour.

'...do you think it would be sensible if they had powers to record suspicious incidents as well?' – Male participant from Frodsham.

Participants felt that this would be a good use of the cameras, and the officers should be granted extra responsibility. However, some expressed concern that these activities are beyond the remit of their role as civil enforcement officers, and may lead to them being placed in a vulnerable position.

This was discussed further in the groups in relation to the third case study, which was an incident involving a third party and had nothing to do with a parking offence. It was agreed by most that it was right for the officer to assist and record this situation. However, dealing with incidents like this may be asking a lot of the officer, and may not be included within their job description when they first started in the role.

'Is this within the civil enforcement officer's remit? What would you expect him to do in these circumstances?' – Male participant from Frodsham.

'(The officer's) going to start thinking I'm somebody who should be upholding the law whereas I'm here to actually enforce fixed notices.' – Male participant from Frodsham.



‘If you bring in the camera as well, that’s a different thing because it’s not just doing his job and it’s not just helping somebody. Other people are there to deal with the situation, aren’t they?’ – Female participant from Northwich.

5.7: Training

Throughout all of the discussions, there was strong agreement of the importance of training, and that there are a number of aspects that officers need to be trained on, not just how to operate the cameras.

‘Because it’s not just training for the cameras, it is a person’s skills, it is everything that goes with it’ – Female participant from Chester.

5.7.1 Dealing with members of the public in general

It was raised by some residents that officers need training in how to deal with the general public. There were several aspects to this, including:

- When giving out a ticket, how to communicate and present themselves.
- When saying they are about to switch the camera on, the manner in which they communicate this, and then dealing with the person’s reaction.
- Conflict management, how to deal with aggressive behaviour and how to diffuse difficult situations.
- Self-defence training due to their vulnerability in their job role.

5.7.2 Dealing with members of the public – different groups

Participants felt that it is important that officers are able to deal with different groups of people in relation to the use of the cameras. Examples included:

- People with mobility issues – if someone is a wheelchair user, ensuring that the camera angle is positioned correctly to capture their image.
- People with hearing difficulties – ensuring that the officers are able to communicate in another way, other than verbally, that they are switching the camera on.
- People who can’t speak English – making sure that they have a way of communicating to non-English speakers that they are being recorded.

5.7.3 Process of operating the cameras

It is important that officers are fully trained on how to use the cameras. Examples which were mentioned in the focus groups included:

- When exactly the officer is to turn the camera on and off (see section 5.3 for details)
- Position of the officer – where to stand so it is ensured that the person’s face is recorded. The question was asked if there is a standard distance the officer needs to be from the person being filmed.



- What happens at the end of the shift, i.e. downloading of the footage and who do they need to tell that something has happened and the video needs to be watched.

Following conversations about all sorts of different aspects of the cameras, many times the discussions came back to training requirements, making this a very important matter to residents.

‘It’s all coming back to in-depth training again...’ – Male participant from Northwich.

‘Full training will be very important.’ – Female participant from Northwich.

5.8: Publicity and raising awareness

In general, participants said it is important that the public fully understand why and how the cameras are being used. People need to understand the full process, especially those who have been recorded so they know exactly what is going to happen with the footage, i.e. being downloaded onto a secure system and deleted after 31 days. It was agreed that the council need to raise awareness of the cameras and make sure they are well publicised.

5.8.1: Local and social media channels

There were a number of suggestions for how the introduction of the cameras can be publicised, including:

- Local newspapers
- Talking Together magazine
- TV features
- Radio
- Parish Council meetings and publications
- Information in libraries
- Facebook
- Council website

5.8.2: Signs and notices

At each of the focus groups there were discussions about the provision of signage to inform people that filming may be taking place around that area. In general, participants thought this was a good idea, however at one group it was raised that there are already too many signs on display. It was suggested that signs could be displayed on existing street furniture, on ticket payment machines, along with the privacy notices displayed on the officer’s uniform.

5.8.3: Information from the officer

It was suggested by some participants that officers could help to inform people who they have given a ticket to and filmed by giving out information postcards or leaflets, about what happens

next. These postcards could contain details about where the footage is going to be stored, how long for and how to access it if they wish to.

6: Other comments and queries from residents

Throughout the discussions, there were other queries and comments raised by residents in relation to the use of the body cameras. These included:

- The cost of the cameras – residents wanted to know the cost of introducing the cameras and everything that comes with it. This information was obtained after the first focus group and communicated to residents at the Chester, Ellesmere Port and Frodsham groups. Most participants felt that a one-off payment of £18,500 for cameras that last for five years is a reasonable cost and is worth the benefits the cameras will bring.
- Residents wanted to know if the council had investigated the use of cameras at other local authorities, and if they had a proven track record of success.
- Some people said that it would be beneficial for other staff to use body cameras, such as Housing Officers.
- Some residents felt that the issue of illegal parking needs addressing more than the need for body cameras, and particular areas need to be dealt with. Areas of Ellesmere Port (Whitby Road outside the banks), Frodsham and Northwich were mentioned.
- Some residents felt that the officers need to be a bit fairer in some circumstances, for example, being fined £70 for parking slightly on a white line is deemed unreasonable by some members of the public and seen as 'nit-picking' by the officer.
- There is an issue of people parking in disabled bays illegally.
- There is an issue of people who are disabled parking in the disabled bays still receiving abuse if their disability is not obvious to begin with.
- There was an interest from participants as to whether the civil enforcement officers are employed by the council or a private company. Their preference was for the council to employ them.
- People felt that a total of twenty officers across the whole borough is not a lot.
- There was an interest as to whether the cameras are going to be shared by officers, and how many will be used at any one time.
- A question was asked about whether officers have targets for the number of tickets they issue, and when the cameras are introduced, targets for how many video clips they should record.
- It was felt by some that parking officers are rarely seen on the streets, so the likelihood of a confrontation occurring between an officer and the person receiving a ticket is remote. (Statistics for how many incidents of assault and abuse occurred during a 12 month period were read out to the Chester, Ellesmere Port and Frodsham focus groups - participants felt there were not very many).



- It was questioned whether the introduction of the cameras is for a trial period only, or is a pilot scheme.

7: Findings from staff focus groups

At the staff focus groups there was representation from the Council's Civil Enforcement Officers along with supervising officers. During the discussions, officers sometimes referred to their own personal experiences and stories to convey their feelings about a particular topic.

7.1: Initial thoughts about the use of body cameras

The officers were asked how they felt about wearing the cameras, and what their initial thoughts had been when they were first told they would be introduced. The general feeling from officers was positive, with them responding very favourably to wearing the cameras. However, there were various concerns expressed about their use, relating to different aspects including safety, when to switch them on/off and the viewing of footage.

7.1.1: Officers' Safety

Most officers felt that the cameras would help their safety by acting as a deterrent against abuse and anti-social behaviour, as people will not want to be filmed behaving this way.

'...it's a proper good deterrent...no one will go near. Because as long as they know they're being recorded.' – Male participant.

'It also reduces people's reactions...we've got a few aggressive areas, and I think it will also make the people think twice. 'Oh I'm being recorded.'" – Female participant.

There was also the feeling though, that they won't necessarily feel safer when they are wearing them, as officers receive negative treatment from the public anyway, especially from those who have received a parking ticket.

7.1.2: Evidence purposes

There was strong agreement amongst officers that the cameras would be very helpful in providing evidence of what has really happened in situations. The Council receives complaints and accusations from members of the public about officers, so video evidence may also help in making staff feel that they will be believed, an example given being accusations of racism by officers.

'I think it's a great thing for evidence...a lot of the time they get accused of saying things or their attitude, and sometimes, when people are upset or something, if somebody's not giving you the answer that you want, anything can seem rude or aggressive.' – Female participant.

'I think it can alleviate the feeling of being unbelieved...' – Male participant.



7.1.3: Public reaction

There were mixed views about how the officers perceive the public will react to the cameras. Some officers felt that the public will not mind the cameras and will get used to them, so eventually their presence just becomes the norm. It was felt by some that the only people who may object to the cameras will be those who have received a parking ticket and are then subsequently filmed if a confrontation ensues.

‘A lot of people wouldn’t worry...the only people it’s going to affect is someone who I’ve issued a ticket and that person has to come back...’ – Male participant.

Some officers felt that public reaction may differ by geographical location across the borough, with residents of some areas objecting to the cameras more than others. This could especially be the case in areas where officers see the same residents on their patrols, sometimes on a daily basis.

There was a discussion about the potential for violent reactions from the public to being filmed, including the possibility of aggressive individuals even ripping the camera off an officer’s uniform.

‘I can guarantee someone will try and rip it off us. I guarantee it.’ – Male participant.

It was also brought up that public opinion could be dependent on how the cameras are promoted, so this must be handled appropriately.

7.2: When to turn the camera on and off

During the discussions, officers received verbal and written information about the procedure to be followed for the use of the cameras. The subject of when the camera is to be switched on and off was discussed at length and identified as a key consideration for the officers.

7.2.1: Consistency - Officers’ judgement versus clear guidelines

In relation to switching the camera on, there was much discussion about whether or not the decision should be down to the professional judgement of the officer. There was a lot of support for written guidelines for the officers to follow, but at the same time, a strong need for flexibility within these guidelines and the ability for the officer to judge themselves if the situation needs to be recorded. There was strong agreement across both groups for this approach.

‘Well I just want to use it when I need to use it.’ – Male participant.

‘Some element of flexibility, down to the officer’s judgement. – Male participant.



It was also recognised by officers that if it is left up to their judgement, it is inevitable that one officer may interpret a situation as threatening and put their camera on, whereas a different officer may view the circumstances differently and not turn it on.

The idea of having guidelines for use was welcomed, on the basis that there is a reasonable degree of flexibility and they are not too strict or 'set in stone' as this can complicate the job.

'I think the consensus is basically guidance...Guidance that you've got this, they're the parameters, it doesn't matter what you do, it's your discretion, it's your choice you know.'
– Male participant.

However, it was expressed by a couple of officers that they would appreciate strict instructions, as they will then be clear on what they have to do and there is no risk of them doing the wrong thing and getting into trouble.

7.2.2: Turning the camera on when issuing a ticket

Following the discussions about officer judgement, there was a lot of debate between officers about when is the best time to turn their camera on. There was a lot of agreement that a good time to put the camera on would be when an officer is approaching a vehicle they are about to issue a ticket to. Officers usually have a five minute observation period from when they first spot the vehicle to issuing the ticket. Therefore, it was felt that if the camera is switched on at the start of this period, this minimises the risk of anything being missed which may be needed as evidence at a later date.

'Actually, I think every time you're going to book a car, put it on.' – Female participant.

'Put it this way, if I am allowed to use my judgement, I'd be switching it on every time I'm doing a PCN.' – Male participant.

'Yeah, in case you miss a little bit of kicking off'. – Male participant.

7.2.3: Turning the camera on when approached by the public

The option to wait until the officer is approached by a member of the public was also discussed, with a few officers saying this would be their preferred option.

'I would only use it in the case of I've got an aggressive driver.' – Male participant.

'I'd probably switch my camera on as well every time someone asked me a question about parking. If someone just goes to me, 'Where's Primark?' I wouldn't...' – Male participant.

However more officers pointed out that an individual may approach or shout at them from behind. In these cases, the officer will not have seen the person soon enough to have turned the camera on, meaning that the initial interaction would not have been caught on camera.

‘Because somebody could come behind you from anywhere and then say something and you’ve missed that first bit.’ – Female participant.

Officers said that in their experience, a person can change their behaviour very quickly, which could certainly be the case if they are suddenly made aware that they are being filmed. This change from being abusive to behaving pleasantly can therefore depict a false picture of events leading up to a possible altercation, which could be crucial to a future investigation.

On the flipside to this, it was also discussed at length as to whether it is appropriate to turn the camera on if a person is already behaving nicely to the officer. It was suggested that this may needlessly aggravate a situation, so some officers wanted clarification as to whether they have to put the camera on in these circumstances.

‘It’s going to change. They could be nice as pie to you and then as soon as you say that it’ll all kick off.’ – Male participant.

However with this in mind, some officers recounted experiences of when they have had pleasant encounters with members of the public who have been very nice to their face, but then put in a complaint about the officer the next day and made accusations. Therefore, if the camera has been left off in this situation, there would be no evidence to substantiate either party’s version of events, which would have been very useful.

During each of the staff focus groups, the same case study examples that were used with residents were used with the officers. Most notably, there was some debate about whether or not the officers would have put on the cameras for the second and third examples - these being a complaint about an officer and situations involving a third party. For the example of a situation involving a third party, officers felt that they would ask the lady in question if she would like the camera to be switched on, or they would only put it on when the person who attacked her child appears.

‘I wouldn’t actually switch it on until the ex-partner arrived, I think.’ – Male participant.

‘...you could ask her opinion. Say, ‘Would you like me to record-, put my camera on and record any evidence in case he comes back. It’s up to you.’ – Male participant.

It was also raised by officers that there is the potential for them to face many different situations on a daily basis. Some may be as simple as a member of the public asking for directions, for which officers said they probably wouldn’t turn the camera on.

7.2.4: Turning the camera on in different areas of enforcement

It was brought up by officers that their approach for when to turn the camera on would differ depending on where they are enforcing at the time. For example, an officer booking cars parked on double yellow lines on the street could turn the camera on when beginning their observation of that specific car. However, when patrolling a car park they feel they would need to undertake

a different approach, by either keeping it on the whole time they're in that car park in case someone approaches them, or possibly waiting until someone comes up to them and running the risk of missing the first line said from the recording.

'...it depends on where you're working doesn't it, because if you're actually working in a street, you see a guy coming up to it and start logging it, but if you're in a car park and you're going in between cars, it's going to be a while before you actually spot a car that needs an event (that needs dealing with).' – Male participant.

7.3: How to inform people they are being recorded

One of the topics discussed at the focus groups was the wording officers think would be appropriate to use when informing a member of the public that they are switching the camera on. This was discussed in relation to the three case study examples to help develop appropriate phrasing for different scenarios.

7.3.1: Short, simple and clear

There was strong agreement with all officers that the phrase used should be 'short and sweet' and easy to remember.

'A small, brief statement will stick in your mind better.' – Male participant.

'I just think we need to keep it short and simple really.' – Male participant.

It was also agreed that all officers should be saying the same thing, and it is important that it is clear to everyone what to say. Officers were keen not to over-complicate things by having to remember long speeches, and risk saying the wrong thing and getting into trouble. It was also noted that using phrases such as 'Council policy' may annoy some people, so should be avoided.

7.3.2: Example phrases

Officers discussed at length specific phrases they could possibly use. Examples included:

'I'm advising you this camera is now in operation'.

'I would just like to inform you that all sound and vision is currently recorded'.

It was agreed by officers that these phrases are short, clear and easy to remember, so should be used in the first instance. If following this the person they are dealing with questions why they are being recorded, officers can then go on to say something along the lines of 'the recording is for mine and your safety'. It was recognised that this additional wording may not always be needed.

7.3.3: Phrases for different scenarios

Whilst referring to each of the case studies, there was much discussion about whether wording should differ depending on the scenario. In the end, there was mostly agreement that the same phrase should be said every time (see examples above), regardless of whether the recording is for the purpose of protecting an officer's safety when issuing a parking ticket, evidence in relation to a complaint or a situation involving a third party. Some officers however did feel that the example involving the third party (a distressed lady with a baby) should be handled differently, by taking a softer approach as she is very upset, or even giving her the choice of whether or not she would like it to be switched on (see point 7.2.3 above).

It was mentioned by some officers that if turning on the camera is to be up to officer judgement, some may already have the camera on whilst carrying out their vehicle observation, whereas others will only turn it on when approached. Taking this into account, there should be a choice of two phrases to use - one stating that the camera is already on, and another informing the person that recording is about to commence.

7.3.4: Do officers always need to inform?

It was also discussed by officers whether it is always necessary to inform the person that they are being/about to be recorded. Some officers felt strongly that if a person is being perfectly nice to them, it was inappropriate to potentially aggravate the situation by telling them that they are being recorded.

'I'm judging it. They're nice as pie, why upset them?' – Male participant.

'Yeah, so 'professional judgement' tells me that if they're being nice to me, why say they're being filmed?' – Male participant.

The word 'impracticable' was debated by some officers in relation to the part of the procedure stating '...officers will, unless it is completely impracticable, tell those present when they are recording...'. Officers wanted clarity on what is counted as 'impracticable', for example, does this count if someone is already being pleasant to the officer?

'It's impractical to say it then because they're not kicking off on you, they're being nice as pie, so why tell them?' – Male participant.

It was also discussed at the same time as to whether they would turn the camera on at all, as if it is up to their professional judgement and they are not feeling threatened, it wouldn't be turned on anyway.

7.4: Access to the footage

During the discussions, officers were given information about what they are to do if they have recorded an incident, and the process of downloading the footage and who will be able to view it.



7.4.1: Who can view the recordings and reasons for watching the footage

There was a great deal of concern expressed by some officers regarding who will be able to access the footage once it has been downloaded, and why it will be watched. Officers were informed that only designated individual(s) would be granted permission to watch the recordings, and this should only be when the officer him/herself has informed that person that they need to watch an incident that has happened that day. Some officers were very concerned that staff may view the footage for reasons other than to watch an incident. There was a suggestion that it should be stipulated in a policy/guidelines document, that the viewing of footage should strictly be just for the purpose of viewing an incident, as indicated by the officer. Those who thought that this was important felt very strongly about this.

‘...the primary focus for this is for our safety and our protection to investigate complaints so I’m a firm believer, it should only be used for that, and there should be safeguards in place to stop it being used for anything else.’ – Male participant.

‘We don’t want our jobs to be judged on it, of what we do. We all do things different...’ – Male participant.

‘...I think everyone’s biggest fear is they’re judging us...’ – Male participant.

7.4.2: Officers viewing themselves

The question was asked by officers as to whether they will be allowed to watch the footage they have recorded themselves. In answer to this it was pointed out that this may not be necessary as given they were there themselves at the time, they know what happened. Some officers said it may help them to do their job better as they can potentially watch the situation back and learn by any mistakes they may have made.

7.5: Length of time to keep the footage

There was some discussion about the length of time the footage is to be kept for, i.e. 31 days. Overall, there were mixed views across the groups.

7.5.1: 31 days is adequate time

Some staff felt that 31 days is an adequate amount of time to keep recordings, as most complaints are received well within 31 days so this should allow plenty of time to refer to the footage and deal with it.

‘...your chances are, complaints come in way before that. For some reason they complain straight away.’ – Female participant.

7.5.2: Concerns 31 days is not long enough

Some officers felt that recordings should be kept for longer than 31 days, for similar reasons as expressed by residents, such as people may go on long holidays, not realise they have received a ticket or the process of appealing a charge may go on longer than usual. These officers felt that the period the footage is held for should be increased to 60 days.

‘...60 days is the standard. 60 days recording it and that, for parking, it gives them time. So, let’s say, your example there, Notice to Owner goes out after 28 days, they have 14 days to respond to the Notice to Owner...’ – Male participant.

7.6: Training

Following the focus groups with residents, it was identified that training is a big issue in relation to the use of the cameras, therefore this was included as a topic for discussion with officers. It was felt across both groups that more information and guidelines are needed generally so they are fully aware of everything before they start to use the cameras.

7.6.1: What to say to the public

Following the discussions about the wording to use when turning the camera on, officers were very keen for clarification on what to say to the public when questioned about the reasons why they are recording. Staff felt this was very important, and wish to have clear statements to reiterate to members of the public to answer their questions as best they can.

‘But these are the sort of things that should be thought out, and telling us, before we put these things on.’ – Male participant.

It was also suggested that these statements be printed on a small business card for officers to carry around with them so they have the correct information to hand. Officers felt that these cards would be useful to have to start with until they get used to saying the information and it becomes second nature.

7.6.2: Self-defence and conflict management

Training around self-defence and how to stop a physical attack was highlighted as areas where officers require more training. Some staff said they need some clarity as to what they are allowed to do if they are attacked by a member of the public. Some officers thought that they were supposed to move away from the situation, whereas others were under the impression that they are supposed to just take it. As a result, there was concern that if they do the wrong thing they will be subjected to disciplinary action.

When asked if they had received training in conflict management, there was a very mixed response. Some had attended a fairly recent refresher course, whereas others had not received training in this for years. As part of this discussion, a male participant made the following point:



‘The camera doesn’t pick up what’s going on in your head. You could be scared for your own life. The camera doesn’t know that.’ – Male participant.

7.6.3: Refresher training and feedback about the cameras

Officers were informed at the focus groups that training requirements for the camera will be reviewed on an annual basis to check that the policy and procedure aspects for use of the cameras are still relevant. There was widespread agreement across both groups that for the first 12 months of operation, this time period is too long, and a review of how well the cameras are working should be scheduled six months after implementation, at the earliest.

‘I think, initially, twelve months isn’t the best idea in the world. I think it should be-, personally, it should be reviewed a minimum of six months in the first year...’ – Male participant.

There was also agreement from officers that further training requirements may be identified once the cameras have been brought into use, so comments from officers can be fed back then.

Finally, it was seen as important that someone in the Council needs to keep up-to-date with current policies and legislation to ensure that officers are following the correct procedures, and the cameras are not being operated illegally.

7.7: Publicity and raising awareness

Officers were also asked about how they think the Council should publicise the use of the cameras. It was recognised during the discussions that it is important to raise awareness of the cameras being in use, especially the reasoning for their introduction. Publicity ideas mentioned by the officers were mostly the same as those brought up at the focus groups with residents.

7.7.1: Local and social media channels

There was agreement across the groups that press statements should be placed in local newspapers such as the Standard and the Chronicle, to raise awareness of the cameras.

‘I think the council should make a formal statement to the local press that ‘the officers are being issued with cameras’ because it’ll take a lot of the shock factor out.’ – Male participant.

Social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and the Visit Chester website were also mentioned, as well as radio features.

7.7.2: Signs and notices

It was agreed that signs can be a good way to publicise the use of the cameras, however it was felt by many of the officers that people either won’t read them or may misinterpret them.



‘If we’re wearing one, they’ll read it ‘cause it’s us. If it’s on a lamppost, they’re just gonna go, ‘Speed camera down there.’ – Male participant.

The possibility of using the Park and Ride buses to advertise was mentioned, by placing posters on the side of the vehicles.

7.7.3: Information on tickets or postcards

The idea of information postcards, which had been suggested by residents, was mentioned at both staff groups to determine if officers would be willing to give these out to the general public. There was a mixed response to this idea, with some officers not particularly favouring this option, but instead suggesting that maybe this information could be placed on the back of a parking ticket instead.

‘No, I think I carry enough rubbish around with me.’ – Male participant.

Some officers did support this idea, but in the form of a business card to include with an issued PCN. It was felt the card should include some standard phrasing such as ‘The officer who issued this PCN was wearing a body camera’, along with a list of reasons for the use of the cameras and website and telephone details for people to refer to for further information. It was felt by some that this will help to reduce the number of appeals the Council receives.

‘That’s a good idea putting a courtesy card in because he won’t bother appealing then, will he?’ – Male participant.

‘...it’d save us a lot of explaining, wouldn’t it?’ – Female participant.

Finally, it was suggested that Cheshire West and Chester look at other local authorities to see how they have publicised the use of their cameras.

8: Other comments and queries from staff

Throughout the discussions, there were other queries and comments raised by officers in relation to the use of the body cameras. These included:

- The clip holders that are to be used – some officers said they would like the camera holders to be removable ‘popper’ clips rather than clips that screw in. This will enable officers to easily remove the holder and position it onto different parts of their uniforms, for example, shirt, vest or jacket.
- Some officers wanted clarity as to whether they are to film other incidents that they come across on their patrols which are not parking related.



9: Online Survey findings

An online survey inviting comments about the introduction of the cameras ran from Friday 29th April until Sunday 26th June 2016. The survey received a total of 25 responses.

9.1: Profiles of respondents

Tables 9.1 to 9.3 show the results of questions asked about respondents' gender, age and whether or not they are a blue badge holder.

Table 9.1: Gender of respondents

Gender	Responses
Male	19
Female	5
Prefer not to say	1

Table 9.2: Age groups of respondents

Age group	Responses
Under 16	0
16 – 24	5
25 – 34	3
35 – 44	3
45 – 54	6
55 – 64	4
65 – 74	2
75 and over	1
Prefer not to say	1

Table 9.3: Blue badge holders

Response	Responses
Yes	0
No	25
Prefer not to say	0

The tables show that the majority of respondents were male, and cover a range of different age groups from 16 up to over 75 years old. None of the respondents were blue badge holders.

Participants were also asked to tell us their postcode. In general, more responses were received from the Chester area, however there were responses from a variety of areas across



the borough, including Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford, as well as more rural areas such as Neston and Malpas.

9.2: Findings from the survey

Overall, the majority of online respondents were in favour of the introduction of the cameras. Some respondents didn't elaborate on why they thought they are a good idea, whereas those who did expand their answer felt that the cameras would help improve officers' safety and prevent abusive behaviour towards them. Other respondents said that the cameras will be good for evidential purposes, and encourage transparency from the Council.

There were a few comments about potential guidelines/regulations associated with the use of the body cameras, either saying that they will be very important to have or that they won't be enough and won't work.

There were minimal comments objecting to the cameras – these respondents either felt they were an invasion of people's privacy/freedom, or they are unnecessary and a waste of money.

Looking at the responses in more detail, there was no obvious correlation between people's postcode, gender or age as to whether they were in favour or against the cameras.

10: Next steps

It is intended that the results from this consultation will be shared with senior managers and Councillors who will take this into consideration to develop the discussed proposals including staff training and guidelines. Results will be fed back to focus group participants, the public and civil enforcement officers.



Appendix

Case study 1 – Verbal and physical abuse towards Officers

Incident - An officer was issuing a parking ticket (Penalty Charge Notice) when a motorist approached the officer and said “Are you doing me?” The officer replied that he was intending to issue a ticket and the motorist replied that it was a disgrace. The motorist got into his vehicle and drove it at the officer while making an obscene gesture. The officer managed to step onto the pavement and the motorist sped away.

Purpose of the recording - A record of the interaction between the officer and the motorist and as a record/evidence of the incident, should the Council wish to prosecute the motorist for driving without due care and attention.

Case study 2 – Dealing with complaints from the public

Incident - Extract from complaint (from a nearby resident, not the motorist):

“The officer was arrogant, abrupt and unhelpful....I also witnessed an episode some months ago when a shopkeeper was forced to close for 20 minutes on a busy Saturday afternoon to move a van. In the latter case the officer (not the one involved in the episode yesterday) was particularly and gratuitously obnoxious”.

Purpose of the recording - A record of the interaction between the officer(s) and the resident (and between the officer and the shopkeeper in the earlier incident referred to). The complaint could have been more effectively investigated if a recording of the incident was available rather than having to make a judgment based on the officer’s account against the resident’s account.

Case study 3 – Other situations involving third parties

Incident - A woman approached a Civil Enforcement Officer clutching a baby. The woman was screaming and hysterical. She said that her ex-partner had hit her baby and that she had dropped the baby. The officer contacted CCTV and requested attendance by emergency services. The officer waited with the woman until the Police and paramedics arrived and the mother and baby were taken to hospital.

Purpose of the recording - A record or evidence of what the third party (the woman) said and to prevent an escalation of the incident, or to provide evidence of events should the woman’s ex-partner have arrived at the scene.



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