

2.6 COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON CCTV CONSULTATION

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- *Notes the report compiled by JWS Research that details the results of a Monash wide community engagement process to assess community views on the proposed installation and maintenance of CCTV cameras in the Oakleigh Activity Centre, including surveillance by Victoria Police.*
- *Accepts the State Government contribution of \$50,000 for the purchase and installation of CCTV cameras in the Oakleigh Activity Centre.*
- *Notes Council expenditure for ongoing maintenance of the cameras at approximately \$2,500-\$5,000 per year.*
- *Notes the use of CCTV for the real-time monitoring of people activity is inconsistent with Council's current use of CCTV cameras and that the policy for the use of CCTV cameras will undertake a review and amendment to ensure that all policies and procedures are compliant with current regulations in Victoria.*

INTRODUCTION

At the Council Meeting of 25 May 2021, Council considered a report regarding installation and maintenance of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in the Oakleigh Activity Centre. This followed a number of reported incidents in and around the Centre, including theft, increasing anti-social behaviour and the fatal stabbing of a young man. The State Member for Oakleigh, together with Victoria Police, requested that the installation of CCTV in the Oakleigh Activity Centre be considered, including live monitoring by Oakleigh Police. The State Government has offered \$50,000 for the purchase and installation of these CCTV cameras.

At the meeting, Council resolved to conduct a municipality-wide consultation to establish the community response to the use of Council assets and resources for the real-time monitoring and surveillance of people movement, activity, and behaviour by Victoria Police, through the use of CCTV cameras, prior to resolving on the specific request.

The attached report from JWS Research outlines the findings and notes the general community support for the installation of CCTV Cameras. The report will assist Council to resolve the request for CCTV camera installation in the Oakleigh Activity Centre.

BACKGROUND

Council engaged JWS Research to conduct a municipal-wide consultation process. The consultation was to establish the community response to the use of Council assets and resources for the real-time monitoring and surveillance of people movement, activity, and behaviour by Victoria Police through the use of CCTV cameras.

As part of the research, JWS conducted 500 telephone surveys with Monash residents. A Shape Monash page was also established, which enabled on-line community feedback and response to the survey questions. This consultation process had 486 responses from both residents and non-residents.

DISCUSSION

The Executive Summary from the results of the JWS Research shows that there is strong support from the community for the installation of CCTV cameras.

The key results from the report are listed below:

- Few residents surveyed are aware that there is CCTV surveillance in the City of Monash. A quarter of the residents (26%) surveyed by telephone are aware that there is a Council operated CCTV surveillance system in the City of Monash.
- Awareness is significantly higher among respondents to the on-line tool (56%) suggesting that some respondents have participated in the survey because they have a particular interest in or knowledge on the topic.
- Very few residents (5%) surveyed by telephone are aware of the proposal to install CCTV cameras in the Oakleigh Activity Centre (with monitoring of people as well as assets). This is higher in the on-line tool (25%).
- Most survey respondents believe that CCTV assists with community safety. Nine in 10 residents surveyed by telephone (91%) agree that CCTV is an appropriate tool to assist with community safety (including 60% who strongly agree). Among respondents to the on-line tool, agreement is lower (71%), but remains in the majority.
- There is majority agreement that it is appropriate to use Council assets and resources such as CCTV cameras for the real-time monitoring and surveillance of people movement, activity and behaviour by Victoria Police (75% of telephone survey respondents agree, compared to 65% from the on-line tool).
- Council funding the ongoing maintenance of the State Government funded cameras, estimated to cost between \$2,500-\$5,000 per annum, is appropriate (71% of telephone survey respondents agree, compared to 62% from the on-line tool).

- Most respondents were not concerned about invasion of privacy or feeling uncomfortable. Around a third (or fewer) residents agree that real-time monitoring of CCTV in public areas would ‘invade my privacy’ (29% of telephone survey respondents agree, 33% in the opt-in survey). I would feel uncomfortable accessing public spaces and areas with real-time monitoring of CCTV elicited a generally negative response (23% of telephone survey respondents agree, 31% from the on-line tool).
- Clear support exists for the installation of CCTV in the Oakleigh Activity Centre. Most telephone survey respondents (78%) support the proposal, including 46% who ‘strongly’ support it. Similarly, there is majority support among respondents to the on-line tool survey (68%), but with higher levels of ‘strong’ support (60%).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Monash Council has primary responsibility for compliance, maintenance, management, and security of Council-owned and operated CCTV surveillance systems. Council fulfils its responsibility ensuring individuals’ rights to privacy are always maintained, by managing these systems in compliance with privacy requirements and in accordance with *Monash City Council CCTV Surveillance System Policy* and privacy legislation.

The *Monash City Council CCTV Surveillance System Policy* is an internal policy and does not currently allow for real-time monitoring. If Council is to provide CCTV as per the current request, there will need to be a review and amendment to the current policy. The review will ensure that all policies and procedures are compliant with current regulations in Victoria prior to any new cameras becoming operational.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Monash Council’s CCTV Surveillance System Policy was developed with regard to the recommendations outlined within a recent VAGO report in 2018. The following acts, legislation and standards documents, and Council policies have been used to ensure appropriate management, governance and privacy is safeguarded:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) (‘PDPA 2014’)
- Surveillance Devices Act 1999
- Standards Australia – Australian CCTV Standards (2006)
- Commissioner for Privacy and data Protection Guidelines to Surveillance and Privacy in the Victorian Public Sector, May 2017
- Guidelines to Surveillance and Privacy in the Victorian Public Sector – Commissioner for Privacy and Data Collection – May 2017
- Victorian Auditor General Office (VAGO) report Security of Surveillance Technologies in Public Places, September 2018

- Business Technology – Non-Employee Network Access Policy
- Business Technology – Non-Employee Network Access Confidentiality Agreement
- Business Technology – Standard Operating Environment Policy
- Community Consultation and Engagement Policy and Guidelines
- Freedom of Information – Request for Access to Documents
- Privacy Policy and Procedures February 2015

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The request has the potential to impact on the right to privacy and reputation. It is recommended that Council ensure that all legislation and policies are complied with to ensure appropriate management, governance and privacy is safeguarded.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A Gender Impact Assessment was undertaken on the community consultation for ‘the installation and maintenance of CCTV cameras in the Oakleigh Activity Centre for Victoria Police Surveillance’. In order to understand any gendered, age and culturally diverse differences in the community’s views on the proposal, both the survey and telephone questions were disaggregated for these cohorts. There were some slight gendered differences in the results, including that more men believed that real-time monitoring of CCTV would invade their privacy compared to women, however more men were also supportive of Council assets and resources such as CCTV cameras being used for the real-time monitoring and surveillance of people movement, activity, and behaviour by Victoria Police compared to women. More women than men would feel uncomfortable accessing public spaces and areas with real-time monitoring of CCTV. Generally, more men than women were supportive of the proposal to install CCTV, noting that nearly two thirds of women were in support.

All of Council’s Advisory Committees including the Gender Equity Advisory Committee and Multicultural Advisory Committee were briefed on the community consultation and were provided with the consultation details to ensure diverse voices were represented in the results.

CONSULTATION

If Council decides to proceed with the installation of the cameras in Oakleigh, officers would consult with relevant community members, VicPol, traders and businesses that are in the vicinity of the CCTV Camera installations. More detailed work will also occur in relation to the specific sites for the installation of the CCTV cameras, noting that they are proposed to be situated in Council owned car parks. Preliminary considerations have identified the Chester Street and Hanover Street carparks as potential sites

for the installation of CCTV cameras, which may also cover the pedestrian crossing in Eaton Mall. Signs advising that CCTV cameras are operating and monitored by Victoria Police will be clearly displayed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Council would fund and conduct ongoing maintenance of the cameras at around \$2,500-\$5,000 per year in total.

CONCLUSION

The community has supported the use of CCTV Cameras in the Oakleigh Activity Centre and this report seeks a decision from Council on the acceptance of the State Government funding for CCTV cameras and the subsequent installation of the CCTV cameras in the Oakleigh Activity Centre.