

Ref - FOI950(Part B) 33987

All correspondence between the PCC and ASC in relation to CCTV installation at Cotham School:

From: Sarah Crew <Sarah.Crew@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Sent: Sunday, October 9, 2022 1:17:41 PM
To: Mark Shelford <Mark.Shelford@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Cc: Nikki Watson <Nikki.Watson@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Subject: Cotham School

Commissioner

By way of update,

We are requiring of information from a few officers who are off this weekend and who we have not been able to contact. We also need to speak to the Headmistress, who has also been uncontactable to confirm definitively who she says gave her advice. This will happen tomorrow.

Everything we have been able to discover so far points to the police correctly advising the school how CCTV might be used as part of a problem-solving plan i.e., in a way that is overt and accompanied by appropriate public signage. This is captured in writing in a problem-solving plan in clear detail.

I do want us to check everything before being completely confident however. This will happen tomorrow.

Sarah

From: Mark Shelford <Mark.Shelford@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Sent: 09 October 2022 14:21
To: Sarah Crew <Sarah.Crew@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Subject: Re: Cotham School

Thank you. I'd like to write an open letter back to MP. It is likely to throw Headmistress under the bus. What are the un intended consequences?

[REDACTED]

Fare Thee Well

Mark

Mark Shelford

Police & Crime Commissioner

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner,
Valley Road, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 8JJ
01278 646 188
avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk

From: Nikki Watson <Nikki.Watson@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Sent: 10 October 2022 17:14
To: Mark Shelford <Mark.Shelford@avonandsomerset.police.uk>; Niamh Byrne
<Niamh.Byrne@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Subject: FW: Stoke Lodge Playing Fields

Niamh

The Chief has informed me that the PCC wishes to write the open letter

‘The PCC wants to take a strong line with the headmistress in an open letter since she has in her open letter, she has relied on the inference that the covert cameras were installed on police advice.

We need to be sure on two points:

We need to be 100 per cent clear on what advice we did give
We need to understand the impact of police and community relationships if the PCC were to write in the way he describes below’

The below is a report from the NPT Insp and beat manager. This illustrates that we gave crime prevention advice but also pointed out that as a public body the school were responsible for their own due diligence and complying with legal requirements. This construction of the fence appears to have angered many in the community and our relationship with the school has been difficult.

Hopefully this will give enough information for the drafting of a letter.



Nikki Watson QPM
Deputy Chief Constable

Avon and Somerset Police
Police and Fire Headquarters, Valley Road, Portishead, North Somerset, BS20 8QJ

Phone 01278 646322
Mobile 07778 470331
Email Nikki.Watson@avonandsomerset.police.uk

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From: Peter Warren <Peter.Warren@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Sent: 10 October 2022 14:59
To: Nikki Watson <Nikki.Watson@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Subject: FW: Stoke Lodge Playing Fields

Nikki

All the info I have obtained re Cotham School, I assume you will liaise with PCC for his open letter, in short it looks like we gave general crime prevention advice, including CCTV, but not in any great detail.

Regards

Pete

From: Robert Cheeseman <Robert.Cheeseman@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Sent: 10 October 2022 13:14
To: Peter Warren <Peter.Warren@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Subject: RE: Stoke Lodge Playing Fields

Boss,

Below is [REDACTED] reply.

Between 2017 and 2022 incidents relating to damage, public order, thefts, and harassment have been reported regularly following the dispute over land ownership of Stoke Lode Playing fields (land owned by BCC and leased by Cotham School who are as such responsible for the upkeep of the land). [REDACTED]

The below statement (attached to the Niche) is the formal advice given ref CCTV this was requested from us to support an application by Cotham School to BCC planning and was duly sent to [REDACTED] BCC Planning Officer – Development Management - Growth and Regeneration Directorate in July 2020.

I do vaguely recall there being some issue with the overt cameras also being targeted and subject to criminal damage and there was talk of covert cameras being considered however I do not recall us going down that route our end (but [REDACTED] may have had a tentative conversation with TSU...you may wish to ask her?). If this is something that was subsequently implemented by Cotham School I would expect as a public authority that they did their own due diligence so as to comply with the law and their legal obligations.

'I am Police Sergeant [REDACTED] currently based at Southmead Police Station, Westgate House. I am the Neighbourhood Sergeant for [REDACTED] Bristol North covering Lockleaze and Eastgate, Henleaze and Westbury on Trym, Stoke Bishop and Sea Mills and Horfield.

Since arriving on team in January 2020, I became aware of an ongoing issue at Stoke Lodge Playing Fields. A number of years ago, this green space was leased to Cotham School by Bristol City Council for sporting and educational purposes and a perimeter fence was subsequently erected with a gate to restrict access.

I am aware that there is currently a legal challenge on going regarding access and permission to use the space. During the last few weeks, the school have granted temporary permission to allow some access to the fields at certain times. Three of the gates to the playing fields have been moved to 'access control' and are now left open to allow members of the public to use the playing field between 0800 hours and 2100 hours.

Despite these permissions, which I hoped would resolve the issue, on Thursday 2nd July 2020, [REDACTED] reported that another fence panel had been

forcibly damaged and removed. I am advised that the most recent repair to the fence involved 14 separate panels. Of those, 4 had to be completely replaced, as they were damaged beyond repair, whilst the others were damaged but could be bent back into shape. This was at a cost of £800 to the school.

To date, there have been over 30 logged crimes of criminal damage and theft to the perimeter fence and signage surrounding the playing fields. Metal fence panels have been removed; damaged and parts stolen. Cable ties have been cut and securing nuts and bolts have been shorn off using unknown implements (in all likelihood power tools). There have been further incidents of anti-social behaviour and public order when attempts have been made to repair the fence, be it a temporary installation put in place by school staff and associates or more permanent measures when installed by contracted workers, these repairs have been met with verbal abuse and threats from unidentified members of the public.

As there has clearly been no progress made in deterring these acts of criminal damage by the measures implemented (as detailed above) and they have continued to occur, it was the Police's recommendation that CCTV cameras be installed for the detection and prevention of further offences. We recommend that these cameras are high definition with night vision and that they are installed and placed in anti-tamper/anti-damage cages running on a 24 hour circuit and monitored remotely. We would further advise that clear signage is placed on the fence itself identifying that these cameras are in use.

The college of Policing defines CCTV as "...an investment in 'situational' crime-prevention; it is designed to change the environment within which crime occurs, rather than trying to change the attitudes and capacities of offenders. It is thought to deter criminality in the area under surveillance by"

From this, I can conclude that CCTV would be an effective deterrent to acts and criminal damage and Cotham School would clearly benefit from the installation of these devices'.

My view on the response is that we should not be looking to deny any advice being given as I think from what I have found out today that yes we have given advice around covert and overt CCTV, and this is as a response to the school being a repeated victim of crime. Our work in NPT is to provide crime prevention advice as this does include this. The

responsibility for the use of cameras and legal framework being adhered to is totally the Schools and they cannot try to pass the responsibility to the local police. They are a public body and must carry out the correct legal process, and importantly understand the impact any activity could have on the community. This is for me really important and have they gaged that right in these circumstances or considered it.

In terms of the impact. This has been an issue for the local community for many years and one that we have always tried to be impartial towards and keep the peace. Our advice is impartial and would be the same for any community victim of crime and our actions as a result of footage supplied show that when there is evidence of offences we will investigate but also look for suitable disposal options rather than just utilising the Criminal Justice System.

In terms of the school contact has always be difficult and so I do not see that a carefully worded reply would make a huge impact for us, but as I say I think most important is that we do not sday we have not, but say advice needs to be carefully considered by any member of the public and if actions are to be taken then legal responsibility and decision making remains with individuals public bodies or organisations.

Sir, I hope this helps but please let me know if you require any further detail.

Regards

Rob

From: Peter Warren <Peter.Warren@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Sent: 10 October 2022 12:53
To: Robert Cheeseman <Robert.Cheeseman@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Subject: RE: Stoke Lodge Playing Fields

Rob,

Thanks, will there be any impact for NHPT if the PCC states the below is a school decision and issue i.e how will it be for relationships?

Pete

From: Robert Cheeseman <Robert.Cheeseman@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Sent: 10 October 2022 12:23
To: Peter Warren <Peter.Warren@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Subject: FW: Stoke Lodge Playing Fields

Sir,

A comprehensive update from the beat team. As soon as I have [REDACTED] I shall send that to you too.

Rob

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 October 2022 12:18
To: Robert Cheeseman <Robert.Cheeseman@avonandsomerset.police.uk>
Subject: Stoke Lodge Playing Fields

I have spoken to [REDACTED] who was the Beat Manager for the area at the time the fence was erected.

He says that there were months of tensions between Cotham School and the 'We Love Stoke lodge' community group. The community did not want the fence up and the school upset the entire community by all accounts.

[REDACTED] told me that when the fence was being erected, the community claimed that the badgers were in danger as a result. The Wildlife Officer came up from Bridgwater and installed a wildlife cameras to prove/disprove this. The result was that the badger set was 'dead' and that work could continue. [REDACTED] says that one of the community members put their own camera up as they didn't believe the findings!

The police were instructed to check that the contractors were not damaging tree roots!

The community have challenged the school and council by trying to get the field listed as a Village Green. [REDACTED] says that they lost this previously but are renewing their efforts and paid for some high-priced lawyer from London. This may be relevant to the constant profile of the situation?

When the school erected the fence they installed their own CCTV as a crime prevention measure. They were worried about damage by the residents as they knew they didn't agree with this. They put signs up advising that there was CCTV. From speaking to beat staff past and present this has always been a contentious issue as the residents don't want to be filmed.

I have seen some of the emails between [REDACTED] and the school.

The first crime with evidence provided was in December 2021. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The school provided evidence from a covert camera of [REDACTED] damaging the gate. This was a surprise to the team as the police were unaware there were any covert cameras. I am assured that this matter was not discussed prior to this.

There were following crime reports of damage [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] had a meeting at the school in January (at this stage she was unaware of footage from a covert camera and the school did not tell her). She attended with [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The school asked about what they could do about crime prevention as they had been receiving damage to the gates, fence. They said that they had gaps and they couldn't get CCTV on the gate as they would have to run masses of length of cables under the grass for power.

[REDACTED] did not advise them to install covert cameras. They had previously reported damage and a member of staff had taken pictures of the suspect. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] did talk about the use of Wildlife cameras which are battery operated rather than requiring a power source. She says that she did not tell them where to put cameras or what to use them for.

If the school are trying to say that this was the advice given to use cameras then that is not what was said.

At this time [REDACTED] still didn't know about the school actually having covert cameras.

IAU had been dealing with the crimes where there was CCTV with the suspect captured on the covert camera. They were then all passed to [REDACTED] to VA and continue the investigation.

The school installed their own covert cameras before the January meeting with [REDACTED] – and no beat staff past or present say that they had a conversation with any representative of the school about this. The first the police knew about the camera was when [REDACTED] received the crimes with footage of the suspect.

I am not sure if this makes sense. The issue of [REDACTED] discussing wildlife cameras was discussed at the January meeting. She never told them to use covert cameras, but they could have interpreted the conversation about wildlife cameras as covert use. I do think it's important that they had already installed covert cameras anyway prior to this.

[REDACTED]

I will forward you some correspondence if it will help.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Bristol North Neighbourhood Policing Team. [REDACTED]
Southmead Police Station, Westgate House, Southmead Road, Bristol, BS10 5LQ

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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