

RECORD OF DECISION

TITLE: Video Remand Hearing – Telford Custody pilot

Ref: PCC/D/2020/2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The HMCTS Reform programme aims to modernise the courts and tribunals service, making more effective and efficient use of its estate whilst maintaining access to justice for all. Video Enabled Justice (VEJ) is a central tenet of the HMCTS Crime Service Model (CSM), enabling people to appear in court from other locations, without having to travel to the courthouse itself.

There are a number of key assumptions regarding use of video within the CSM which will impact policing. There are specific benefits which may accrue to policing, but also issues and risks as well as a potential for attracting costs for which policing nationally is not currently funded.

Broadly the context in which VEJ needs to be examined for policing may be split into three parts:

- The aspiration of HMCTS to have Video Remand Hearings (VRH) undertaken from police custody;
- The aspiration of HMCTS to move towards court virtualisation, through video appearance;
- The potential increase in travelling distance to the appropriate court for those needing to attend it, who are not video enabled.

The Video Remand Hearing Telford Custody pilot seeks to understand, on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Criminal Justice System (CJS), as much as is possible of the following:

- The impact of VRH in terms of people, process, estates and technology;
- The costs and benefits associated with VRH;
- The impact of not being VRH-enabled in the CSM

PROPOSAL

To fund a 3 month proof of concept video remand hearing pilot within the Telford Custody suite.

Funding will be committed by the PCC and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS). Other partners within the CJS have agreed to release relevant staff as resources as their contribution.

West Mercia Police and HMCTS staff will carry out a full assessment of the costs and benefits of the pilot

**APPROVAL OF
West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner**

I hereby approve the above proposal

Signed

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PART 1 – NON-CONFIDENTIAL/EXEMPT FACTS AND FIGURES

SUPPORTING REPORT

1. Background

- 1.1 Video remand hearings use video and digital technology allowing detainees to appear via a live video link at any suitably equipped Court, avoiding unnecessary travel and transportation.
- 1.2 In 2019 the HMCTS centralised remand hearings at Kidderminster. This has created additional court time at other courts across West Mercia. The courts have used this additional court time to hear additional criminal trials, such as domestic abuse cases to improve service to victims. As a result this has reduced the time victims now wait for an available court date.
- 1.3 While there has been a significant benefit for victims and defendants subject to trials, the centralisation of remand hearings has placed an additional burden on defendants detained for court and defence solicitors.
- 1.4 The VRH pilot is designed to reduce the burden and costs associated with centralising remand hearings, making the entire CJS more efficient and effective.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 That the PCC agrees for West Mercia to run a 3 month proof of concept VRH pilot within Telford custody so the CJS can model the cost v. benefits in order to make an informed decision regarding future funding.
- 2.2 The pilot is due to commence in March 2020.
- 2.3 Operating procedures for the pilot have been drawn up.
- 2.4 A proof of concept report will be prepared at the conclusion of the pilot.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 It is proposed that the PCC allocates £19,552.40 for VRH to be piloted in West Mercia. Telford custody has been identified as the most suitable site.

FINANCIAL COMMENTS

Total cost to deliver the VRH pilot in Telford for 3 months is: £20,820.99. The Police and Crime Commissioner's share of this is £19,552.40 to be funded from the Infrastructure reserve.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

By virtue of section 143 of the Antisocial Behaviour, Policing and Crime Act 2014 the Police and Crime Commissioner may provide or arrange for the provision of services to secure crime and disorder reduction, services to help victims or witnesses of, or other persons affected by, offences and anti-social behaviour, and other services specified by the Secretary of State


By virtue of schedule 11, paragraph 14 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the Police and Crime Commissioner may do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of the functions of commissioner That includes: entering into contracts and other agreements (whether legally binding or not) and acquiring and disposing of property (including land).

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information in this form is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and other legislation Part 1 of this form will be made available on the West Mercia Commissioner's website. Any facts and advice that should not be made automatically available on request are not included in Part 1 but instead in a separate Part 2 report.

OFFICER APPROVAL

Assistant Chief Executive Officer

Signature  Date 28th January 2020