

£80k CCTV 'to be high definition'

By **Moira Howells**

ALTON Town Council has agreed to go ahead with an £80,000 CCTV system in Alton's town centre.

It is hoped the cameras will act as a deterrent to criminal and anti-social activity, and help to reduce the fear of crime.

Using the latest wireless technology, this five camera system will be digital and encrypted, allowing images to be sent between camera and control point securely and in high definition.

In agreeing to fund the additional £42,371 to enable the scheme to go ahead, ATC's pre-Christmas meeting on December 17 was mindful of the current economic climate.

They had been prepared to stump up more than £58,500 towards the scheme, but that was dependent on a local business contribution of £10,000.

In a written report to the meeting, deputy town clerk Greg Burt said that letters asking for support had so far resulted in pledges of just £2,000.

ATC leader David Willoughby told colleagues that, while traders would be the ones to benefit most from CCTV, it was perhaps unrealistic at this time to expect them to contribute to the capital outlay.

"Maybe they would be more prepared to make a contribution to the maintenance costs," he said.

Determined to press on with the installation of a system which they believed would provide "a tremendous crime fighting and investigative tool" councillors decided to set their

sights on a slightly less ambitious scheme but one which could be just as effective.

The original scheme for £106,000, quoted by chosen supplier, Quadrant Security Group, was for a five-camera cable system that could be dismantled for use elsewhere.

The wireless alternative was felt by councillors to provide a more affordable option which would be less disruptive to install and could be added to quickly and efficiently.

In Mr Burt's opinion, while the wireless system would not lend itself to being easily relocated, it would be unlikely that ATC would wish to move cameras from one area to another, preferring instead to install permanent units in new areas, if the need arose.

He had accepted an offer from Quadrant to resurvey the town centre, at its own expense, to ascertain if lower priced wireless units would be suitable, in terms of image transmission to the receiving station at Alton police station.

Project advisers, the Perpetuity Group, had been asked to look at the results of this survey and to produce an assessment of the revised proposal.

In a letter to the council, head of Perpetuity Security, Peter Speight, described Quadrant's new proposal as a "value for money scheme" that was technically compliant and would meet the needs originally set out in the tender specification.

Mr Speight confirmed that the proposed system would rely on the latest wireless technology to link all the cameras back to the control point at the police station. Furthermore, the absence of

cables would remove the need to create traffic chaos in the middle of Alton by digging up the roads.

The wireless equipment would have no ongoing revenue costs attached, and it could be added to quickly and efficiently.

It would enable either reactive or proactive control and would be designed to be monitored either locally at Alton police station or by other monitoring stations such as Winchester.

It would mean that the cameras could be monitored on a 24/7 basis if required.

Mr Speight recommended procurement of the system at the earliest convenience, to take advantage of the price system.

According to Mr Burt, the cost of proactive monitoring of such a system would range from £15,000 for 24/7 cover, to £10,000 for every night from 4pm to 4am, to £6,000 for weekend monitoring, from noon on Friday and midnight on Sunday.

On behalf of Hampshire Constabulary, Inspector Laurie Rickwood of the Safer Neighbourhoods team said that in his opinion 24/7 monitoring would offer "significant benefits", especially if the monitoring company had access to the police radio channel.

He added that any live monitoring would be an asset in terms of enhancing police ability to respond to live incidents, it would provide a more convincing and reassuring message to the public and, if advertised, would deter the minority of offenders who may contemplate committing crime.

Insp Rickwood said that, in his opinion "the differential would be money well spent."