

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW - CCTV AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
MONDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2006**

Councillors *Davies (Chair) Dobbie, Mughal and *Portess

* Member present

Also present: Dr. T. Pascoe (PRCI), Mr. M. Bagnall (Anti Social Behaviour Team), Mr. I. Kibblewhite, Mr. B. Jones, Mr. I. Martin and Mr. H. Clues (Metropolitan Police)

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mughal.

9. URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no such declarations.

11. MINUTES

AGREED;

That the minutes of the meeting of 7 September be confirmed.

12. THE EFFECTIVE USE OF CCTV FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY PURPOSES

The Panel received a presentation from Dr. Tim Pascoe from PRCI about the use of CCTV for community safety purposes. PRCI were a “spin out” company from the University of Leicester and specialised in looking at issues concerned with community safety and, in particular, CCTV. They could provide a range of services including research, consultancy, evaluation and training and facilitation.

They were currently assisting the Council and the Safer Communities Partnership by reviewing the operation of CCTV systems within the Borough and this included providing support for the scrutiny review on the issue.

Where CCTV systems had been successful, they had clear objectives and sustainable strategies. CCTV as a crime prevention measure appeared to have a life cycle. It was necessary to renew and update systems from time to time and to market them so that the public remained aware of their existence otherwise deterrent value would be lost. CCTV had greater preventative effects on some types of crimes, such as car park crime, than others. It had little effect in deterring disorder but could be effective in assisting an effective response to it. It was most beneficial when used in conjunction with other crime reduction measures and tailored to the local setting. It did not always have to be used to just deal with the “hard” issues – it could also be used for finding lost children, helping people find their cars and monitoring traffic.

There was clear evidence that CCTV made people feel safer and that they had considerable faith in its deterrence value. There were now over 4 million cameras in

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operation within the UK and their numbers had trebled within the last 3 years. The National Evaluation of CCTV had shown that CCTV could work but in a lot of cases, it did not work as well as it could.

Many projects suffered from not having clear objectives. The existence of funding for CCTV had created pressure to bid for it during its early years, often in the absence of reliable intelligence indicating where CCTV would be likely to have the most effect. Schemes needed to be properly managed and this required:

- Access to technical expertise
- The full engagement of end-users
- The appointment of a suitable project manager
- Independence.

There was a shortage of suitably qualified people to manage schemes. Independence was of particular importance as there could often be tensions between partners involved in schemes.

As a result of the lack of guidance on how many cameras to bid for, the number and density of cameras varied widely between schemes. Too little coverage tended to prevent efforts to track offenders for detective and evidential purposes. However, systems with a high density of cameras did not necessarily produce a greater reduction in crime. Camera coverage was linked to camera positioning and needed to take account of the nature of the area to be monitored and the objectives of the CCTV system

Police intelligence was invaluable when positioning decisions were taken, as was the input of the operators who were to monitor them when extending existing schemes. Operators sometimes found that the cameras were not positioned in the best way to enable them to perform the tasks that were set for them. Many errors in the positioning of cameras arose from over-reliance on the technical manager to the exclusion of other parties. Only a minority of projects had a structured procedure for deciding the positioning of cameras.

Decisions could be led by installers and systems could sometimes have serious defects. For example, some cameras were unable to cope with artificial lighting in the hours of darkness. Systems also needed to be "future proof" and this could mean having sufficient capacity and the capability of switching from analogue to digital recording methods. In addition, there needed to be proper maintenance to ensure that cameras continued to work effectively and were not obstructed.

The use of CCTV needed to be supported by a strategy outlining the objectives of the system and how these would be fulfilled. This needed to take account of local crime problems and prevention measures already in place. It was important that there an understanding of:

- How CCTV should operate
- Its effectiveness; and
- The role of evaluation

CCTV could reduce the fear of crime and prevent it occurring by impacting on risk and opportunity. It could prevent crime occurring by the early identification of trouble

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spots. Where crime did take place, CCTV could lead to an increased actual rate of offenders being caught. CCTV pictures could, for instance, be used as evidence for prosecution of offenders. In addition, CCTV could provide added value to other measures that were in place.

CCTV systems could meet their objectives by managing at least these factors:

1. Scheme objectives
2. Management
3. Density and camera coverage and positioning
4. Technical characteristics
5. Operation of the control room

Independent review of schemes was important in order to ensure that they were as effective as they could be and to help guide future investment. It was particularly useful to look at the following matters:

What difference had the scheme made? This was tied strongly to the aims and objectives set for the scheme. The impact of the scheme should be measurable as far as possible, so there needed to be consideration of targets and the collection of baseline data relevant to the scheme's specific aims and objectives. This stage raised the questions that the evaluation should aim to answer.

How will it be known whether it has made a difference? The evaluation should be evidence-based, including measurements, exemplar materials, and records wherever possible.

Was it worth it? At a suitable time, perhaps one year after the implementation of the scheme, it was useful to take stock and review. Consideration needed to be given to any implementation problems and how they were resolved, the cost-effectiveness of the scheme and how the experience might inform future evaluations.

It was crucial that the context was considered so that it was clear what effects were as a result of CCTV and what might have happened anyway. The context would also determine how transferable a particular approach might be to a different situation.

Dr Pascoe circulated details of the timetable for the work that PRCI were doing in Haringey. As part of their work, they were available to assist and guide the Panel in their work. In answer to a questions, he stated that he felt that the CCTV system in operation in the London Borough of Camden was an example of particularly good practice.

The Panel thanked Dr. Pascoe for his contribution.

13. CCTV AND COMMUNITY SAFETY - EVIDENCE FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Mr Kibblewhite answered questions regarding the operation of the covert CCTV van that operated within the Borough. The rationale behind its purchase had been to provide public reassurance and reduce crime and anti social behaviour. The van was primarily to deter disorder and robbery. Examples of where it had been deployed were outside schools, in Finsbury Park and outside Tottenham Hotspur football ground. It was a very effective deterrent and could cause potentially troublesome groups of people to disperse quickly. It also helped to detect crimes in certain

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instances. For example, it had helped to catch some young people who had undertaken a robbery on a bus and assisted in identifying individuals involved in an assault on a bar manager. There had not been any prosecutions that had relied solely on evidence collected in this way but it had been a contributory factor in many cases.

When the van was bought, the intention was for it to be used 24 hours per day but, in practice, 6 hours a day had proven to be more achievable. It was generally used at peak times – early evenings and weekends. The van had been bought by the Safer Communities Partnership but it had been used almost entirely by the Police. It could be booked by other partners but the Police had priority use and bookings could not be guaranteed as they might need to use it at short notice. There had been some initial teething technical problems and on some occasions they had not been able to record activity

The van had cost £75000 to purchase and £25000 to maintain over a 5 year period. This worked out as being cheaper than the cost of one PC. It was used sometimes as a replacement for manpower when action was urgently needed. The unit was popular with law abiding people who felt reassured by its presence and could help to calm down volatile situations

He felt that the Police could be more forceful in its use. It could also be used more regularly. Its use was particularly good at deterring disorder outside schools. He also felt that the fixed cameras did not always provide good quality pictures when “zoomed in” on targets.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Clues explained the role of the Police Video Sentry system. Mr. Jones stated that when he had come to Haringey, he had found the images that the Police had been getting via CCTV cameras were of poor quality. He had started the new system up by placing two cameras in a store room in Bruce Grove. They worked off a narrow beam and were very useful at placing people at a location at a particular time. Half of the funding for this had come from the Council. There were now 130 cameras in operation throughout the Borough and these had been installed during the past 5 years. They were located in shops, offices and storerooms and covered a range of locations including cash points and road junctions. In areas where it was operational, there was an 80% chance of an offender being caught on a camera walking to or from an incident. There were approximately 50 in Wood Green and 60 in Tottenham. The cameras were now being extended to Crouch End and Muswell Hill. Evidence collected by the cameras had been used to identify and successfully prosecute over 600 offenders during the past 5 years. These were often serious offences such as robbery, assault, rape and murder. This had coincided with a 50% reduction in street crime in these areas.

Posters with images of individuals who had been caught committing offences on the system were regularly displayed on Arriva buses in order to encourage people to help in their identification. It also helped to deter individuals from committing offences.

The overall cost of the system had been £400,000 in total. The Council had contributed £180,000 of this. The cost of the equipment was coming down in price – the local authority had now spent £50,000 on obtaining 100 more cameras for the west of the Borough where there had been concern about the effectiveness of CCTV coverage.

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The system allowed photos of offenders to be obtained and circulated very fast, thus enabling quicker arrests. In addition, the improved evidence that the images provided now meant that it was rare to have a not guilty plea - 95% of offenders were now pleading guilty. This was enabling large savings to be made in court costs, which could be £10,000 per day. The system had some limitations – it was not monitored and therefore ineffective in enabling a response to an incident and images were also not centrally recorded. It was nevertheless cheap and, if someone committed an offence where the cameras were in operation, there was an 80% chance of being able to positively place them as being in the location. Identification was always an issue but there was a 50% rate of identification on publicised images.

Officers that worked with video sentry visited the CCTV control room from time to time and used images gathered by the fixed cameras. Police officers had worked with operators to encourage the active patrolling of locations. There were some gaps in the capability of the fixed CCTV system at the moment and, in common with other fixed systems, it was rare for the Police to obtain images that were of sufficient quality to be used. Images could be too wide and individuals too small and therefore difficult to identify.

It was noted that the control room was soon to be relocated to new premises with a new digital system. Tapes were currently collected once per week. The new system would benefit from being networked into the video sentry system so that images could be shared with the Police. If this was not done, there was a danger that the service would be inundated with requests for images.

There were currently two types of staff working within the CCTV control room. The parking staff appeared to be particularly well trained and effective. They had one pool of people who were rotated and had shown themselves to be very effective in enforcement. There was a high turnover amongst staff operating the community safety cameras staff and many came from temporary agencies. It was challenging work and particularly difficult to sustain concentration over a period of time.

It was noted that there were now Sentry Scope cameras within the Borough that could provide a 20 mega pixel image which could be zoomed in to pick out particular parts of the image in order to identify a suspect or a car registration. One side effect of the cameras had been that a high percentage – up to 40% - of robbery allegations – had been shown to be bogus.

The vast majority of requests for use of premises for cameras were agreed to. However, there were likely to be difficulties in finding suitable sites for cameras in Muswell Hill as many of the premises above shops were residential and residential properties were not generally used.

Mr. Bagnall reported on the use of covert CCTV equipment to address issues of anti social behaviour. He had been assisted in setting up their system by Mr. Clues. The Home Office had visited to see their system in action and had been impressed. The system was working very well and had been in operation for four months now. It was heavily used and had proven to be effective. It had been particularly helpful in closing down several brothels and gathering sufficient evidence to enable an ASBO to be obtained. It had also been used to address fly tipping and had enabled perpetrators to be identified. Drugs issues had also been identified in certain areas of the Borough. The service worked closely with partners, particularly the Police.

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The main client of the service was Homes for Haringey but it covered all types on tenure. The strategy of the service was to capture ASB activity in action and use this evidence to take legal proceedings against the perpetrators. Evidence captured was also used to convince private landlords to deal with anti social behaviour emanating from their own properties, otherwise further action could be taken by the Council. The use of evidence obtained using CCTV considerably strengthened cases and often was crucial in obtaining ASBOs. The evidence obtained helped to prevent the need for residents to go to court. The cameras also saved the Council money by helping to prevent vandalism by identifying perpetrators.

The covert nature of the surveillance helped to protect witnesses. The van that belonged to the Safer Communities Partnership would not have been suitable as it was designed for overt surveillance and its main function was also to deter crime rather than to collect evidence. Two officers currently undertook surveillance duties. The van was generally used where it was felt activity was likely to take place although it was not possible to guarantee that any would take place.

All operations were logged and the van had been used 98 times over a four month period. Partners had accompanied the ASBAT when using the van on certain covert operations. Partners were not, however, able to deploy the equipment independently as it was very expensive and operators had to be properly trained in its use beforehand.

The van and all the associated equipment had cost £142,000 to buy. The software was easy to update and action was to be undertaken to double the size of the memory. The only ongoing costs associated with the system arose from staffing costs, particularly overtime and regular maintenance of the van. The service was to be marketed to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and it was hoped that it would ultimately become self financing.

Images captured through surveillance could be shared with partners such as the Environment Service and Homes for Haringey. ASBAT did not normally get access to images captured by other CCTV systems. However, images would need to be of good quality if they were to be of use to them. He had tried to obtain images obtain by the fixed cameras once before but had not found the process to be straightforward. Publicity on how the Borough's CCTV systems were used, what happened to the images and how they could be accessed could assist in promoting the best use of data obtained.

The use of CCTV by the Anti Social Behaviour Team would be assisted by having a dedicated CCTV officer in post. Its use currently relied on the goodwill of staff. This had been considerable but he was concerned that staff would burn themselves out eventually if they continued working in this way.

The Panel thanked Mr. Kibblewhite, Mr. Martin, Mr. Jones, Mr. Clues and Mr. Bagnall for their assistance.

14. PROGRESS WITH REVIEW

The Panel noted that the officers from the Environment Service would be attending the next meeting of the Panel on 19 October to outline the way that CCTV was used

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to deal with environmental crime and parking. The following meeting would be on 30 October and would provide an opportunity for the Panel to hear the views of local residents and traders. The meeting would focus on their perceptions of CCTV and whether its current use had met their expectations in deterring crime.

15. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no such items.

Cllr Matt Davies

Chair