

Sevenoaks District Council

CCTV

Annual Report

1st April 2010

to

31st March 2011



Sevenoaks CCTV Annual Report

From 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011

1. The purpose of the Annual Report

Section 163 of The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1998 created the power for Local Authorities to provide CCTV coverage of their public spaces for the purposes of crime prevention. As part of the requirement to operate a public space CCTV surveillance system, we are required to produce and maintain a Code of Practice incorporating the legislative and administrative requirements applicable to CCTV and other requisite information. This Code of Practice is available to the public. In addition, an internal Procedure Manual is maintained as a guide to operational procedures for operational staff.

- 1.1. The preparation and publication of this Annual Report is a requirement of the Sevenoaks District Council CCTV System Code of Practice.

2. The purpose of the Sevenoaks District Council CCTV System

- 2.1 The primary purpose of the system is to support the Community Safety strategy of the Council and its partners to reduce both the level of crime and fear of crime.
- 2.2 To create a safer community, improving the quality of life for all in keeping with Sevenoaks District Council's Community Plan.
- 2.3 To assist the Police and others in the apprehension and prosecution of those committing crime and public disorder.
- 2.4 To gather evidence by a fair and accountable method.
- 2.5 To improve confidence in law and order.

3 Sevenoaks CCTV Control Room

- 3.1 Sevenoaks District Council officers staff the CCTV control room, working shifts to provide cover 7 days a week. We have 96 Cameras, covering Sevenoaks, Swanley, Westerham, Edenbridge and New Ash Green. The majority of cameras can pan, tilt and zoom (PTZ) allowing the operators full control of the cameras.
- 3.2 The CCTV control room makes use of digital recording equipment and flat Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) screens to provide good quality and secure images.
- 3.3 Digital images permit live viewing, recording and the facility to play back immediately. All digital recordings have an authentication, which cannot be altered. Important recordings can be protected to ensure they are not erased or overwritten. Storage of images is quick, easy and cost effective. The Digital Video Recorders come with a built in hard drive, which stores all data for 31 days. The old analogue system it replaced required large numbers of video tapes and significant operator time in rotating, securing and reviewing tapes.

- 3.4** The CCTV control room covers part of the West Kent Police area. We are working very closely with the Community Partnership initiatives in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge where Shopsafe and Pubwatch schemes operate. All these have a radio link direct into the control room. Last year the control room assisted with 575 calls.
- 3.5** Public car park surveillance is another important role for the Council's CCTV system. Cameras monitor the majority of public car parks as well as the Council office car parks. Civil Enforcement officers can access help via the radio network system. Parking problems identified by CCTV Operators can be reported to the Civil Enforcement officers for immediate action.
- 3.6** The CCTV control room staff are responsible for the Council's out-of-hours emergency telephone service. The Operators deal with various emergencies across the District including quality of life issues such as noise complaints, lost and stray dogs, sewage and water board issues, dead animals, dangerous structures and debris, flooding, fly tipping and much more. Last year the operators dealt with 1283 calls, including 437 quality of life issues.
- 3.7** Since August 2009 the CCTV control room is also responsible for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council's out-of-hours emergency telephone service, dealing with 1110 calls this last year.
- 3.8** The control room also has daily direct contact with AA Road Watch and other Travel links, helping to keep motorists up to date with travel situations within the District. These are broadcasted regularly on local radio stations, last year operators assisted with 765 calls.
- 3.9** For the security of staff, buildings and visitors, a number of council buildings are equipped with cameras and alarm systems, which are monitored by the CCTV Operators.
- 3.10** Partnership working with other council teams and external agencies is an important element of the CCTV service provision. The control room works closely with partners to support internal and external teams gathering information relating to Licensing, the Night Time Economy Tasking group, Environmental Health, Planning, Kent Police as well as others. The control room contributed to 1089 call and enquires last year.

4 Staffing

- 4.1** Operators are very experienced and well trained in the use of CCTV cameras and relevant legislation, which governs data handling and protection. All CCTV operators are fully licensed by the Security Industry Authority (SIA). Staff must be licensed by the Security Industry Authority to practice the role of a Public Space CCTV Surveillance operator. Council staff had to pass a BTEC exam, as well as a practical assessment within the CCTV control room in order to achieve the SIA qualification.
- 4.2** Refresher training is provided to staff to keep them updated on relevant legislation, CCTV Surveillance and Health and Safety issues. Operators are encouraged to identify training they feel could benefit the service.

5 Improvements to the CCTV system

5.1 The CCTV system improvement works undertaken between 2006 and 2009 ensured operational effectiveness.

6 Directed Surveillance

6.1 The law and our Code of Practice permits the use of the CCTV system to monitor or observe individuals covertly via CCTV (i.e. 'directed surveillance') at the request of 'Public Authorities' (i.e. law enforcement bodies) if authorised by a senior officer of the Local Authority. A Superintendent or officer of similar standing must make the request in writing on behalf of the Police or other law enforcement body. As a 'Public Authority, Sevenoaks District Council can also instigate targeted operations, requiring directed surveillance by CCTV, in compliance with the law.

6.2 Targeted operations employing directed surveillance will only be carried out where other methods of investigation are not appropriate or not likely to be effective and where they are considered 'proportionate' to the suspected criminal activity or problem posed. The law and rules relating to covert surveillance are contained in the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Failure to obtain the necessary authorisations under this Act could invalidate any subsequent evidence obtained by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1978.

6.3 During 2010 to 2011 only one authorised targeted operation within the Sevenoaks CCTV Control Room was conducted in partnership with Kent Police.

7 Independent Audit

7.1 An independent audit was carried out in January 2011, to assess our compliance with the Council's CCTV Code of Practice and procedures. The report also evaluated the CCTV system to see whether it had met key objectives. All points covered by the audit were found to be satisfactory and compliant with the Code of Practice. All the key objectives were met to a satisfactory standard. The control room was found to be well managed and working to a very high standard. This is reflected in performance indicators and the quality of the CCTV assisted arrests within the last year. A copy of this audit is available on Sevenoaks District Council's website.

7.2 The CCTV Code of Practice was reviewed and updated in January 2011. It has been authorised and accepted by Kent Police and by the Chief Executive of Sevenoaks District Council. Copies are available on the Sevenoaks District Council's website.

8 Lay Visitors

8.1 Closed circuit television surveillance is an increasing feature of our daily lives. It plays a significant role in protecting the public and assisting the police in the investigation of crime. It has been mentioned many times that the UK has led the world from its early introduction in the 1970's to the massive growth in CCTV installation and use in the

1990's. CCTV has been instrumental in helping the police identify and bring to justice those involved in all aspects of criminality, not just serious crime and terrorist incidents. CCTV in the UK has significant public support and year on year crime surveys record that the public feels safer due to the presence of CCTV.

Equally it is regarded by some as the most potent infringement of people's liberty and right of privacy. If, as operators, managers and owners of such schemes, we are to command the respect and support of the public, our CCTV system must be used with the utmost probity at all times. The CCTV system must stand up to independent scrutiny and be accountable to the people it aims to protect. To help ensure this, voluntary Lay Visitors have agreed to inspect the system in accordance with The CCTV Code of Practice and the CCTV Procedure Manual.

- 8.2** These Lay Visitors have received full information about the CCTV system and been given training on the local CCTV environment by the CCTV Manager. They voluntarily monitor the operation of Sevenoaks District Council's CCTV system to make sure the control room and operators adhere to the Code of Practice at all times.
- 8.3** All Lay Visitors are independent members of the public who have volunteered and been security vetted.

Anyone wishing to be considered for a position of Lay Visitor should contact the CCTV Manager.

9 CCTV Performance Evaluation

- 9.1** Many aspects of control room performance are measured on a monthly basis against agreed targets. This helps us to identify trends and opportunities for improvement.
- 9.2** During the year 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011, the CCTV control room instigated, assisted or monitored 107 arrests across the District.

10 The Future

- 10.1** The installation of digital technology allows opportunities to trial options such as audio monitoring, recognition and video content analysis software. However there are no plans to trial these technologies at present.
- 10.2** Over the last twenty years the UK has emerged as the world's most prolific user of CCTV. From controlling demonstrations, monitoring our town centres to investigating high profile terrorist incidents. CCTV is widely regarded as an indispensable crime prevention and public protection tool. These are very challenging times financially for all Local Authorities, we will explore opportunities to generate further income to help meet the cost of the core CCTV service by offering quality services to other authorised bodies where permitted and system capacity allows. Sevenoaks District Council remains committed to the use of CCTV in helping to make our communities a safer place to live, work and visit.