



SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL CCTV SCHEME

**Evaluation by Medway Council
2nd December 2009**



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Introduction

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to ensuring the continued support of the public for CCTV in public places by conducting regular checks and evaluations of the system and publishing the results in an Annual Report.

There is a natural inclination to assume that CCTV surveillance systems will make a significant impact in reducing the level and fear of crime within town centre environments. However, establishing whether CCTV is an appropriate counter measure, determining the system requirements and measuring the ongoing success following implementation can only be achieved through an appropriate evaluation process.

The Sevenoaks CCTV System comprises of 96 CCTV cameras covering Sevenoaks, Swanley, Westerham, Edenbridge and New Ash Green. The majority are pan, tilt and zoom (PTZ). There has been a three-year development scheme within the control room, which was finalised in March 2009, this included the recording system becoming fully digital, all monitors upgraded to flat screens. There have also been upgrades and replacements to all outside CCTV cameras and equipment.

All cameras display pictures through the display monitor stack in the CCTV Control room located in Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks.

The Control Centre consists of a display monitor stack with the capability of viewing 96 cameras in quad form. All recordings are on digital hard drives. Operator positions have their own incident monitors within the control desk where there is the facility for incident recording in real time and with the ability to produce still prints.

Any operator can select any camera on any of the active monitors, which permits the selection of specific areas that need to be monitored.

A replay console, sited adjacent to the control desk allows the digital images to be reviewed without interfering with the recording operation within the Control Console.

Methodology

Lynne Goodwin Control Centre Manager at Medway Council CCTV undertook a site visit to the CCTV Control Room at Sevenoaks District Council on December 2nd 2009. The system was tested against the current Code of Practice, which is available to the public on the Council's website, and in Sevenoaks District Council public areas.

Sample recordings were checked for recording quality, compliance against the Code of Practice and for Human Rights issues.

It is anticipated that this report will be incorporated into the Sevenoaks District Council Annual report on CCTV, which will be made available to the public in accordance with the Code of Practice.

Interviews were undertaken with the CCTV Operators on duty and further discussions were held with Sharon Wright, CCTV Manager.

1. Maintenance

The picture quality of the CCTV system was found to be of a very good standard, with all cameras fully functioning. A regular cleaning programme is in place, and the Council's appointed maintenance contractor Chroma Vision maintains the system to a good standard. The CCTV Operation receives a prompt and satisfactory response to maintenance and repair issues. The recorded images are checked twice a day to ensure that it meets an acceptable standard.

2. Documentation

The CCTV Code of Practice and CCTV Operators Manual are kept within the CCTV control room. The following documentation is completed within the control room: -

- Visitors Log
- Operators Log
- Incident Log
- Review Log
- Maintenance Log / Fault Reports
- Stills Movement and Seizure Report
- Emergency Numbers and Procedures
- Targeted Operations Log
- Daily Occurrence Reports
- Daily CCTV System Check Log

Documentation was inspected and found to be fully complete and held in accordance with the Code of Practice.

3. Access

The control procedures for access to the CCTV Control Room were reviewed and the Code of Practice is strictly adhered to.

4. System Management

Random samples of recordings were reviewed, and the cameras are operated in accordance with the CCTV Code of Practice. The CCTV Unit was found to operate in accordance with the Human Rights Act (specifically Article 1-gather information lawfully, and Article 8 - an individuals Right to privacy) on these random reviews. The images were of a very good quality.

A full audit trail is available for all Images, which are kept securely within the Control room.

The CCTV Operators carry out time checks twice daily on shift changeover.

Handover time between shifts is 15 minutes. This ensures that all Operators are fully aware of the day's occurrences, and provides for a seamless operation.

Any preset changes and settings required are only carried out by the Senior CCTV Operator.

There are two Operators assigned to each shift covering 24 hours a day 365 days a year, monitoring 96 cameras across the district. There are occasions when single manning occurs due to annual leave or sickness. During this time there is a lone worker procedure in place.

5. Communications

CCTV Operators communicate with Kent Police by way of an Airwaves Police radio that is situated within the control room. The Unit also have access to three Shop Safe / Pubwatch radios for the areas of Edenbridge, Swanley and Sevenoaks and are able to co ordinate responses and act on information received via this medium. There are plans to expand this scheme into New Ash Green and Westerham.

There has been a recent application to renew the TEA2 Airwave Licence issued by the Cabinet Office. This licence is mandatory to enable the continued use of the Police Airwave radio system. There have been additions to the CCTV Procedure Manual to accommodate the requirements for the application.

6. Partnership Working

The CCTV Operation in Sevenoaks has a good working relationship with Kent Police, Customs & Excise, Immigration Service and Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Youth & Community and Social Housing Groups, as well as Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators, Kent County Council Wardens and local Police Community Support Officers.

There is a Police Safer Communities Unit based at the Council Offices now, which enables improved partnership working.

7. Lay Visitors

There are two-named appointed Lay Visitors and regular visits have been undertaken throughout year. No adverse comments or observations have been made by the Lay Visitors.

8. Performance Indicators

There are no specific performance indicators included in the CCTV Code of Practice. However Control Room staff and CCTV systems operations are monitored against targets, set annually, to help improve overall performance and identify areas for system development.

The CCTV manager is now benchmarking the District Council's CCTV system performance by comparison with other similar sized Local Authority CCTV operations within Kent.

9. Complaints

There has been 1 complaint received by the Unit in 2009. This was investigated and dealt with appropriately to a satisfactory standard.

10. Compliments

The CCTV control room has received complimentary correspondence from Kent Police and the Crown Prosecution Service for its contributions toward detecting crime, the apprehension of offenders and the quality of evidence leading to successful prosecutions. Including some very complimentary letters from the Chief Inspector thanking the CCTV Control Room Manager and her staff for their invaluable assistance. One recent letter, whereby CCTV Operators spotted a group of people acting suspiciously near an ATM at a bank in Sevenoaks. Descriptions of persons, vehicle involved and direction of travel was given to Police. The suspects were subsequently arrested in shortly after Tunbridge Wells for theft and fraud offences. The CCTV team have caught numerous teams fitting devices to various ATM's in the areas they cover, resulting in some excellent arrests.

11. Training

All operators have valid BTEC Level 2 Awards in CCTV Operations for Public Space Surveillance and are licensed by the Security Industry Authority. Any new operator undergoes the formal training to become SIA Licensed and is then teamed with experienced operators in the control room for six weeks to develop local knowledge.

The CCTV Unit has had to reapply for their SIA licence this year, this all went smoothly and all staff are required to wear their badge whilst on duty. This was checked on the day of inspection and found to be satisfactory.

12. Signage

Signage within the Town Centres was found to be good, and complies with current recommendations; there is a cleaning programme of all CCTV signage being carried out at present.

Conclusion

The evaluation of Sevenoaks District Council CCTV Scheme found the scheme is running efficiently and effectively, all cameras and equipment are working to a very good standard.

The Code of Practice is strictly adhered to and all data protection procedures are in place.

This Control Room was found to be well managed and works to a very high Standard. This was reflected in the performance indicators and the quality of CCTV assisted arrests within the last year.

SignedLynne Goodwin.

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