

## **Swale Public Space CCTV Strategy – PDRC Update**

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

### **Overview**

Following an input by the Cllr Horton and the Community Safety Unit on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at PDRC, a Public Space CCTV Strategy has begun to be compiled, based upon the reasoning provided to the group previously.

This strategy thus far gives an overview of the history of public space CCTV; legislative requirements; the Swale Picture; performance; and the findings from the CCTV review.

The draft strategy also puts forward a vision and purpose for the public space CCTV service looking to the future.

### **Next Steps**

Following the discussion with PDRC, it is proposed that consultation will take place with partners and the public as required, before returning to PDRC for final consideration. A final version of the strategy would then be taken to Cabinet for recommendation. A tactical delivery plan would be drawn up and approved through appropriate mechanisms following this.

**Recommendation: That PDRC endorse the vision and purpose contained within the Public Space CCTV Strategy.**

# Swale Borough Council Public Space CCTV Strategy

## 1. Forward

To be completed

## 2. Introduction and purpose of the Strategy

This is the first Public Space CCTV Strategy for Swale Borough Council, although a public space CCTV service has been in operation for two decades. There is a requirement to drastically change the way in which the service operates in order to meet both the current and future service needs.

## 3. Swale CCTV – The Story so far

### CCTV History

Public Space CCTV was installed in Swale in 1994/1995, following the receipt of funding from the Home Office to 'prevent and detect crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB)'. This was part of a wider, national, roll out of CCTV in public spaces for crime prevention purposes as technology had advanced to enable more than one camera to be monitored/record at once, in colour. Cameras were remotely monitored to detect and prevent crime, with their footage being used by the Police as evidence in criminal proceedings.

Funding was also provided over the following years by Parish Councils and other groups of private individuals and businesses to install systems to meet their needs, monitored by the Council as part of the wider public space CCTV service. This led to a large completely random system, covering various parts of the borough – both town centres and residential areas.

The CCTV Control Room has been linked closely through radio systems to Kent Police and the local Business Crime Reduction Partnership, Swale Safe. This increased the detection of incidents from both the Police and local retailers, whilst enabling the sharing of information.

During the period within which public space CCTV has been operated by councils, there has been a large increase in the technology available to the public – with a large number of residential properties and businesses hosting their own CCTV system; along with almost every member of the community owning their own mobile device with increasingly sophisticated recording capabilities. This has increased the amount of evidence available to Police forces for their investigations, along with all officers being equipped with Body Worn Cameras.

This increase in private systems has in part led to some Councils switching off their public space CCTV. With many councils facing increasing funding pressures and limited national research to fully justify its effectiveness some have moved to no system or reduced monitoring hours/recording only.

CCTV technology has continued to advance since the Swale system was originally installed. Technology will now allow for a fully digitised system, with better recorded images and the increasing use of analytics (such as facial recognition), working towards more automated systems with limited to no operators.

## **Legal Requirements**

There is no Statutory Duty for Swale Borough Council to deliver CCTV. However Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places an obligation on local authorities to consider the crime, disorder and environmental issues affecting the local area and ensure their activities do all they reasonably can to prevent them. The implementation and monitoring of CCTV is one activity delivered by Swale Borough Council that contributes towards this obligation.

Increases in public space surveillance nationally, along with wider technological advances, led to pressure groups campaigning to protect civil liberties, privacy and freedom. Their campaigns and general concern from communities, in part led to the introduction of the Surveillance Code of Practice in 2013.

The purpose of the code was to ensure that individuals and wider communities have confidence that surveillance cameras are deployed to protect and support them, rather than spy on them. The code introduced 12 principles that resulted in changes to the way that public space CCTV services operated.

These principles specify that all CCTV must be in pursuit of a legitimate aim and necessary; and that the impact of individual's privacy has been considered. There also strengthened the requirements for security of information recorded and the development of processes. Specifically for Swale, this resulted in careful consideration of all CCTV deployments.

There are a number of other legal frameworks that must be considered in the delivery of CCTV services including:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulations
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) 2000
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

## **Current Swale Picture**

The Swale Public Space CCTV Service was moved to Medway Council in 2010, to increase its effectiveness following failures with the private contract in place for its monitoring from the Swale House Control Room. This new Partnership was based on a clear business case to provide a more cost effective service from its control room in Strood.

In 2012, this Partnership was widened to include Maidstone and Gravesham Councils. In 2015, Medway Council sub contracted its responsibilities for this Partnership to Medway Commercial Group (MCG), which is still responsible currently for the monitoring of Swale's 49 CCTV Cameras, 24/7/365.

The current public space CCTV service also encompasses delivery of the out of hours emergency planning and housing responses for the Authority.

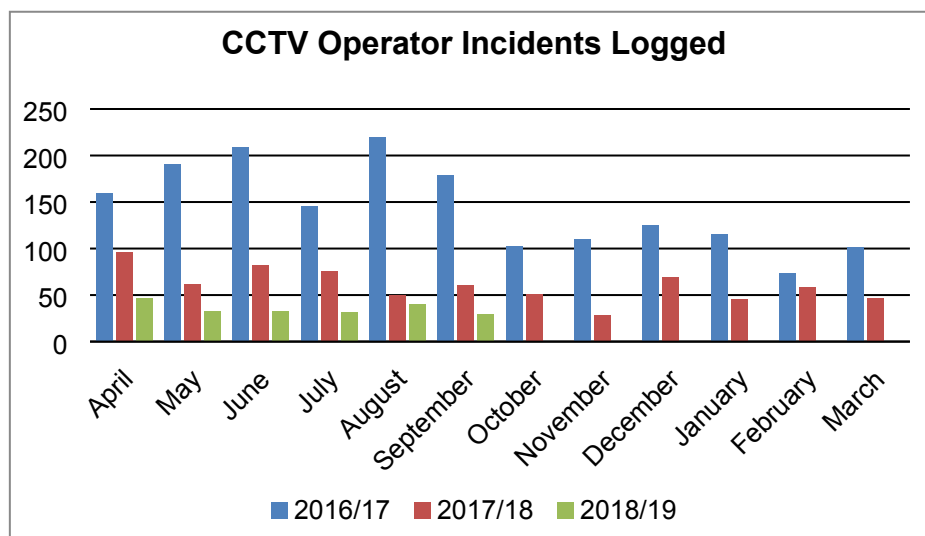
As a direct result of the introduction of the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice, SBC reviewed its CCTV Camera locations to ensure that it complied with the requirement that all locations were justified. This resulted in 16 cameras being decommissioned in 2015 and following a subsequent review in 2018, a further 16 were decommissioned. This process will be completed on a regular basis to ensure this ongoing compliance.

The Partnership Agreement has been extended until March 2020 by SBCs Cabinet, to allow time for the completion and implementation of this CCTV Strategy.

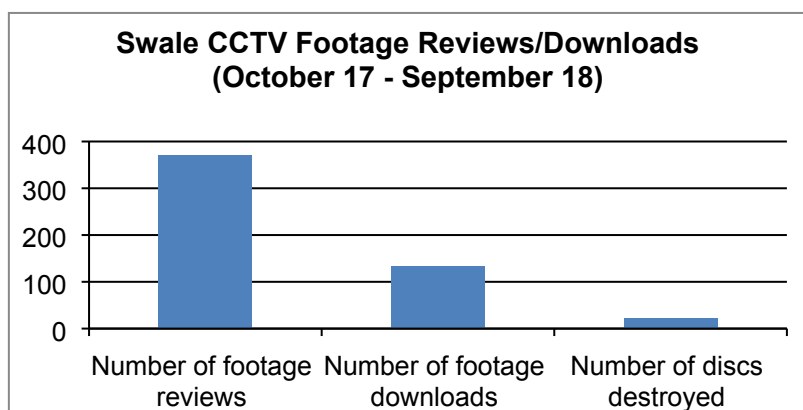
Maidstone Borough Council are also conducting a review of their monitoring and maintenance options. This follows a review of their camera deployments which resulted in a drastic reduction of their camera numbers which are now only focused upon their town centre. Maidstone BC have given notice of their intention to withdraw from the Partnership, with the timescales for this and resultant implications for partners being explored.

### Current Performance

Between October 2017 and the end of September 2018, there were 516 incidents detected and then logged by CCTV Operators – this equates to just under 1.5 incidents per day. This is also a large reduction compared with the same period the previous year (a reduction of 49%).



The CCTV system is also utilised, largely by Kent Police, for the retrospective reviews of incidents that have occurred and where an incident has been detected, is provided as evidence. Between October 2017 and the end September 2018, there were 370 footage reviews completed, of which 94% were for the Police – an average of just over 1 per working day. Of these reviews, 133 were then downloaded to be used as evidence in an investigation and 17% of those discs were not collected and therefore destroyed.



The reduction in incidents detected/logged by CCTV operators may in part be due to a number of different factors:

- Police resourcing has changed over the last decade – from the introduction of neighbourhood policing at the start of the decade to a recent focus on vulnerability

and threat, risk and harm. This along with drastic reductions in funding has resulted in reducing focus on town centres and 'acquisitive type crimes';

- The model by which CCTV is monitored has changed, even from when it was transferred to Medway and the Partnership established in 2012, with the formation of Medway Commercial Group;
- Technology has advanced at a great rate, with almost every individual now carrying a Smart Phone acting as a hand held camera and the Police introducing Body Worn Cameras that provide evidence as needed.

These reasons, along with wider influential factors such as longer term town centre decline, may have impacted upon the performance of the current CCTV service. It is clear that its purpose and technology needs to also change with the times.

### **Findings from CCTV Review**

A review of the CCTV Service began in 2017 to inform decision making regarding monitoring options. The scope of this review was widened in 2018 to include the equipment and transmission options. Key findings were:

- Public perception of the service differs to the reality – there is limited understanding of the legal requirements that the system must comply with; the total costs; and its effectiveness;
- The CCTV system is an aged and outdated analogue system, with many cameras and equipment having reached or nearing the end of their life, with parts becoming harder to source;
- There is difficulty in evidencing that the quality of recorded footage is of evidential standard in low lighting areas or when a recording has been retrospectively interrogated i.e. zooming required as part of investigation on a recording;
- The data from the cameras is fed back to a control room through BT Fibre Lines which are expensive and inflexible;
- The operating model currently used means the operator does not always necessarily have the local knowledge of the borough to detect incidents;
- Lack of ability to prove the deterrent effect of a public CCTV system.

## **4. Vision and Purpose**

Vision: To migrate to a fit for purpose, second generation public space CCTV system, using modern digital equipment that is compatible with future upgrades and technology advancement.

The purpose of this second generation Public Space CCTV service would be to:

- Help to Prevent and Detect Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Provide quality evidence to support Police investigations and prosecutions;
- Support most vulnerable members of the community;
- Support management of emergencies or major incidents, along with ongoing out of hours assistance;
- Assist in town centre and event management;
- Deliver Town Centre Wi-Fi in Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Faversham that will enable community messaging; better access to the Councils website; access to electronic cash cards; and better access to online payment for car parking