CCTV Annual Report 2019/20

1.   Introduction

CCTV plays an important role in the community safety function for Chelmsford City Council and the Safer Chelmsford Partnership. Whilst CCTV is not a statutory role, the city council does have a statutory duty under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to place issues of community safety at the centre of the delivery of local services. CCTV was introduced into Chelmsford in 1995 and the control centre now monitors approximately 350 cameras across the district.

2.   Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the provision of CCTV is to prevent and deter crime, and to ensure that residents, businesses and visitors feel safe in the areas of coverage at any time of the day and thus boost public confidence and reduce the fear of crime.

The CCTV function works to the priorities of the Community Safety Partnership which are agreed each year following a strategic assessment. This assessment is endorsed each year by the One Chelmsford Board. The current priorities for the partnership are:

- Tackling violent crime and reducing reoffending (gangs, drugs and county lines, knife crime, domestic abuse and night-time economy disorder)
- Driving down anti-social behaviour in public places (youth nuisance, ASB associated with rough sleeping and improving communications with our residents)
- Identifying and supporting vulnerable persons (emotional health and wellbeing, social isolation, suicide prevention, hate crime and a proactive approach to those at risk of exploitation)
- Tackling rural crime and environmental crime

Officers and CCTV staff are tasked each month at community safety hub tasking where a police document is reviewed and relevant actions are given to appropriate members of the partnership. This process is intelligence led and enables CCTV staff to focus on high harm and vulnerability.

Chelmsford was awarded Purple Flag status in 2013 (reaccredited in 2019) and the effective use of CCTV always features as a positive resource together with other partnership initiatives.

3.   Operation of the System

The system is operated and monitored 24/7, 365 days a year. The control room is always staffed by two members: one supervisor and one operator, with a part-time member of staff working on Friday and Saturday evenings. The current staffing structure consists of eight full time equivalents, one part-time and five casuals (who cover annual leave and sickness). A twelve-hour shift pattern: four on four off was introduced in 2016 which has delivered key benefits in terms of staff morale, performance and retention.

Each member of staff is licensed with the Security Industry Authority (SIA) or working towards registration following successful training/probation, and accredited officers with Essex Police under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS).

The operational management of the team is by a Senior Community Safety Officer, Karen Buttress and the strategic management is overseen by the Public Protection Manager, Spencer Clarke, who is the single point of contact (SPOC). The Standard Operating Procedures and Code of Practice are reviewed on an annual basis.

The privacy impact assessments (PIAs) for each camera are also reviewed each year. All Freedom of Information requests (FOI) are dealt with centrally by the Information Governance Manager and DPO, and his team. This postholder is also the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for CCTV and is registered with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

The CCTV function was subject to an internal audit in 2018 and was given a moderate assurance rating. A follow up audit was completed in March 2020 and all outstanding actions were completed. Performance statistics are publicised annually on the Council's website and in City Life or via the local press. Several visits are facilitated throughout the year to ensure that the public remain confident that the use of CCTV is both effective and proportionate.

4.   Performance Statistics (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020)

Daily statistics are recorded on a V-TAS database which enables the mapping of crime and use of the system (which supports annual PIAs). It is also a useful tool for performance management in relation to staff and as an audit to prevent improper use of surveillance. Key statistics for 2019/20 indicate that CCTV played a key role in:

- 8,980 incidents (Attention to 1,798, Public Order 906, Concerns for Welfare 573, Alarm Responses 538, Theft 511 and Missing Persons 478)
- 424 arrests and 123 no arrestable offence
- 701 media reviews/requests

- 2,311 out of hours calls (Advice 844, Noise 671, Car Parks 503, Homelessness 154 and Stray Dogs 98)

The annual gross revenue cost of CCTV for the financial year was £357,453 (actual compared to an original estimate of £363,300 thus representing an underspend of £5,846). However, income received for the CCTV function was £52,165 which represents 15% of the annual running costs of the service.

Income generation is from a variety of sources such as third-party contracts, radio commission, internal transfers (where CCTV has enabled efficiency savings elsewhere in the council). This income also includes a £10,000 grant from the Late-Night Levy which is received on an annual basis. The capital expenditure on CCTV was £80,550.37 which included new cameras and a server at Waterhouse Lane Parks Depot and the replacement of old analogue cameras with new high definition units at a variety of locations throughout the city centre.

5.   Achievements

The Chelmsford CCTV system continues to have a good reputation both regionally and nationally. Expenditure on system compares favourably with councils of similar size and demographic profile (figures available in the most recent Big Brother Watch report). The direction of travel in terms of ongoing capital support and system replacement is positive.

There has been a steady migration over to new technology which has been driven by the installation of a FLIR video management system (VMS) in October 2016. This has enabled old analogue technology to be supported whilst new high definition units have been introduced as units have failed or reached their operational lifespan. There has also been effective use of the legacy fibre optic network supplied by Virgin Media whereby new digital transmitters are being installed as cameras fail to achieve improved capacity at each site.

CCTV now plays a key role in reducing vulnerability by using and sharing intelligence around criminal and sexual exploitation and adopting a hostile approach to tackling organised crime. The use of surveillance has been used to gather evidence about gang nominals and local organised crime groups by working with the community policing team, local response teams and Raptor teams. There have been no RIPA requests for 2019/20 for directed surveillance. CCTV has supported the ongoing work around anti-social behaviour being associated with rough sleepers in the city centre, but also acts as a tool to safeguard our most vulnerable by keeping a watchful eye on those sleeping in the city centre.

CCTV has a strong record of achievement in ensuring that Chelmsford continues to have a safe night-time economy. It supports the licensing objectives of the council and works closely in partnership with well-established interventions such as street pastors, taxi marshals, Chelmsford SOS Project (Open Road), Best Bar None and Pubwatch.

6.   Key Priorities for 2020/21

- Installation of replacement cameras, servers and car park systems funding from capital programme (project commenced on 1 April 2020 with completion programmed for 31 July 2020)
- Complete a system asset management exercise on completion of the capital works with a full life cycle analysis
- Commencement of a new comprehensive maintenance contract (contract procured, and 4-year contract commenced on 1 April 2020)
- Installation of replacement programme cameras and associated works (scheduled quarter 1/2)
- Complete external outstanding actions from audit recommendations (digital transfer of data with Essex Police)
- Refresh code of practice to ensure GDRP compliance (completed April 2020), and complete privacy impact assessments as necessary and return annual survey to the Surveillance Commissioners Office
- Continue to support the transition of the parking advice responsibility to CCTV
- Provide consultancy and project management to ensure that the CCTV element to major projects is delivered within agreed timescales (Capital Programme for Chelmsford City Council, Maldon District Council and Essex County Council)
- Expansion opportunities and future income generation

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