

AGENDA ITEM: 5

**COMMUNITY SAFETY and LEISURE
SCRUTINY PANEL**

18th NOVEMBER 2008

CCTV in MIDDLESBROUGH

FINAL REPORT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel's assessment and proposals on CCTV in relation to the panels agreed Terms of Reference of the scrutiny.

OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 2 The overall aim of the scrutiny Investigation was to assess the issues associated with CCTV and make appropriate recommendations, which would address the issues, outlined in the Terms of Reference.
- 3 To present the findings of the scrutiny Investigation to the Executive for their consideration.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4 The following outlines the **Terms of Reference** for the scrutiny examination into CCTV, which were determined following discussion by that panel at their meeting of 9th July 2008.
- What is the present coverage of CCTV
 - How effective has the CCTV system been in Middlesbrough
 - What is the future for CCTV in Middlesbrough

BACKGROUND

- 5 Once OSB ratified the subject of CCTV the Panel wanted to assess the present balance between the use of CCTV as a means of protecting society without being overly intrusive. The Panel also wanted to assess the effectiveness of CCTV as a crime deterrent tool in addition to the facility it provided in assisting both detection and prosecution.
- 6 An additional area the panel considered important was not simply to address the physical installation and operation of CCTV but to understand the public's perception with particular reference to the youth of Middlesbrough and later the perception of retailers in relation to Town Centre CCTV.
- 7 The panel is aware that in Middlesbrough there is clear evidence that CCTV has contributed to solving a substantial number of crimes. However, recent research from the Home Office, the US and also New Scotland Yard indicate that CCTV actually solves very few crimes and that their deterrent effect is minimal. In addressing this, the panel found that the number of cameras being monitored by an individual irrespective of their skills or vigilance is a crucial factor. The response and involvement of the Police to react to incidents identified on CCTV are equally important and an area the panel intended to explore. Running parallel with these issues is the cost. Great play has been made recently in the press regarding the expenditure nationally on CCTV. Consequently, the panel intended to question these issues and obtain evidence from various sources to inform and assist the panel in forming its conclusions.

SCRUTINY PANELS EXMINATION

- 8 The panel commenced their enquiries with a setting the scene meeting provided by the Public Protection Service, which outlined the operation of CCTV and the associated costs. Following this the panel visited the CCTV Control Room located on the first floor of the bus station.

Town Centre CCTV (Middlesbrough)

- 9 The panel was informed that CCTV was introduced into Middlesbrough in 1994 as part of a business partnership initiative and while encountering some commercial and funding support difficulties it moved to the bus station in 2003. This move was supported by £300K of government funding and the extension to the original scheme has now more than tripled the original camera capacity. The CCTV function has become an integral part of the Crime and Disorder Partnership and indeed has become an intelligence service used by various groups in their battle against crime and anti social behaviour. The effectiveness of CCTV in Middlesbrough was evidenced with some noticeable statistics over the last 6 years. These included the involvement of over 3000 arrests and provided over 8000 intelligence reports.
- 10 The cameras do provide continuous cover, 24 hours a day, in the town centre which not only contribute to intervening when a crime is being undertaken but is understood to contribute to the prevention of crime. To achieve this coverage the scheme currently manages 216 cameras with 3 operators per shift at a cost of approximately £440k per annum of which Middlesbrough does receive contributions from 3 organisations.
- 11 The panel received a range of technical information regarding coverage, code of practice, improvements in image, connectivity, monitoring etc, which endorsed the panels observations that Middlesbrough CCTV operation, was undertaken in a very professional manner. The panel found that there had only been 3 complaints since the commencement of CCTV in Middlesbrough and none had been received in the last year. On all occasions the complainants were invited to the control room and upon observing the operation they withdrew their complaint;
- 12 The panel found that there is no marketing of CCTV in Middlesbrough and whilst there is a view that marketing the coverage may add to the deterrent the decision is to maintain a low profile and allow daily life to continue without the thought of surveillance. However, the panel considered this might not always be possible following the introduction of speakers where operators can alert the public when an incident arises and the need occurs to activate the speaker. However, the panel observed a range of evidence of the speaker cameras in operation and the response from the public was very encouraging.
- 13 A subsequent benefit the panel found was that CCTV is used to assist the Fire Brigade in both alerting and also responding to cover an area where a 999 call has been made. This has found to assist the Brigade when addressing hoax calls.

town centre CCTV (Newcastle)

- 14 The panel was aware that the CCTV service in Middlesbrough is managed and funded by the Council and that Police response times to incidents can be a crucial factor. Therefore the panel wanted to engage with an area where the CCTV is funded, managed and operated by the Police. From this background

the panel visited Newcastle city CCTV control room. The panel found that Newcastle had 147 cameras and had two operators monitoring the system continually in the city centre Police station. This operation is not linked to the Councils CCTV system as the city Council has a few independent CCTV control rooms, which focus upon areas such as the civic centre, Metro stops, car parks, depots etc.

- 15 The panel wanted to explore the issue of response times to identify if this was quicker than Middlesbrough through the use of Police monitoring and also Police response. Members were informed that all Newcastle staff were Police trained and therefore able to interpret the response needs of an incident and use the language generally understood by operational Police when directing operational Police officers.

Public Perception Survey

- 16 The panel wanted to understand the public's current thoughts on CCTV and if it has become an accepted town centre tool or is it viewed as intrusive. Specifically, the Panel wanted to gain an insight into the youth perspective and how young people, who had grown up with CCTV, had viewed this CCTV environment. When undertaking the initial enquiries the panel found that a survey was being undertaken as part of the voiceover survey where 1200 residents of Middlesbrough were interviewed. In response the Panel received an analysis of the survey, which fell into two main groups. First an analysis focusing on the views of the 18-24 age group and secondly Middlesbrough residents as a whole.
- 17 The result of the survey was that in general, older people do feel more secure as a result of CCTV as there is a tendency for older people to feel more vulnerable. The response from the youth was that they also take some comfort in the knowledge that CCTV is watching, especially when they visit the town centre in Middlesbrough for evening socialising, as it is more likely that some young people are involved with anti social behaviour at that time.
- 18 Some of the key issues derived from the survey regarding the 18-24 age band are outlined below
 - i. 96% of the youth surveyed were aware of CCTV in Middlesbrough and 45% felt safer because of it.
 - ii. While 51% of the youth surveyed actually believe that CCTV does actually impact on anti social behaviour, only 37% believe it reduces the fear of crime.
However, only 31% consider it an invasion of privacy.
 - iii. There was a strong view (65%) that CCTV in car parks does reduce car crime.
- 19 From this survey the panel recognised that the results were relatively even regarding the public's view of CCTV as a tool which makes them feel safer, or not. However, the panel is aware that measuring the impact of CCTV may not

be that simple. As CCTV has been operating for a number of years and together with a range of other initiatives to tackle crime and anti social behaviour in recent years, Middlesbrough has generally reduced incidents of crime and that people feel safer.

- 20 One area which the survey illustrated a clear opinion was regarding the introduction and use of speakers with CCTV. More than half of those surveyed consider they feel safer where a verbal response can be made instantly when a camera has detected and incident. Only a very small percentage (13% overall) consider speakers to be a further intrusion of privacy.

Cleveland Police

- 21 The Panel was very interested in obtaining the Police perspective on the effectiveness or otherwise of the CCTV facility. The Police confirmed that CCTV was a crime preventative measure and also a means of securing a successful prosecution. The Police also informed that Panel that when the Police were notified of a crime in progress by the CCTV officers the Police could direct their resources exactly to the crime as continuous radio contact could be maintained and information related as it was currently being observed.
- 22 When the Panel enquired about anti social behaviour. They were informed that CCTV played a substantial part in assisting the Police to attend the exact location or indeed intercept the offenders due to the descriptions conveyed from the CCTV control room to the officers attending the incident and therefore offered an invaluable resource to the Police. A further benefit was in the actual assessment or contribution each individual made to the incident and thereby the charges would reflect this and indeed protect the innocent.
- 23 The Panel was informed that CCTV evidence is frequently the first source of evidence the Police use when endeavouring to solve a crime. Frequently, when the perpetrator has sight of the CCTV footage, as evidence to be presented to a court the perpetrator will, on most occasions, change their plea to guilty. The Police confirmed that frequently the CCTV footage had secured a conviction, which may not have been achieved otherwise. In addition to this the Panel were informed that CCTV is a contributory factor in assisting the Police when the Police are required to undertake covert operations.
- 24 The panel made enquiries regarding the Police contribution to the provision of the CCTV facility, which was clearly a substantial benefit to the Police in reducing crime, ability to direct their resources and secure convictions. The Police informed the Panel that a Police presence is deployed in the CCTV control room and scans the footage to identify offenders, analyse information to solve crimes. The panel consider the location of this officer in the CCTV control room is directly to assist the Police in undertaking their function and does not contribute to the actual CCTV system. The Police also informed the panel that they contributed by providing a direct link to the Police station so the Police can take control of the CCTV camera when an incident occurs. While the panel appreciates this is a worthwhile facility its purpose is again for the Police to be able to inform their deployment of resource more efficiently.

- 25 In conclusion the Police presented that there was a partnership, which included a number of major organisations whose objective is to tackle crime and anti social behaviour and that these partners made a contribution in their own way. The panel recognises how the partnership contributes to the issue of tackling crime as the Council does in a number of different ways. However, the Panel believes that this facility makes a substantial contribution to the Police undertaking their function in a smooth, efficient and effective way. Consequently, as the Police admit that CCTV is a very successful and essential tool in modern Police detection and prosecution, the Police should make a substantial contribution to the tuning costs of CCTV in Middlesbrough.

Town Centre Retail

- 26 The panel wanted to gain an understanding of how retailers used or perceived CCTV in the town centre and therefore undertook a brief enquiry. The Panel found that while retailers in the town centre consider CCTV does not cause any detriment they don't feel they get much value from it. In exploring the issue further it was found that there is radio contact between town centre retail security staff and the CCTV control room. It was conveyed that when security identify an incident and contact the CCTV control room there is frequently no response. CCTV may have directed a camera to the incident but without informing security the retail security staff feel isolated. It is stated that this happens on many occasions and builds both frustration and a lack of confidence in the CCTV service. On occasion the security staff will alert CCTV that beggars are approaching shoppers and sometimes aggressive begging and again no confirmation from the CCTV Control room.
- 27 The panel was informed that this situation has occurred on many occasions and does vary depending on the operator on duty. The panel was told that this is presently being addressed by the CCTV management. The panel consider this could develop into a very effective relationship between town centre security staff and the monitoring facility and that some positive training should be pursued between security and CCTV staff to enable a greater understanding of the role and needs of each.

ADDRESSING THE "Terms of Reference"

- 28 The panel addressed the terms of reference during their lines of enquiry and an outline of their findings is as follows: -

1. What is the present coverage of CCTV

The panel found that the CCTV system had expanded considerably since its introduction in 1994 and that the present coverage of the town centre was very good. The panel appreciated that a facility such as CCTV can always be expanded but caution should be applied when balancing the increased gain against the increased cost.

2. How effective has the CCTV system been in Middlesbrough

The panel was shown footage of real incidents, which had been observed, and police deployed accordingly. However, through the engagement with the Police the panel finds that the CCTV system in Middlesbrough to be well run and very effective in its operation. The evidence presented from the Police was that this CCTV system has made a substantial contribution to the prevention and detection of crime and anti social behaviour in Middlesbrough. The panel appreciates that the reduction of crime in Middlesbrough has been achieved through a range of initiatives of which CCTV has contributed.

3. What is the future for CCTV in Middlesbrough

The panel believes that CCTV in Middlesbrough should continue and be supported. However, the panel believes that greater financial support should be secured from external organisations, as the CCTV is a tool used by the partnership. In this respect as an operational tool it is considered that the Police gain substantially from CCTV and that the Police should make a substantial contribution to this facility.

CONCLUSION

29 The panel undertook this scrutiny with narrow terms of reference paying particular attention to the area of effectiveness re CCTV in Middlesbrough. The panel are aware that a key purpose for installing CCTV is to deter and detect crime and tackle anti social behaviour. In addressing this, the Panel found that it is very difficult to measure the crime deterrent factor of CCTV. It is undoubtedly there for some people while others pay little regard. The Panel were shown some positive indeed powerful evidence that CCTV had prevented, intercepted and solved criminal activity. However, as various initiatives are introduced in Middlesbrough to tackle crime the number of incidents continue to reduce.

30 The panel considers that the Councils CCTV service operates well and adheres to strict protocols, which ensure it operates effectively in tackling crime and securing prosecutions. The panel were informed just how substantial a tool CCTV is today in modern Police detection and prosecution. How it assisted the deployment of Police recourses to the exact incident and what the Police expect to face upon arrival. How to identify the perpetrators and indeed how a perpetrator has changed their plea once having sight of the CCTV footage. It is undoubtedly a powerful tool for effective Policing today. This view was clearly endorsed when the panel visited Newcastle where the Police, manage, fund and operate the town centre CCTV system, for this very reason.

- 31 The panel considers the Police should make a substantial annual contribution to the CCTV system, as it is clearly a tool, which aids the Police considerably. The panel do not accept that the Police placing one of their officers in the control room to evaluate CCTV footage for Police purposes is a contribution to the scheme. The panel believes that the Council introduced CCTV to benefit the communities of Middlesbrough yet the obligation to do so really rested jointly with the Police and the Local Authority.
- 32 There are however, other benefits in having CCTV besides arresting perpetrators of crime, and these are enhanced with having speakers operated by the CCTV control room. Ensuring the area is attractive to residents and visitors, by intercepting anti social behaviour, addressing litter, accidents and any begging all contribute to an improved environment.
- 33 The panel explored the views of the retail sector and was disappointed to find that poor communication was an issue, which had reduced confidence with retailers. The panel did not find any negative issues regarding the operation of retail security staff or the CCTV monitoring but the lack of immediate feedback from the control room had left security staff feeling isolated and potentially vulnerable. The panel was informed that the management are aware of this and that training and improved awareness sessions are being introduced to resolve these concerns.
- 34 The panel recognises from the voiceover survey that public opinion is not strong either way regarding CCTV. There is clearly an awareness of its presence by a substantial majority. However, the impact it has on making people feel safer or its actual impact on crime etc is relatively neutral. The panel understands the service approach to limiting awareness through marketing as a factor in maintaining a low profile and contributing to a sense of freedom. With the introduction of speakers and a relatively neutral response regarding public opinion of feeling safe the panel believes some further consideration should be given to the issue of improving public awareness.
- 35 The panel addressed the issue of selling extracts of CCTV footage, which show crimes, or anti social behaviour being undertaken. The panel is aware that selling footage does occur in other areas of the country and is often found being shown on television programmes. The panel considers that such actions do little more that sensationalise the issue of crime and anti social behaviour and would not support this action. The panel considers that any sale of footage showing damage, assault, robbery anti social behaviour etc can only present Middlesbrough in a negative way and that the Council should agree a policy which clearly states that the Council will not sell CCTV footage for financial gain.
- 36 The panel also found that there may be benefits in ensuring CCTV operators have some awareness training sessions on communication style/technique with the Police as occurs in Newcastle. This is to improve the ability to accurately convey detail in a way that the Police can interpret and respond accordingly. The panel considers that such sessions would benefit both the Police and the CCTV operators by equally ensuring the Police have a greater

understanding of the information available to the CCTY operator and the needs of operational Police.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 37 The panel has presented within this report a range of findings, which address the CCTV service in Middlesbrough. The panel presents its core recommendations below for the Executives consideration-
- A The panel considers the CCTV system is a powerful and invaluable tool for modern Police detection and prosecution and that discussions should be undertaken with the Police to secure a substantial financial contribution to the CCTV system. This to be achieved before budget setting in February 2009.
- B That the issue of Staff Training/Awareness be undertaken promptly in relation to two key areas.
- Communication/involvement with the Police to improve the awareness of the terminology used or required by operational Police officers.
 - Awareness and greater understanding to improve the communication between CCTV operators and the retail security staff. That a programme be established and introduced within 3 months of the Executive accepting this recommendation.
- C In recognition to the relatively neutral view the Public has regarding feeling safe due to CCTV. The panel considers that the issue of improving public awareness through publicity etc should be revisited and assessed on a regular basis to see if this would improve the publics opinion.
- D That the Council clearly establishes a policy, which states that clips or extracts of footage obtained from CCTV are not sold to generate income. As such extracts could present Middlesbrough very negatively.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 38 The panel is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular the co-operation we have received from the following: -

E Chicken
J Bonnar

Middlesbrough Council
Middlesbrough Council

L McDonald
A Little
S Sellers

Middlesbrough Council
Newcastle Police
Cleveland police (D.C.I.)

COUNCILLOR PERVAZ KHAN

CHAIR OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

OCTOBER 2008

Contact Peter Clark
Senior Scrutiny Officer
Performance and Policy Directorate
Telephone 01642 729708 (DDI)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

39 The following background papers were consulted or referenced to during this Scrutiny and in the compilation of this report:

- (a) Minutes of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panels of 9th July, 30th July, 27th August, 10th and 29th September 2008