



SCRUTINY

CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV) TASK GROUP

NOVEMBER 2015

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1. THE CHAIR'S FOREWORD

If I've learned one thing in my first eighteen months as a councillor for Kensal Green (and believe me I've actually learned hundreds) it's that CCTV is an emotive topic.

There are not many, or probably any, topics I receive more representations about than community safety. This can vary between the kind of low level anti-social behaviour (ASB) which brings a sense of insecurity and unease into our communities; to the infuriatingly selfish behaviour of fly-tippers; to the most serious crimes of all, like the two tragic murders my ward has witnessed in 2015.



When these discussions begin, it's not long before the first mention of CCTV and the following questions find a voice:

- *Would CCTV have deterred the perpetrator?*
- *Would CCTV have caught the perpetrator?*
- *Or were there cameras there which made no difference?*

It is because I know that CCTV is so important to my constituents that I did not think twice when the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, my friend and colleague Cllr Dan Filson, asked me to lead this review.

This is also the reason I was determined that the voices of local people – for whom the service exists in the first place – should be at the forefront of the investigation.

I ensured that our Task Group was not dominated solely by politicians by inviting a community activist from the south of the borough (Mike Wilson from Harlesden), and a community activist from the north of the borough (Sandria Terrelonge from Alperton) to join the team.

Their insight has been invaluable and they have contributed fully alongside my fellow Councillors – Janice Long and Lloyd McLeish – on the task group.

I also ensured all our meetings were held in public with local people invited to attend. At our first public meeting we held a lengthy discussion with representatives from various community groups about the public perception of CCTV.

We have learned a lot along the way and explored some surprising areas. Personally I did not fully appreciate the complexity of the law determining where and when a CCTV camera can be installed, before this investigation.

Likewise I had not anticipated the way in which a local authority's CCTV infrastructure can be used to raise additional revenue for local services.

Which of course brings us to the subject of money. We were aware from day one that due to the incredibly straightened times which local authorities find themselves in; none of our recommendations could require Brent Council to find more money it does not have. But where we have found new ways that the CCTV service can raise additional income, it is my firm belief that the service should be allowed to keep all of this income.

This report could never have been produced without the support of a whole network of people. I have already mentioned the four people who joined me on the task group and the other residents groups who took part in our meetings. I would like to thank them all for being so generous with their time and ideas.

I also would like to acknowledge the wide variety of expert witnesses from a variety of groups around Brent and beyond who gave us so many new ideas. Last, but certainly not least, my deep thanks goes to the many council officers who gave up their evenings to share their views, or welcomed us into their CCTV control room, and even went on trips to view best practice elsewhere.

In particular I'd like to thank Kisi Smith-Charlemagne and Chris Williams who were at all of our meetings and were quick to respond to any requests I made of them.

As I hope will become clear as you read this report; the officers who work in our CCTV service are extremely dedicated and knowledgeable. We are lucky to have them.

**Cllr Matt Kelcher, Kensal Green Ward
October 2015**

2. TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP



Cllr Matt Kelcher (Chair) was born in Belfast and raised in North Derbyshire, but has called Brent home for the last five years. He was honoured to be elected to represent his home ward of Kensal Green in 2014 and served as Assistant Cabinet Member for Employment and Skills for a year before being elected onto Brent's Scrutiny Committee. He graduated with a first in Politics from the University of Nottingham and recently completed an MA in Political Communication at City University London. In his day job Matt heads up the public affairs, policy and research work of an organisation representing Britain's charity shops. He has significant experience of policy making having previously served as a researcher and advisor on small business policy in Parliament and a policy officer in local government.



Cllr Janice Long represents Dudden Hill ward. Previously she has represented Harlesden and Mapesbury wards. She is Vice Chair of the Alcohol & Licensing committee and chairs Sub-committee C of A&L. Janice is a Governor at Newfield Primary. She was also a Board member of Brent Housing Partnership from 2002 before she stood down this year. As a councillor Janice has focused on housing, environment and transport issues. A life long resident of Willesden, south of Brent Janice knows the borough well and has used her experience as a councillor on this task group.



Cllr Lloyd McLeish has represented Harlesden ward in the London Borough of Brent since 2014. He was born, raised and educated in Brent where he has lived all his life and holds an Economics degree from the University of Greenwich. Since being elected to Brent Council Lloyd has sat on the Audit committee and Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing committee. He is a member of the Fabian society and has been a former member of the Unite trade union London Eastern regional political committee.



Mr Mike Wilson is a Brent resident, treasurer of the Harlesden Town Team, and Leader of its Public Realm Team. Mike is actively involved in an innovative 'Citizens CCTV' initiative locally, specifically targeted at combating fly tipping. Protecting rights of privacy whilst also recognising the contribution that CCTV can make in the fight against crime and antisocial behaviour of all sorts drives Mike's interest in the subject. Mike holds an M.A. from Oxford, and spent his business life as an entrepreneur in the music industry. In 'retirement' he looks after his young daughter, and continues to enjoy lifelong hobbies, which include rowing; golf; olive growing and music: performing jazz around London.



Ms Sandria Terrelonge is a Payroll and Accounts Supervisor for a market research company based in London, schooled in the North of England and has lived in Alperton Brent since the late 90s. Sandria keeps herself busy with her various activities and runs a badminton and netball club and plays at league level in both sports. In addition Sandria is keen to volunteer whenever she can and is currently one of the coordinators of the 'Heather Park Neighbourhood Watch'. Sandria also took part in the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremonies as a volunteer.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The task group has made over twenty individual recommendations, spread across the four key questions outlined in its Terms of Reference.

Each of these recommendations fall into one of five overarching themes which the task group believes should form the basis of Brent Council's future CCTV strategy.

1. Best practice

The Council should actively seek examples of excellent practice in other local authorities and integrate these into its own long term strategy, whilst always ensuring that systems in Brent are designed to respond to the borough's unique needs. All performance levels should be carefully benchmarked and measured.

2. Education and awareness

Public education about the role and impact of CCTV should become a council priority. The council should look for every opportunity to increase public awareness about the laws surrounding CCTV, its strengths and drawbacks. This should also allow the wider community to participate on an informed basis in decisions about CCTV.

3. Income generation

Brent Council should work to generate additional revenue from its existing CCTV infrastructure, for example through monetising ducts and 4G access points. Additional funds raised should be ring fenced to further improve the service.

4. Targeted transparency

Overall the council should be seeking to create a more targeted CCTV system with an increased focus on deployable cameras. All decisions about deployment should be made in a fully transparent way with the full involvement of residents.

5. Supportive environment

In order to ensure that officers who work in the Council's CCTV control room remain motivated their role in saving the authority money and keeping the community safe should be more widely recognised and integrated into the other work the council does.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Perception of CCTV

1. Brent Council should develop a concise summary of its CCTV policy to contain information on: the effectiveness of, and alternatives to CCTV; the constraints imposed by national legislation on CCTV; the cost of CCTV relative to the public purse. Most importantly, this document should set out clearly the criteria by which areas would become eligible for a deployable camera. This summary can be distributed to any resident or group who seeks a new camera – as well as all elected members – to increase public awareness of Brent’s policy towards CCTV. The language in the summary should be tested with local groups to ensure it can be understood by the target audience. A draft should also be presented to Scrutiny Committee for review.
2. Brent Council should give a public commitment that it will continue to maintain a public network of CCTV cameras in the borough to aid the goals of public reassurance and confidence and to demonstrate that the council understands the public’s concerns and is listening to them.
3. Brent Council’s policy towards CCTV should always take account of the priorities of the borough’s residents, for example on fly-tipping. These views should be gathered and confirmed by means of a survey or other public study.
4. Brent Council should never use dummy cameras as part of its CCTV strategy.
5. Brent Council should involve local community groups in “designing out” crime in their area, and provide them with a quick and easy way to report physical problems which may interfere with the effectiveness of local CCTV cameras.

Effectiveness of CCTV

6. Brent Council should develop new and measurable benchmarking criteria to monitor the internal performance of its CCTV team on a quarterly basis, to identify trends, improvements and regressions. These should be focussed on what the team exists to achieve. In terms of criminal acts, Operator Initiated Arrests (to be known as OIAs) should be measured to understand if the monitoring of our network is helping the police to apprehend offenders. In terms of fly-tipping, which as has been noted is extremely important to Brent residents, a system to measure the number of environmental issues resolved with the aid of CCTV should be developed. The percentage downtime of cameras should also be recorded to ensure that Brent’s contractors are providing a strong and standard service and that the areas identified as needing cover receive what they were promised. The Cabinet Member responsible for community safety should report these findings to Cabinet on an annual basis and the figures should also be made available to the Scrutiny Committee.
7. Brent Council should prioritise public education about CCTV and in particular it’s actual effectiveness and the effectiveness of alternatives.
8. Brent Council should work with other local authorities to establish a CCTV benchmarking network. Potential early partners would be the CCTV User Group or neighbouring boroughs.
9. Brent Council should work to actively publicise successes which derive from the CCTV network.

The Current Systems in Brent

10. Brent Council should develop a comprehensive list of all community and residents groups in the borough and the areas in which they operate – elected members would ideally be placed to help create this. When there is a change in camera coverage, possibly as a result of the regular mobile redeployments, the specific local group in the area affected should then also be informed on the same basis as elected members. The goal of this is to increase education and improve community relations by proactively informing residents about the council's community safety work. Likewise, all Neighbourhood Watch schemes should be notified of changes in camera coverage.
11. Brent Council should join up and improve communications between the CCTV control room and the departments which use their footage.
12. Brent Council should maintain the excellent local knowledge of its CCTV operators, if necessary through site visits to hotspots.
13. Brent Council should continue with its new emphasis on deployable units, but ensure all changes, and the reasons for these, are communicated clearly and effectively to all stakeholders.
14. Brent Council should seek to improve members' reports, with a particular focus on getting wards right and more information about the evidence base used when a decision about deployment is made.
15. Brent Council should use changes in CCTV as part of a wider communication strategy about combatting crime and anti-social behaviour.

Working Innovatively, Involving the Community and Securing Alternative Funding Sources

16. Brent Council should draft new planning guidelines in line with other stated council objectives, which make clear that where necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, developers should provide funds through S106 for the council to install CCTV to mitigate the impact of their development. To ensure revenue costs are not unduly encumbered by this process, the contribution should include a commuted sum for the repair and upkeep required over the lifetime of the camera. Further consideration should be given to the provision of other non-essential CCTV cameras via CIL, to investigate the likely costs and implications of doing so. The CCTV function should be part of all future planning considerations, to ensure new developments do not impinge upon the current network
17. Brent Council should require the Community Safety Team to prepare a report on how the council's CCTV strategy might be used for income generation, to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in early 2016.
18. Brent Council should commit that all money raised through the income maximisation strategy should be retained by the CCTV department to be reinvested to improve the CCTV service.
19. Brent Council should conduct a wide-ranging review of alternative funding sources which can be tapped into to provide CCTV, beginning with MOPAC.

20. Brent Council should develop a clear “can do” attitude about any innovative “Citizens CCTV” schemes and seek to increase the range of CCTV provision in the borough by such means.
21. Brent Council should develop a briefing document for citizens and resident’s groups offering clear signposts on further reading they must do, and places they must go for advice if they wish to develop a local, private CCTV network.
22. Brent Council should evaluate the possibilities of sharing its CCTV services with other boroughs to save costs. Any savings should be re-invested to improve the service.

5. INTRODUCTION – SCOPE OF THE TASK GROUP

History

Across the developed countries of the world today surveillance is part of everyday life and this has led to the acknowledgement that the UK is part of a surveillance society. The UK has experienced a massive growth in Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) since the 1980s and this was initially based on the assumption that CCTV was a solution for crime and disorder.

CCTV also became very useful in monitoring traffic. Britain first started using it for this purpose and thousands of cameras were placed all over the city to monitor traffic and to see if there were accidents. Since that time, they have been placed in vehicles such as taxis, buses and trains. They have also been placed in private areas such as car parks to attempt to decrease instances of vandalism.

Today CCTV is also common in the home. Many homes with security systems have this installed as an added security feature to prevent break-ins or unwelcome intruders. It is also used in many public areas including schools and airports to record any suspicious activity.

Councillors report that frequently, Brent residents will request CCTV cameras to be installed in their communities to tackle a perceived problem. It is for this reason that scrutiny members felt that it was the right time to conduct a review into the effectiveness of CCTV in Brent. The review focused on the prevention of anti-social behaviour, apprehending offenders, costs and alternative funding and the levels of reassurance given to residents.

The use of closed circuit television cameras for the purposes of tackling crime has greatly increased over the last decade. There is no official figure for how many cameras are in use, although a figure of 4.2 million, based on academic research, is often cited. Although the rationale for CCTV use is that it “prevents crime”, a number of studies have questioned the assumptions underlying this claim and drawn attention to a complex range of factors that should be taken into account when assessing CCTV’s effectiveness.

A 2007 report by the Campbell Collaboration claimed that CCTV has a “modest but significant desirable effect on crime” but that its use should be “more narrowly targeted” than at present.

Questions

The review considered the following questions in four key areas.

Public perceptions of CCTV

- Why do so many residents groups campaign for CCTV?
- What impact do residents think CCTV on their street will have?
- Does CCTV make people feel safer?

The effectiveness of CCTV

- Is CCTV an effective deterrent, what actual impact does it have?
- How many offenders are caught and prosecuted through CCTV footage?
- How can CCTV be benchmarked?
- What is the best cost/benefit analysis of CCTV available (e.g. cost of installing, monitoring, maintaining and upgrading versus cost of crimes)?

The current systems in Brent

- What are the current council processes in place for installing (and removing) cameras and monitoring their footage, how can this be improved?
- Does the council have the right policies in place to work with partner organisations such as the police?
- Which other local authorities have excellent practice and how do we compare?

Working innovatively, involving the community and securing alternative funding sources

- Are the community integrated into our CCTV policies and systems as much as they should be and how could this be improved?
- How can the council support community initiatives around “Citizens CCTV” and what is the current legislation in place concerning such schemes?

Aims

The aims of the review set out at the start of the investigation were as follows:

- A more focused use of current CCTV resources
- Better understanding of the CCTV needs for Brent
- More deterrent evidence linked to CCTV operations
- Stronger partnership working, with partners such as the Police, residents, social landlords and Wembley Park
- Enable residents to feel safer in Brent communities

6. METHODOLOGY

As part of this review the task group invited relevant partners to contribute through discussion groups, meetings and visits. Primarily, the task group started by collecting information about the national, regional and local picture on the use of CCTV. This included meetings with the Head of Service for Community Safety and the Lead Cabinet Member. The task group consulted with the UK's leading Consultant on CCTV and the Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

The task group decided to hold four themed discussion groups which reflected the key areas of the review. Local residents' groups were invited to attend along with officers and partners. As part of these discussion groups several members of the UK CCTV user group attended and added their expert knowledge which enriched the quality of the discussions held. Given the focus on identifying good practice elsewhere, the group visited the LB Hammersmith and Fulham and LB Enfield to view their Award winning and state of the art control rooms.

Partners: Group 1

- Relevant Council Departments
- Brent partners
- Local Residents Groups
- Local Business Groups

Partners: Group 2

- The Surveillance Camera Commissioner
- Specialist consultants
- National Local Authority CCTV User Group
- Best Practice Local Authorities

*A full list of participants of the task group's work can be found in section 10 of this report

7. POLICY CONTEXT

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) issued its first code of practice under the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) covering the use of CCTV in 2000. The code was developed to explain the legal requirements operators of surveillance cameras were required to meet under the Act and promote best practice. The code also addressed the inconsistent standards adopted across different sectors at that time and the growing public concern caused by the increasing use of CCTV and other types of surveillance cameras.

The unwarranted use of CCTV and other forms of surveillance cameras has led to a strengthening of the regulatory landscape through the passing of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (POFA). The POFA has seen the introduction of a new surveillance camera code, which focuses on the 12 guiding principles of surveillance issued by the Secretary of State since June 2013 and the appointment of a Surveillance Camera Commissioner to promote the code and review its operation and impact. The ICO has contributed to this tougher regulatory landscape by taking enforcement action to restrict the unwarranted and excessive use of increasingly powerful and affordable surveillance technologies.

Surveillance Commissioner

The Surveillance Camera Commissioner, (the Commissioner), is a statutory appointment made by the Home Secretary under Section 34 of the 2012 Act. The Commissioner's statutory functions are:

- Encouraging compliance with this code;
- Reviewing the operation of this code; and
- Providing advice about this code (including changes to it or breaches of it).

7.1. Brent

In Brent, we use CCTV to assist with efforts to combat crime and disorder, enforce bus lane offences, moving traffic contraventions and manage events around Wembley Stadium. We keep an eye on dangerous situations, locate suspects of crime and provide valuable support to the police, emergency services and other organisations because our CCTV recordings may be used as evidence for court cases.

Brent currently has 183 cameras in key locations throughout Brent with the majority in the following locations:

- 19 Neasden
- 21 Harlesden
- 43 Kilburn
- 69 Wembley

Brent cameras operate 24 hours a day; since April 2014 the control room is staffed Sunday-Thursday 0800-0400 and Fri/Sat 1000-0600. There is an agreement with Transport for London to allow Brent access to their cameras during emergencies. Brent is not responsible for private CCTV cameras.

Brent's CCTV team will:

- Report incidents to the emergency services
- Provide evidence for criminal or civil proceedings
- Help detect crime by working in partnership with the police and other law enforcement agencies
- Keep traffic moving in lanes through effective monitoring
- Work with the police to disrupt potential incidents

In early 2015 a Brent CCTV operative received a Certificate of Appreciation at the first Metropolitan Police CCTV Awards ceremony. He was nominated for his excellent work in spotting two crimes on CCTV at the end of last year.

7.2. London and National

The origins of CCTV provision for public space in this country lie in the early 1980s. Since then the use of CCTV systems has expanded gradually but significantly. The earliest systems were funded in a small number of cases by the police or local businesses, but in the majority of cases by local authorities through what were then known as City Challenge or Safer Cities Initiatives. Subsequent Government funding took the form of the CCTV Challenge Competition between 1994 and 1999, under which £38.5 million was made available for some 585 schemes nationwide.

In turn, between 1999 and 2003, major investment was made in public space CCTV through the Home Office-funded Crime Reduction Programme (CRP). A total of £170 million of capital funding was made available to local authorities following a bidding process. As a result of this funding, more than 680 CCTV schemes were installed in town centres and other public spaces. The end of the Crime Reduction Programme signalled the end of a dedicated central funding regime for public space CCTV. However, local areas continued to have access to Home Office grant monies in the form of general funding for crime reduction.

Most public space CCTV is now owned, monitored and managed by local authorities, many of whom have procured different systems at different times and with a range of different specifications, leading to a mix of schemes across the country. Although the Government has invested heavily in public space CCTV schemes, so too have local authorities and local partnerships. Local authorities also continue to carry much of the burden for the ongoing costs of running and maintaining their schemes.

8. KEY FINDINGS

8.1 Public Perception of CCTV

From the start of this investigation we were keen to understand how CCTV is perceived by ordinary members of the public, so that our recommendations could be developed with their views always in mind.

It quickly became clear that there is widespread public support for the use of CCTV in public places. For example, a recent poll commissioned by the CCTV User Group demonstrated that:

- 90% of people in the UK support the use of public area CCTV by Local Authorities and Public Bodies
- 82% believe CCTV saves money by reducing Police and Court time
- 63% believe that Crime and Disorder would increase if CCTV was removed in their area (appendix 1)

Furthermore, a 2013 survey by YouGov and Avigilon (a surveillance solutions company), found that 38% of people feel safe in areas where they know CCTV is being used because it acts as a deterrent, and a further 41% attribute the feeling of safety to the fact security forces can use the footage if anything were to happen.

Our qualitative research in the local area revealed that the views of Brent residents about CCTV marry up the national picture.

The first public meeting of our task group focused on local public perceptions, with representatives of various community groups given time to speak about their views on the use of CCTV in Brent.

All those in attendance strongly supported the council maintaining a CCTV network with people believing it to be an effective deterrent and something which has made a difference in their community. One of the comments on the night was; "I would think twice about going out in the dark if there were no cameras, especially in places where it's dark or there are overgrown bushes and poor lighting." This was very typical of the attitudes of those local residents we met.

In addition, evidence we received from local property developers, indicated that the presence of CCTV in new residential developments is viewed as a key selling point. People in Brent, or moving into our borough, will choose where to purchase or rent homes on the basis of perceived security, of which CCTV is a key feature.

In the opinion of the task group, this sense of reassurance is, a perhaps intangible, but nonetheless positive benefit to Brent of the council maintaining a CCTV network.

We are therefore pleased that the council agreed to protect the CCTV budget in its two year budget passed in 2015. None of our recommendations call for this budget to be further increased, but we do feel that the role of CCTV in saving the council money – and in some areas of potentially generating new revenue – should be more frequently recognised.

The future strategy of the council around CCTV should bear in mind this support, but also seek to build systems which meet the priorities of our residents. We discussed this matter with Professor of Criminology, Martin Gill. He emphasised how every local authority's CCTV strategy should be developed to tackle the local area's unique needs.

We are in no doubt that prime amongst these needs in Brent is the issue of fly-tipping:

- All elected councillors on the task group stated that fly-tipping is one of the complaints they most frequently receive.
- Community representatives on the task group have similar experiences in dealing with local problems.
- More than half of local residents who attended our aforementioned public meetings, stated that fly-tipping was the main problem that they would like CCTV to address.

We therefore hope that all future decisions about CCTV take account of local needs. One example may be that additional deployable cameras for fly-tipping hotspots may be prioritised ahead of fixed cameras for other crimes.

Despite this clear public support, our interviews demonstrated that local residents also understand that CCTV is never a panacea which will solve all problems. At the same time as calling for CCTV, witnesses we heard from also highlighted poor lighting, overgrown trees, and building designs as issues to address. They felt that CCTV would be more effective with these changes in place, as well as the changes making the areas safer in themselves. We believe that the council should make it very quick and easy for residents to report such problems in public spaces.

As part of our work we discussed the issue of dummy cameras and were reassured to learn that the council does not support or operate any dummies. Some may see the idea of dummy cameras as being superficially attractive. They could potentially give the impression of wider coverage across Brent and, therefore, contribute to the goals of public reassurance and deterrence.

However, from the testimony of the many expert witnesses we interviewed, it became clear that once it becomes common knowledge that some cameras within a network are fakes, overall faith in the system decreases. It is, therefore, little wonder that this practice is discouraged in the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's code of practice, not least because there have been instances of legal cases whereby victims of crime have brought lawsuits against authorities they believed were monitoring them through cameras which were in fact fakes.

Finally, our investigation into public perceptions made it clear that residents, and resident groups, who have contacted the council about CCTV have received very different responses. We even heard examples of community groups asking the council for new CCTV coverage in their area, and receiving no reply at all.

We believe this is unacceptable. Not only should Brent residents always receive the best response possible from their council, but an opportunity to educate the public about CCTV is missed. It is our strong preference that clear criteria explaining when an area may be eligible for CCTV is laid out, so that this can be given to anyone making contact with the council. We believe that if people are given the clear facts they will be more satisfied by the council's response, even if a camera cannot be provided.

Key recommendations

- ★ Brent Council should develop a concise summary of its CCTV policy to contain information on: the effectiveness of, and alternatives to, CCTV; the constraints imposed by national legislation on CCTV; the cost of CCTV relative to the public purse. Most importantly, this document should set out clearly the criteria by which areas would become eligible for a deployable camera.

- ★ This summary can be distributed to any resident or group who seeks a new camera – as well as all elected members – to increase public awareness of Brent’s policy towards CCTV.
- ★ The language in the summary should be tested with local groups to ensure it can be understood by the target audience. A draft should also be presented to Scrutiny Committee for review,

Other recommendations

- Brent Council should give a public commitment that it will continue to maintain a public network of CCTV cameras in the borough to aid the goals of public reassurance and confidence and to demonstrate that the Council understands the public’s concerns and is listening to them.
- Brent Council’s policy towards CCTV should always reflect the priorities of the borough’s residents, for example on fly-tipping. These views should be gathered and confirmed by means of a survey or other public study.
- Brent Council should never use dummy cameras as part of its CCTV strategy.
- Brent Council should involve local community groups in “designing out” crime in their area, and provide them with a quick and easy way to report physical problems which may interfere with the effectiveness of local CCTV cameras.

8.2 Effectiveness of CCTV

We are aware that there are clear limitations on the deterrence effect of CCTV. This was witnessed first-hand by members of the task group as we saw drug deals taking place in clear sight of a camera from the CCTV monitoring room at Brent Civic Centre.

This was backed up further by the evidence of witnesses at our meetings, in particular local police officers, and industry research such as, *Assessing the impact of CCTV* (appendix 2).

It would seem that CCTV has very little effect on violent and serious crime, as these are often not pre-meditated, but can have a greater impact on vehicle crimes and theft such as shoplifting and pickpocketing. We also found that CCTV has the greatest deterrent impact in the first few months after installation, but over the long-term criminals will move their activities elsewhere or find ways to get around the new camera.

Benchmarking the performance of Brent’s CCTV systems against those of other local authorities is difficult, as there is no local authority benchmarking system in place. Benchmarking data provided by the police varied widely, and as a task group we have little confidence in it. Testimony from local police officers informed us of how different boroughs measure different indicators and the definition for these indicators can also be interpreted differently.

However, we are more confident that Brent could benchmark the periodic performance of our CCTV to understand if it is improving or worsening over time. This happens already in a limited capacity - for example via data captured using the Geographic Information System (GIS) (appendix 3, 4 & 5) – but we feel this could be improved.

Most notably, we believe Brent can learn from best practicing local authorities such as the neighbouring borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Hammersmith and Fulham monitor their own internal performance by measuring the average downtime of a camera (the lower the better), and the number of incidents reported by a camera operator which lead to an arrest (the higher the better).

Of course, spotting criminal acts and reporting them is not the only aspect of a camera operator's job, and we recognise their much wider value. However, this does seem to be a performance measure it would be relatively straight forward to introduce. If other benchmarking opportunities present themselves which cover other aspects of the role, we would encourage Brent to start to measure these as well.

We also feel that the Council could improve its reputation amongst residents by better publicising successes brought about through CCTV. This will demonstrate that the Council is taking action on the matters which local people are interested in. For example, we heard about a pedestrianised street in the south of the borough where local people have complained that the camera on the street was not monitored as people were able to drive down it with impunity. This camera actually belongs to a contractor, but nonetheless it was clear that Brent Council were the organisation most blamed for a perceived lack of monitoring.

In actual fact several hundred fines have been levied on drivers committing this offence. In our opinion, greater knowledge of this fact in the local area would increase confidence in the council and improve the deterrence effect of the camera. This principle should equally apply to cameras maintained by partners or contractors, whose positive performance could be promoted by the council's communications team.

Key recommendations

- ★ Brent Council should develop new and measurable benchmarking criteria to monitor the internal performance of its CCTV team on a quarterly basis, to identify trends, improvements and regressions. These should be focussed on what the team exists to achieve. In terms of criminal acts, Operator Initiated Arrests (to be known as OIAs) should be measured to understand if the monitoring of our network is helping the police to apprehend offenders. In terms of fly-tipping, which as has been noted is extremely important to Brent residents, a system to measure the number of environmental issues resolved with the aid of CCTV should be developed.
- ★ The percentage downtime of cameras should also be recorded to ensure that Brent's contractors are providing a strong and standard service and that the areas identified as needing cover receive what they were promised.
- ★ The Cabinet Member responsible for community safety should report these findings to Cabinet on an annual basis and the figures should also be made available to the Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

- Brent Council should prioritise public education about CCTV and in particular its actual effectiveness and the effectiveness of alternatives.
- Brent Council should work with other local authorities to establish a CCTV benchmarking network. Potential early partners would be the CCTV User Group or neighbouring boroughs.
- Brent Council should work to actively publicise successes which derive from the CCTV network.

8.3 The Current Systems in Brent

Brent's CCTV control room is located in a small, fairly secluded area within the Civic Centre. On a visit to the control room, many of the task group members felt that people working there could be isolated from the rest of the council's teams. We believe it is important that the CCTV team are supported and recognised for the good work they do. For example, when an operator spots an environmental crime and passes this onto the appropriate team

for action, they are not informed of the results of their report. Learning that they have helped to catch an offender could be very good for morale.

This will require coordination across departments, but we feel this morale-boosting idea is eminently achievable.

The current operators have excellent knowledge of the areas within Brent they are monitoring and it is important that this local knowledge remains within the CCTV team, particularly as Brent moves to a more deployable CCTV system.

The council has recently acquired ten new cameras which can more easily be moved around to respond to evidence demonstrating a need for a new camera. This takes place on a quarterly basis.

We were also encouraged to learn that Brent Council is beginning to connect the network up through its own fibre ducting and new 4G and Wi-Fi transmissions. This reduces the overall cost of the network and Brent's reliance on BT networks.

Brent's CCTV team have recently begun to send out messages to all elected members informing them when cameras are re-deployed and the reasons for this. The whole task group saw examples of these messages and felt that this was a positive development as local councillors are best placed to communicate new policies and arrangements to the groups and individuals in their wards who will be most affected.

We understand that this is a new process and still has some issues which need to be resolved. For example, wards in the report we saw were mis-labelled which could lead to confusion or information not passed to the right groups.

Local Joint Action Groups (LJAG's) are involved in the decisions about where CCTV cameras should be deployed or removed. However, we feel that public understanding and awareness about LJAGs is limited to say the least. Providing residents with more information about this decision-making process and how they can pass suggestions to LJAGs could improve council intelligence and also contribute to our broad goal of greater public education and transparency.

We recognise that there are obstacles to achieving this, in particular structural and membership changes within the local groups the council may wish to contact and involve. But overall, we feel that the council currently has limited information on specific residents' groups operating on community safety issues across the borough, and, as a result, cannot provide many groups with particular information in advance. It is, of course the responsibility of both the council and the resident groups themselves to ensure that information held by the council is correct, but Brent could certainly do more to collect this information.

As noted earlier, CCTV is not the only resource available to the council to improve community safety. *Smart Water* is a traceable liquid and proprietary forensic asset marking system that is applied to personal, commercial, and industrial items of value to deter theft and to identify culprits for prosecution. The liquid leaves a long lasting and unique identifier, whose presence is invisible to the naked eye except under an ultraviolet black light.

We discussed the example of *Smart Water* with witnesses including local police and learned that during a recent campaign to increase the use of *Smart Water* in Brent, the product was successfully used as a hook on which to hang a broader publicity and awareness campaign about burglary. Using the roll out of *Smart Water* to bring attention to the issue in an area had tangible results and the publicity generated was deemed to be as essential to this as the product itself.

We feel that publicising CCTV initiatives – such as the purchase of new deployable devices – could have a similar positive impact.

Key recommendations

- ★ Brent Council should develop a comprehensive list of all community and residents groups in the borough and the areas in which they operate – elected members would ideally be placed to help create this. When there is a change in camera coverage, possibly as a result of the regular mobile redeployments, the specific local group in the area affected should then also be informed on the same basis as elected members. The goal of this is to increase education and improve community relations by proactively informing residents about the council's community safety work.
- ★ Likewise, all Neighbourhood Watch schemes should be notified of changes in camera coverage.

Other recommendations

- Brent Council should join up and improve communications between the CCTV control room and the departments which use their footage.
- Brent Council should maintain the excellent local knowledge of its CCTV operators, if necessary through site visits to hotspots.
- Brent Council should continue with its new emphasis on deployable units, but ensure all changes, and the reasons for these, are communicated clearly and effectively to all stakeholders.
- Brent Council should seek to improve members' reports, with a particular focus on getting wards correct and more information about the evidence base used when a decision about deployment is made.
- Brent Council should use changes in CCTV as part of a wider communication strategy about combatting crime and anti-social behaviour.

8.4 Working Innovatively, Involving the Community and Securing Alternative Funding Sources

Throughout our review, the task group learnt a considerable amount about the legislative test which must be met before any camera can be installed by a public body like a council.

Data protection laws are rigorously enforced around cameras, meaning that there must be a clear reason given for needing a camera – with evidence to back this up - before a CCTV camera can be installed. Local authorities must apply to a court of law using a Regulated Investigatory Powers Application (RIPA) form (appendix 6) to ensure that the reasons are justifiable, there is consultation with those most likely to be affected, and the impact on their privacy is assessed and any appropriate safeguards are put in place.

Proportionate consultation and engagement with the public and partners (including the police) is an important part of assessing whether there is a legitimate aim and a pressing need and whether the camera itself is a proportionate response. Such consultation and engagement also provides an opportunity to identify any concerns and modify plans so that the most appropriate balance between public protection and individual privacy is struck.

These overarching laws prevent the council from pursuing an unfettered policy of installing new cameras. However, we believe there are several ways the council can work innovatively to secure additional funds to improve the service.

We were disappointed to learn that Brent currently has no specific policies within its planning and regeneration strategy to increase provision of CCTV in the borough through development requirements.

By contrast, we were told by officers at the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, that their council require all new developments to provide funds through either Section 106 (S106) or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to install new cameras to increase the council's network. We were impressed by this arrangement which has enjoyed significant cross-party support in the Borough, even through the council's recent dramatic change in political control. This has allowed Hammersmith and Fulham to install approximately twice as many cameras as we have in Brent, without any capital costs to the council.

Of course, cameras still require maintenance and incur annual costs. But we were told of CIL arrangements where enough money was handed over to the council to install a camera and maintain it over its expected lifetime.

We believe that Brent could do more to use the planning system to maintain and improve the local CCTV network. Troublingly, the maintenance of CCTV provision has also not been considered in some local developments, which once erected have blocked the views of cameras already installed. This means that the council has had to pay for these cameras to be moved or decommissioned when these costs should fall on the developer who made them redundant.

Furthermore, the infrastructure required for a council to operate a full CCTV network can be monetised to provide additional funds for the authority, but Brent is currently not taking full advantage of this. To run a CCTV network an authority needs to install ducts, camera poles, 4G transmission points and CCTV cable. Funds can be raised from each of these pieces of equipment, for example by charging for access to the quick Internet connections. The task group believes that if the infrastructure is in Brent anyway, we may as well also generate income from it.

MOPAC (The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) provide grants for particular safer neighbourhood's projects. We feel the council could do more to encourage community partners to attract some of these funds to Brent.

Likewise, funds could potentially be saved by sharing the CCTV service across authorities. We have good monitoring facilities in the Civic Centre and believe it is certainly possible that other councils may wish to pay for Brent to monitor their feeds.

The task group also heard from a community group who worked to develop a local "Citizens CCTV" model, which would raise funds for a deployable camera to be targeted at fly-tipping hotspots. We were alarmed to learn that this group had received, to say the least, a less than helpful response from Brent Council. In some instances the council appeared to be working to actively discourage this project which had strong local support and could increase camera coverage in the borough.

Fortunately, a corner now seems to have been turned, with the council providing more effective assistance to the community group and we hope this change of attitude will be permanent.

The council's legal department cannot provide binding legal advice to private citizens, and so we understand that people seeking to take the initiative in this way will always have to seek independent legal advice. However, the council can make people aware of the particular laws and regulations which may come into play around their conduct, and hopefully they will provide this kind of service in future.

Key recommendations

- ★ Brent Council should draft new planning guidelines in line with other stated council objectives, which make clear that where necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, developers should provide funds through S106 for the council to install CCTV to mitigate the impact of their development. To ensure revenue costs are not unduly encumbered by this process, the contribution should include a commuted sum for the repair and upkeep required over the lifetime of the camera. Further consideration should be given to the provision of other non-essential CCTV cameras via CIL, to investigate the likely costs and implications of doing so.
- ★ The CCTV function should be part of all future planning considerations, to ensure new developments do not impinge upon the current network.

Other recommendations

- Brent Council should require the Community Safety Team to prepare a report on how the council's CCTV strategy might be used for income generation, to be presented to Scrutiny Committee in early 2016.
- Brent Council should commit that all money raised through the income maximisation strategy should be retained by the CCTV department to be reinvested to improve the CCTV service.
- Brent Council should conduct a wide-ranging review of alternative funding sources which can be tapped into to provide CCTV, beginning with MOPAC.
- Brent Council should develop a clear "can do" attitude about any innovative "Citizens CCTV" schemes and seek to increase the range of CCTV provision in the borough by such means.
- Brent Council should develop a briefing document for citizens and resident's groups offering clear signposts on further reading they must do, and places they must go for advice if they wish to develop a local, private CCTV network.
- Brent Council should evaluate the possibilities of sharing its CCTV services with other boroughs to save costs. Any savings should be re-invested in to improve the service.

9. CONCLUSION

The legal regime around the use of CCTV cameras is strict, and the direction of travel set from central government is set to only get stricter. The Surveillance Camera Commissioner's code of practice is set to extend out from police and local authorities to cover all public institutions.

It has therefore never been more important for councils to become beacons of best practice and set an example to all their local partners on how CCTV should be used.

This report has set out some key mechanisms by which this can be achieved.

Firstly, it has given examples of some leading best practices which Brent should seek to adopt, but also provided evidence of local needs unique to Brent, which should be at the heart of everything we design. It has provided examples of how the performance of the council's CCTV systems can be benchmarked and measured to ensure that any regressions are quickly identified and addressed.

Secondly, it has identified the vital role that public education can play in building confidence in the CCTV system. Increasing public awareness of the facts around CCTV is especially important in an era of tightening laws and tightening budgets.

Thirdly, it has shown how additional revenue can potentially be raised through the council's CCTV infrastructure and highlighted how this should be ring fenced to improve the valued CCTV service the council provides.

Fourthly, it has highlighted the benefits of switching to a more deployable system of cameras and of involving and educating the community about such redeployments.

Fifthly, it has emphasised the importance of a supportive environment for the council's CCTV staff and recognised the great work they do.

We look forward to seeing these changes in action.

10. PARTICIPANTS, REFERENCES AND APPENDICES

Participants

London Borough of Brent:	Director of Community Services
	Head of Community Safety & Public Protection
	CCTV Manager and CCTV Team
	Brent Legal Team
Government Agencies	Surveillance Camera Commissioner
	Information Commissioners Office
Non Government Organisations	Academic at Leicester University
	National/London CCTV User Group
Brent Partners	Brent Housing Partnership
	Quintain - Wembley Park
	Brent Police
Brent Resident Groups	Heather Park Neighbourhood Watch
	Dudden Hill Residents Association
	Sudbury Town Team
	St Raphael's Housing Estate Residents Association
	Vale Farm Residents Association
CCTV Service Provider:	Tyco International Ltd
Other Local Authorities	LB Enfield
	LB Hammersmith & Fulham

References:

The task group referred to a number of reports in the course of its work. Key documents include:

1. In the picture: *A data protection code of practice for surveillance cameras and personal information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Guidance, 2015*
2. The Surveillance Camera Code of Practice: *Home Office Guidance issued under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012; June 2013*
3. Online CCTV survey: *YouGov and Avigilon, 2013*
4. The Price of Privacy: Big Brother Watch, 2012
5. CCTV and its effectiveness in tackling crime: *House of Commons, Home Affairs 2010*
6. National CCTV strategy: *Home Office, 2007*
7. Assessing the impact of CCTV, *Professor Martin Gill, 2005*

Table of Appendix

	Appendices
1	An independent public opinion survey on the use and value of CCTV in public areas commissioned by the CCTV user group and undertaken by RNS Research International 2011
2	Assessing the impact of CCTV, <i>Professor Martin Gill 2005</i>
3	Data captured - Brent CCTV Geographic Information System CCTV Incidents
4	Data captured - Brent CCTV Geographic Information System ASB
5	Data captured - Brent CCTV Geographic Information System Fly-Tipping
6	Regulated Investigatory Powers Application (RIPA)
7	Regulated Investigatory Powers Application (RIPA) review form
8	Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) Fly-tipping actions reported by local authorities in 2013-14
9	The Surveillance Camera Code of Practice: Home Office Guidance issued under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012; June 2013
10	In the picture: A data protection code of practice for surveillance cameras and personal information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Guidance, 2015
11	CCTV Scrutiny task group Terms of Reference