



Cabinet
20 January 2016

Report from the Chief Executive

Scrutiny Task Group report on Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This task group has been requested by the Scrutiny Members in response to Brent resident's requests for increased levels of CCTV in the borough.
- 1.2 The purpose of the task group is to analyse and understand the effectiveness of CCTV in Brent and its impact on reducing anti social behaviour crime, and, to review policies and processes in comparison to others and best practice.
- 1.3 The review was concerned with the perception and attitudes of resident's, and, the deterrence of crime for Brent communities. The review also focused on apprehending offenders, costs and alternative funding and the levels of reassurance given to residents.
- 1.4 The review is aligned with borough priorities, such as 'Working in partnership with citizens and building stronger residents and council relationships'. And 'Continuing to reduce crime and making people feel safer'.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Cabinet consider the contents of the CCTV task group's report.
- 2.2 Members of the Cabinet approve the 22 recommendations made by the task group and support the development of an action plan across the council and partner organisations to take these forward.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The task group reviewed the local arrangements of the council and its partner's, national research and guidelines, and, heard the views and opinions from local residents and businesses. The task group consulted with experts in this field and other London boroughs which were identified as leaders in CCTV. The task group reviewed a number of concerns in the use of CCTV; which formed the focus and key areas of the review, these included:

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?

3.2 The task group has made twenty two 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.

3.3 CCTV Task Group 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.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None of the recommendations in this report require significant upfront investment from Brent Council. Some recommendations require officer time to conduct further investigations into income generation, but the task group are positive that this will have an overall net financial benefit to the council

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 Citizen’s CCTV

The council can not provide legal advice on “Citizen’s CCTV”. Schemes are residents’ schemes and are not council schemes, residents who provide these schemes must ensure that they comply with the law, especially the Data Protection Act 1998, and guidance issued by the Information Commissioner’s Office and the Surveillance Camera Commissioner’s code of practice. The running of any such scheme and ensuring its compliance with the law is not the council’s responsibility.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 .None

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 The following Brent services and partners would be affected by the recommendations made:
 - Brent Community Safety & Public Protection
 - Brent CCTV Team
 - Brent Legal Service
 - Brent Waste Enforcement Services/Public Realm
 - Brent Planning Services

Background Papers

CCTV task group Scope and Terms of Reference (September 2015)

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