

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP  
VIEWS ON CCTV**

**(Report by Head of Environmental & Community Health Services as  
Chairman of the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide background information to Members of value of CCTV: the view of the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership (HCSP).

**2 BACKGROUND TO REPORT**

- 2.1 The Chairman of the HCSP received a request from Chairman of O&S (Social Well-Being) Panel on 18 November 2010 for the HCSP view of value of CCTV. The request was prompted as this is a very current and potentially contentious issue at Economic Scrutiny Panel and further information was needed to inform a budget decision (due in February 2011),

**3. BACKGROUND TO THE VIEWS**

- 3.1 The next meeting of the HCSP is not until 16 December 2010 and the last was on 14 October which pre-dated these proposals. This schedule gives insufficient time for the partnership to debate the issue and report to the Panel in good time. Therefore the Chairman penned a draft response which was circulated to the HCSP members for comment on 19 November 2010.

- 3.2 The Community Safety Partnership was informed on 14 October 2010 of the Strategic Assessment of Crime and Disorder in Huntingdonshire (Autumn 2009-Summer 2010). Within that document they were told that Huntingdonshire is a relatively low-crime area and: Crime has gone down in Huntingdonshire by 8.3%; There have been good reductions across most types of crime; Increasing concern relating to some forms of violent crime. The main findings for town centre crime were as follows:

- Huntingdon town centre has the highest volume of offences (although the victim section shows that shop lifting here has come down steadily over the last few years)
- Other thefts in Huntingdon are relatively high compare to elsewhere
- There has been no change in the level of violent offences in Huntingdon despite violence in Huntingdon being a partnership priority

The main findings for violence near licensed premises were as follows:

- The pub / club cluster of most concern continues to be Huntingdon
- Part of the St Neots cluster is also of concern

The main findings for criminal damage were as follows:

- The main locations of concern are St Neots and Huntingdon

- 3.3 A the time of writing three members of the HCSP have offered individual comments on CCTV for consideration in addition to the Chairman's comment.

#### **4. HCSP VIEW OF VALUE OF CCTV**

- 4.1 Luminus supported the Chairman's statement and suggested "It is vital... that robust evidence is made available to the HCSP as to the effectiveness of CCTV in Huntingdonshire so that the Partnership can come to an informed view about the provision of the CCTV service as early as possible in 2011. We will then be able to use that evidence to lobby for an appropriate CCTV service in 2012-13 and beyond".
- 4.2 Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service noted "With the work we have been involved with and using cameras as a catch/convict and also a deterrent. I am confident this will have a detrimental impact on ASB and criminal damage in the areas identified as risk areas. I appreciate this is a cost exercise, the cost comparison of maintaining the CCTV service compared with increased cost of policing and damage may be a good way to justify the retention of some sort of CCTV, all be it a reduced one."
- 4.3 The Police Authority representative made no comment on behalf of the Authority but offered a personal observation: "I should declare an interest here because Stilton Parish Council, of which I am chair is, this week, taking advantage of a grant from Cambridgeshire Constabulary to extend CCTV coverage to include most of our main village centre. At present the coverage is our playing field including skate park, and fortuitously part of High Street. The Parish Council decided we must afford this extension because of the good effects of the coverage we presently enjoy. The skate park is well used because parents are confident it is safe and ASB on the field has declined dramatically. That includes underage drinking and drug taking. By extending the coverage we hope to have a similar effect on the ASB that occurs regularly in the village centre where there is a youth drop- in centre and, more critically, 4 pubs and an Indian restaurant. Stilton Parish Council feel that the effect of CCTV is cost-saving in that far fewer calls have been made to the police since CCTV was installed and the level of complaints to the Parish Council has dropped. Caretaking costs on the field are lower now we don't have to keep a look out for drug taking equipment. Also, in the future we intend to build a community hall and further sporting and leisure facilities on the field ,confident that there is protection against vandalism of the type we used to suffer. I realise that Stilton's experience is insignificant in the grand scheme of things but I do feel that more CCTV in the smaller communities rather than less could cut the work of [Neighbourhood Policing Teams] NPT's. Can I stress that my remarks are on behalf of my community and in no way represent those of the Police Authority at this time."
- 4.3 The Chairman of HCSP offered the following comments: The Divisional Commander has been made aware of the proposals regarding the modifications of availability of CCTV in Huntingdonshire. She acknowledged the benefit of CCTV in Huntingdonshire to the Police Service; principally in providing visual evidence of wrong-doing and encouraging and early admission of guilt (thereby saving both the time of the Courts and police-officers' time in fewer abortive Court appearances). She had no immediate concerns about a reduction to the basic service in Year 1 (as proposed in the report). It was acknowledged that more information may be required to assess the impact of later moth-balling (2012-13). It was understood that HDC's Streetscene Manager, was collating any information available on behalf of HDC. A request was made that the Police Service consider providing evidence of use/savings but it was unclear whether

such information could be extracted from the Police-data available. Details of national research that has been undertaken were provided. It was discussed that part of the consideration of the future for CCTV could include discussions with neighbouring authorities and other agencies; although it was recognised that technological compatibility and communication/cabling issue may well act as significant constraints. It was suggested that it was likely that the Streetscene Manager's report may touch on these areas. In summary: The HCSP is reassured that the draft-budget report includes proposals for maintenance of a basic CCTV service for next year (2011-12). In relation to full-mothballing at a later date (as proposed in the report) it is suggested that more information may be required, but that there will be time during 2011-12 to undertake that work."

## **5. NATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS**

- 5.1 There was a study, undertaken in 2005, on behalf of the Home Office to assess the impact of CCTV. They concluded - [Where] "cameras were installed exclusively in car parks in order to reduce vehicle crime.... Previous studies have shown CCTV to be particularly effective against these types of crime in car parks." The 2005 study "shows a steady decrease in crime as car parks became live, suggesting that in this system the reduction in vehicle crime could be attributed to the installation of CCTV."
- 5.2 "It has been shown that the CCTV schemes produced no overall effect on all relevant crime viewed collectively". "The [2005] results indicate that the CCTV schemes that have been assessed had little overall effect on crime levels. Even where changes have been noted, with the exception of those relating to car park....could in fact represent either chance variation or confounding factors. However, there are some characteristics of CCTV systems which appear to influence crime levels. Those systems providing a high level of coverage appear to show a greater reduction in crime than those that do not, and the effect is increased where the area covered by the cameras is enclosed."
- 5.3 "It would be easy to conclude from the information presented in this report that CCTV is not effective: the majority of the schemes evaluated did not reduce crime and even where there was a reduction this was mostly not due to CCTV; nor did CCTV schemes make people feel safer, much less change their behaviour. That, however, would be too simplistic a conclusion"...." crime rates appeared to the authors to be a poor measure of the effectiveness of CCTV." ".... The importance of the crime-fighting role that CCTV plays in [evidence being passed to the police] should not be underestimated. Some weight should be attached to the retrospective use of CCTV images for evidential purposes."

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 People would wish to receive evidence on which to base decisions. However, the use of crime rates to measure the effectiveness of CCTV is flawed. A request has been made that the Police Service consider providing evidence of use/savings but it is doubtful whether such information can be extracted from the Police-data available.
- 6.2 Previous studies have shown CCTV to be particularly effective against crime in car parks. There were 743 vehicle crimes (theft from or theft of vehicles) in Huntingdonshire between September 2009 and August 2010. This was a reduction of 168 crimes from the previous period. The location of these crimes seems to be away from current CCTV coverage as there were only 13 crimes recorded in all the HDC secure car parks last year (2009/10). When questioned

32.5% (143 from 439) of respondents thought break-ins & damage to vehicles was a problem with only 11.4% (50 from 439) reporting it wasn't a problem at all.

- 6.3 There appears to be no immediate concerns about the impact of a basic service during 2011-12; but more information may be required in relation to full-mothballing at a later date. The investigation may need to include discussions with neighbouring authorities and other agencies about any mutually beneficial method of maintaining CCTV surveillance in part of Huntingdonshire; there will be time during 2011-12 to undertake that work. The next budget round will not commence until November 2011; this gives nine months for further enquiries.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Home Office Research Study 292:** Assessing the impact of CCTV by Martin Gill & Angela Spriggs published by Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate  
February 2005

**Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership 2010 Strategic Assessment**  
County Research Group on behalf of HCSP October 2010

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