HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

INFORMAL NOTES of the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee visit on Monday March 1st 2011 at 6.00 pm at Southwark Police Station, 323 Borough High Street, London SE1.

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Councillors Gavin Edwards (Chair), Linda Manchester (Vice-Chair), Kevin Ahern, Claire Hickson, Wilma Nelson, Michael Situ, Mariam Facey (Co-opted Member) and John Nosworthy (Co-opted Member).
ALSO PRESENT:	Councillor Richard Livingston – Cabinet Member Eden Geddes – CCTV & Coordination Manager Ian Gentry – CCTV Operations Manager Caroline Thwaites – Metropolitan Police Christine Macmaster - CCTV & Coordination Manager Fitzroy Williams – Scrutiny Project Assistant

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Poddy Clark.

2. **SOUTHWARK AND LEWISHAM CCTV CONTROL ROOM VISIT**

2.1 **Southwark Police Station**

The timetable for the visits was as follows:-

2.2 18:00 p.m. – Meet in the reception of the Borough Police Station
18:10 p.m. – Welcome and introductions
18:15 p.m. – Overview of Southwark Community Safety CCTV & Digital Upgrade
19:00 p.m. – Mini bus to depart for Lewisham
19:30 p.m. – Visit to Lewisham CCTV (recent upgrade)
21:00 p.m. – Close
21:15 p.m. – Minibus leaves for the Borough/Tooley Street
21:45 p.m. – End.

2.3   This was an informal visit to the CCTV control rooms of Southwark and Lewisham, members were allowed access to the facilities and asked questions of the managers in charge of the control rooms.

2.4   Members were welcomed to the control room, Eden Geddes and Ian Gentry introduced themselves and provided members with the following information. There were 160 town centre cameras which were in operation 24 hours, 7 days of the week. Images were recorded on VHS tapes which would soon become obsolete and some monitors were starting to fail and needed replacing. The way forward would be to replace old monitors with flat screen monitors which are used to capture digital images. Members were also informed that data captured would not be held for more than 31 days.

2.5   The Community Safety CCTV began in 2009/10 and implemented a new management system which is monitored from august to august each year. There were 5,000 incidents recorded last year and are currently involved with 60-70 reviews with partners, which included community safety, community wardens, trading standards, health and safety, housing and the police.

2.6   Members were informed that there were presently 3 live links to the police station, which are used to alert them of any incidents, it was also reported that 40 recordings were released each month to go to court in prosecution cases.

2.7   The control room also has access to 71 TFL cameras in Southwark which can be used to link the borough up from north to south. TFL own these cameras but have given access as the images produced provide clear images for the purpose of prosecution cases. Cameras on buses are a future project which could also be linked to the control centre and the police.

2.8   Cameras on the underground are not available to CCTV but they will be in the near future due to the working partnership programme. Members were also informed that cameras were not linked to any underpasses in the borough.

2.9   Officers informed members that reported crime and anti-social behaviour was presently being mapped and upgraded to the unit and valuable evidence can be collated and used at a later date for prosecution purposes. It was also reported that officers were checking cameras to see if they were in the correct positions to capture any crimes.

        New recorders have been positioned in the north of the borough and currently awaiting BT to provide the connections.

2.10   CCTV is also used for parking enforcement in this borough, where cameras pick up vehicle details committing any parking violation, this information is used to issue the offender with a ticket. Images captured can be changed from one monitor to another with ease.

2.11   In response to cameras on estates, it was reported that housing directorate presently have 101 cameras covering 400 estates in the borough. Officers are presently auditing all the cameras and so far it has come to light that only some of the cameras are recording

2

images. It was further stated that presently it is a mass of different systems which should be pulled together and upgraded in the next 12 months, with a digital upgrade the system could take up to 800 cameras. The cost of installing a new camera is presently £25,000 and that does not include monitoring.

2.12 New technology is directed at flat screen monitors and digital images, new cameras are flexible and can be moved pretty easily and last up to 7-10 years depending how they are used, it has been proved that cameras last longer with regular use. A new system would last for up to 10 years.

2.13 The initial system was funded by the Home Office and match funded, this is no longer available to local authorities. Members were informed that a consultant had been appointed to provide a cost and appraisal for this service which is estimated at £400,000.

2.14 Members were informed that a digital upgrade and general requirement was essential to maintain the service. Parking funding could be used for these aspects of CCTV as no budget had been allocated for these works.

2.15 The Sub-Committee were informed that the CCTV team provides training for small groups regarding the overview of the system and how to monitor the cameras. It was also noted that the CCTV team were advertising their telephone number for the general public to contact with regards to crime and cameras placements.

Recommendation

The chair with the agreement of the Sub-Committee agreed to bring this item to the next meeting of the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Lewisham CCTV Control

Members were then transported via minibus to Lewisham CCTV control room, where Christine Macmaster introduced herself to members and informed them that this control room was the same as Southwark's 6 months ago, but it has recently been upgraded with a spacious cool room fitted out with more flat screen monitors.

With the introduction of new technology the system could use any cameras for recording purposes. Lewisham was ready for the digital switchover. It presently uses 180 cameras in the borough of Lewisham. The total cost of the upgrading was £450,000. This was raised through capital revenue and council reserves, New Cross contribute for two cameras.

The officer reported that rail stations (inside, outside) and walkways were covered by CCTV cameras. Members were informed that the funding was provided by capital revenue and council reserves, New Cross also contributed for 2 cameras.

The officer reported that the police required access to the CCTV unit, but there were rules such as the police would not be allowed to download themselves, they would have to

3

arrange with a CCTV operative for any downloading, which would prove them with a master copy. Members were also informed that data would not be held for more than 31 days. Members were also informed that the police had not contributed to this particular system, but 200 discs were provided to the police each month. Under the old system, tape management used to take up to 20% of operators working day. Now the police provide hard drives to the control room operatives to capture the evidence from cameras.

The robbery squad were allowed to attend the control room for monitoring purposes, where the unit would download data requested for their information. Where digital recording had been introduced the recording quality was greatly improved, easy to use for clear pictures and straightforward to download specific times and incidents. The control room also holds a backup system where discs are included and coded; the system was also proving to be cost effective.

The operation manager informed members that authorised users can request recordings, which is a new move which required a review of facilities for this kind of work. The control room also provides data for environmental services, fire brigade, ambulance services, police and businesses particularly in regards to shoplifting.

The informal meeting closed at 8.50pm.