



COMMUNITY CCTV

Public Space Operations

Annual Report

2019-20

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Introduction

The council owns a network of Close Circuit Television cameras (CCTV) that covers some streets, open spaces, car parks and housing within the District. These systems include cameras where footage is relayed to the Council's control room, and a number that record on site to hard drives. We also have four systems that are moved around 'hot spots', to assist in tackling crime and/or anti-social behaviour.

Purpose

Our CCTV is in place:

- To prevent and detect crime, providing evidential material for criminal proceedings;
- To promote Community Safety and to help reduce the fear of crime and disorder;
- To deter and detect incidents of anti-social behaviour, providing evidential material for criminal proceedings;
- To assist with the economic development of the City and Town Centres;
- To assist Local Authorities with their enforcement and regulatory functions, providing evidential material for civil and criminal proceedings;
- To assist with traffic management, providing information and co-operating with traffic flow projects;
- To assist with other civil proceedings such as insurance claims.

A fundamental principle of the operation is that an individual should be able to undertake lawful business without intrusion into their privacy.

The principles and practice that govern the management of the CCTV system are found in our Code of Practice, a copy of which can be found on the Council website:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/Emergency%20Support/CCTV%20Code%20of%20Practice%202014.pdf>

St Albans City and District Council's Control Room



The monitoring and maintenance of the CCTV system is currently provided by Videcom Security Ltd.

The St Albans CCTV control room capacity is also used to provide monitoring services to two other local Councils.

In addition, the CCTV system is used to support the St Albans Business Against Crime Partnership, which is operated by the Business Improvement District. This assists local businesses to manage shoplifting and anti-social behaviour. Through this scheme, businesses and local agencies can communicate via Shopwatch two-way radios with the CCTV control room and Police. This allows for details of incidents to be communicated quickly to provide a proactive response and to increase the flow of evidence and intelligence.

Management and Reporting

The day to day operation of the CCTV control room is managed by the Principal Community Protection Officer, who works closely with the Control Room Manager to ensure the system is run efficiently and according to the Code of Practice. The CCTV operators use the cameras on a proactive basis to actively patrol the areas covered.

The strategic operation of the Community CCTV system is overseen by a multi-agency monitoring group. Meeting on a quarterly basis, the members discuss performance issues, incidents of interest, current hot spots and possible locations for the re-deployable CCTV systems.

Political scrutiny of the CCTV service is undertaken by the Community Safety Scrutiny Working Group.

Directed Surveillance

The law (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - 'RIPA') and Council Code of Practice permits the use of the CCTV room to monitor or observe individuals covertly, via 'directed surveillance' at the request of relevant Public Authorities, e.g. the Police. These operations are only undertaken where other methods of investigation are not appropriate or are not likely to be effective. Our Code of Practice clarifies that the System Manager will only allow the control room to be used for covert directed surveillance if they are satisfied this is necessary and proportionate. During 2019-20 one request was made to use the Council's public space CCTV system.

Activity Summary

CCTV operators keep records of all their activity on a database (see summary details in Appendix 1). This includes data on the incident type, the source of the reported incident, and the camera involved. The definition of an incident in this context is any request for CCTV assistance, a CCTV operator pro-actively monitoring an event, or a request for CCTV footage to be downloaded.

Analysis of this information shows that during 2019-20, the control room dealt with 3599 incidents; 2,902 in St Albans and 697 in Harpenden. This compares to a total of 3650 incidents in 2018-19; 3004 in St Albans and 646 in Harpenden.

To assist with Police investigations, the control room disclosed 354 DVD discs of footage. Further examples of how the operators have assisted the Police are listed below:

- An operator spotted a male acting suspiciously outside a charity shop in the early hours of the morning. Police were alerted and the male was arrested before he entered the premises, the male was also wanted for previous burglaries.
- A CCTV operator helped the Police arrest a burglar . when he saw a male acting suspiciously at 3.45am at Subway in Chequer Street in St Albans City centre. The operator alerted the police and the male on suspicion of burglary and was later found guilty and given a 2-week suspended prison sentence.
- A suspicious car was observed in Harpenden where the CCTV operator spotted the occupants weighing and bagging up cannabis. The police were alerted, and they recovered drugs and a knife at the scene. Two men were arrested for intent to supply drugs and possession of an offensive weapon.
- On another occasion, an operator saw a van driving erratically late at night in St Albans. Again, police were notified, and the vehicle was stopped and searched. Two men were charged with theft.
- A further example of CCTV's effectiveness was the case of a man spotted pushing at the front doors of several shops late at night in St Albans City Centre. Police were informed and he was arrested.

Our mobile CCTV systems were deployed at 6 different sites to monitor crime and anti-social behaviour hot spots.

A member of the public can submit a Subject Access Request to view footage of themselves. However, images of other people cannot be disclosed if this would amount to an intrusion of their privacy and/or the images would cause unwarranted harm or distress. Details of how to submit a Subject Access Request are contained in the Council's CCTV Code of Practice; 1 request was received during 2019/20.

The Council receives regular requests for CCTV footage of road traffic collisions. As an individual can request footage of themselves but not another person, footage of road traffic collisions is only provided direct to the relevant insurance company. An administration fee of £100 is payable to assist with the Council's costs in retrieving and disclosing the footage. We received 9 requests from Insurance companies for this footage in 2019/20. This income is reinvested into the running costs of the CCTV provision.

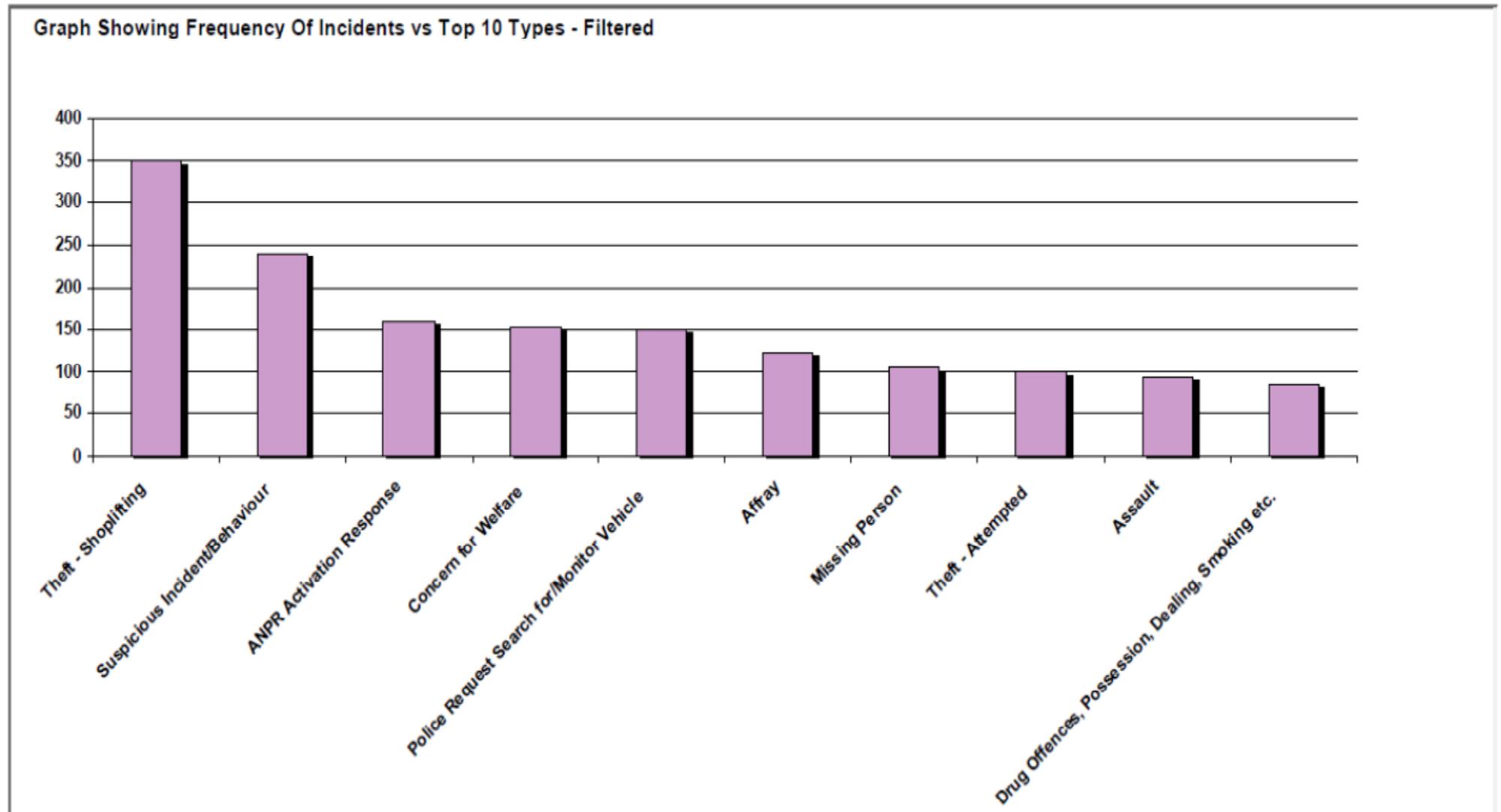
Developments for 2020/21

Following a number of incidents in Clarence Park we have submitted a planning application to install two dome cameras. Located at the front and back of the park, to cover as much of the park as possible, these cameras will be routed back to our control room to allow for 24-7 monitoring.

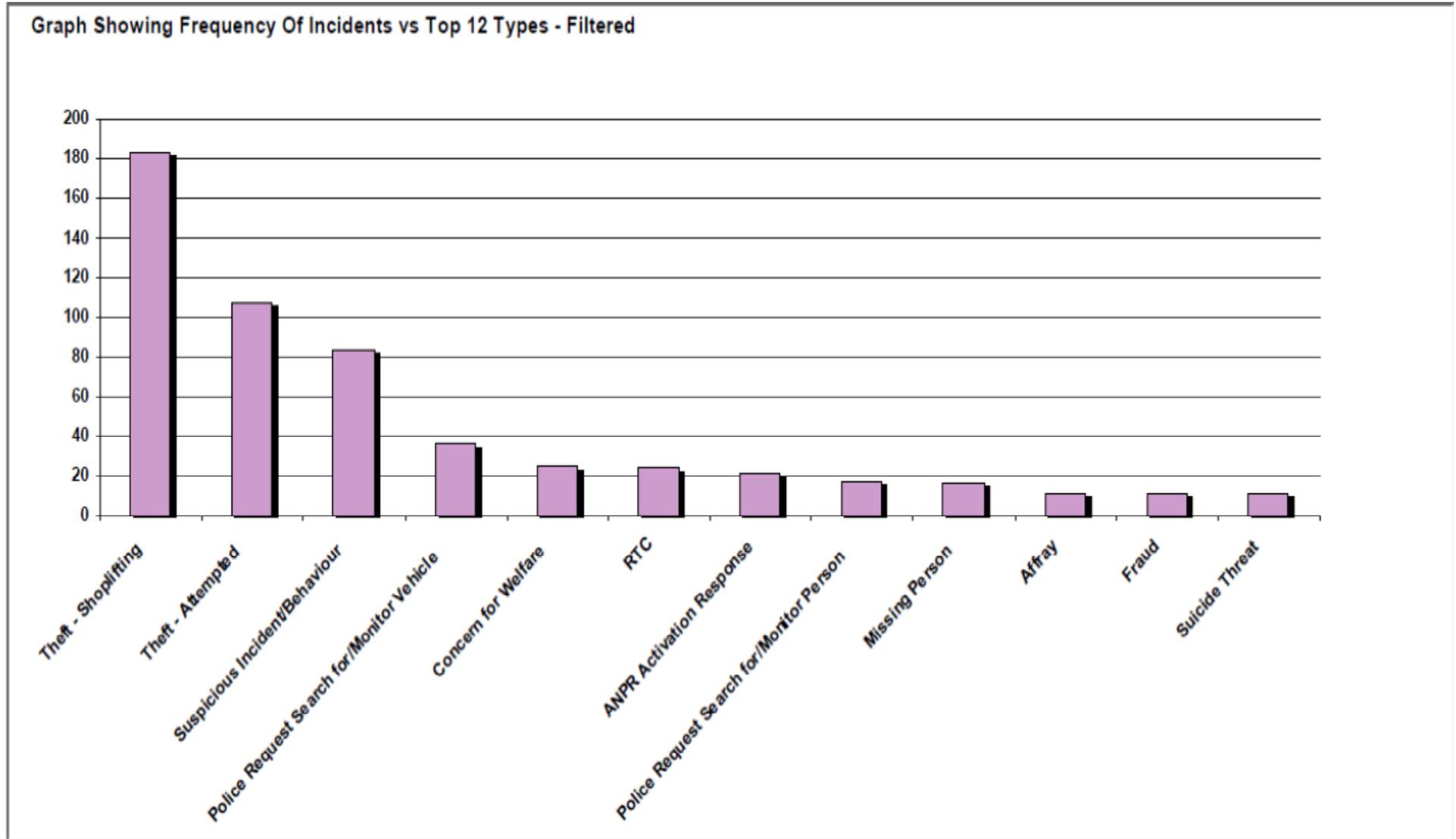
We have also purchased a computer server that will allow for the automated historical searching of a number of City Centre cameras. Whilst facial recognition won't be activated, this system will allow for car types and descriptions of suspects to be entered, producing possible matches, which will save the valuable Police and Officer time.

Appendix 1 April 2019 - March 2020

St Albans – Top incident types



Harpenden – Top incident types



COMMUNITY CCTV IN OPERATION



**Images are being monitored
and recorded for the purposes of
public safety, crime prevention,
crime detection and
the prosecution of offenders.**

This scheme is operated by:



St Albans
City & District Council

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