



COMMUNITY CCTV

Public Space Operations

Annual Report

2018-19

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Introduction

St Albans City and District Council has public space Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems at 99 separate locations across 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. There are also 3 systems, each consisting of 4 cameras, that are used on a re-deployable basis across the City and District to monitor crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots.

Purpose

Public space CCTV is provided for the purpose of enhancing community safety. This is achieved through:

- Assisting with missing persons, accidents and incidents involving vulnerable members of the public
- Prevention and detection of crime and disorder.

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 the Code of Practice, a copy of which can be found on the Council website:

<http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/community-and-living/community-safety/cctv/>

St Albans City & District Council 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 utilised 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 is an organisation that 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. As the data in Appendix 1 shows, a large number of incidents are identified as a result of this proactive patrolling.

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 2018-19 one request was made to use the Council's public space CCTV system.

Upgrade of the CCTV system

The conversion of the CCTV system from analogue to digital is almost complete with just two fully function cameras remaining which will be converted in 19/20 and 13 hard drive systems.

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 2018-19, the control room dealt with 3650 incidents; 3004 in St Albans and 646 in Harpenden. This compares to a total of 4,208 incidents in 2017-18; 3,611 in St Albans and 597 in Harpenden. The percentage of total incidents occurring in Harpenden increased from 14% to 17%.

To assist with Police investigations, the control room disclosed 351 DVD discs of footage.

We also participated in the latest serious of the Channel 5 series, "Caught on camera", provided suitably redacted footage showing the range of incidents the CCTV and control room has assisted with for the benefit of the Police and victims of crime.

Examples of this assistance include:

- Following an attempted burglary in Harpenden, there was initially no trace of any suspects. However, an operator carried out a search and located a female and male. They were both arrested, the male was found to have 2 crowbars and an axe on him; he was also wanted for failing to appear at Court.
- Footage was captured of those responsible for setting fire to a charity installation on a post-box.
- Operators alerted Police to three males who were riding mopeds anti-socially in St Albans. When attending they found one bike to be stolen and the rider was arrested.
- Operators alerted Police to a van that was seen in suspicious circumstances early in the morning around the Griffiths Way retail park. The van was seized as it was stolen, and the driver arrested.
- Operators spotted two males in Harpenden acting suspiciously near to a bike rack close to the station, and alerted Police when they produced bolt croppers. Both were arrested for theft.

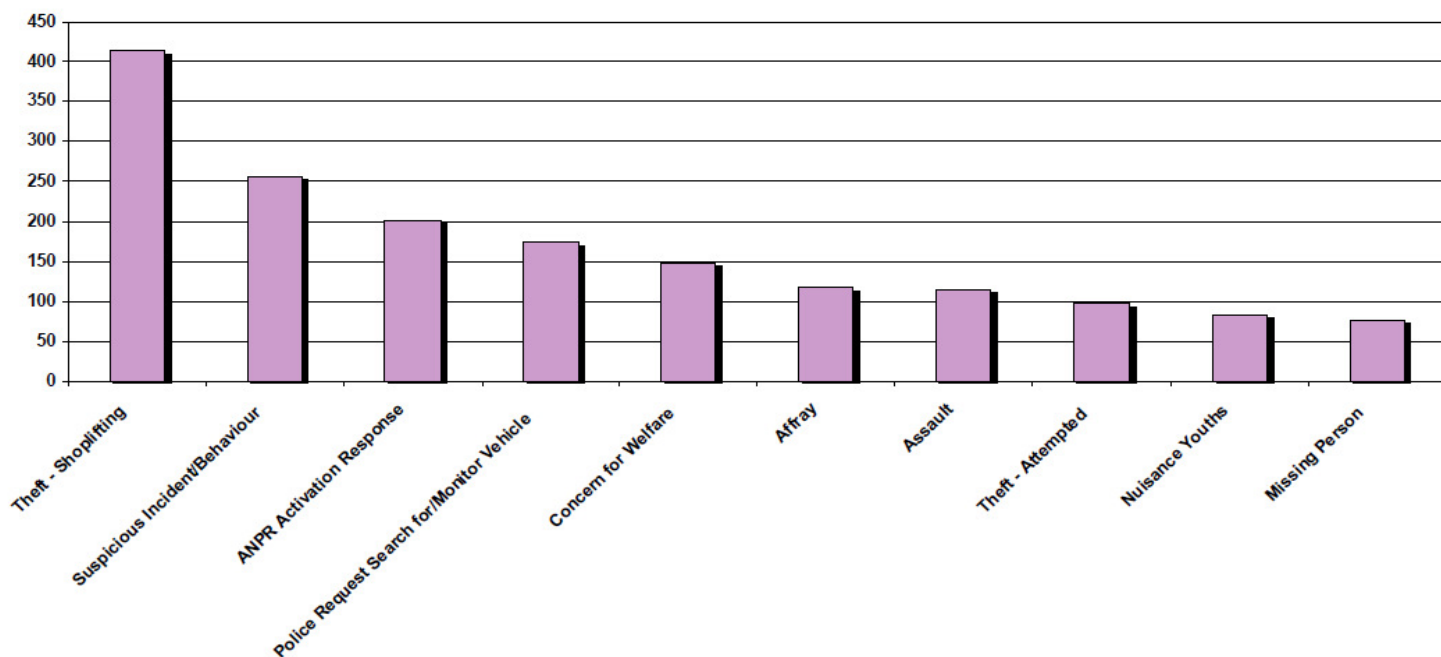
Our 3 mobile CCTV systems were deployed at 4 different sites to monitor crime and anti-social behaviour hot spots.

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. No requests were received during 2018-19.

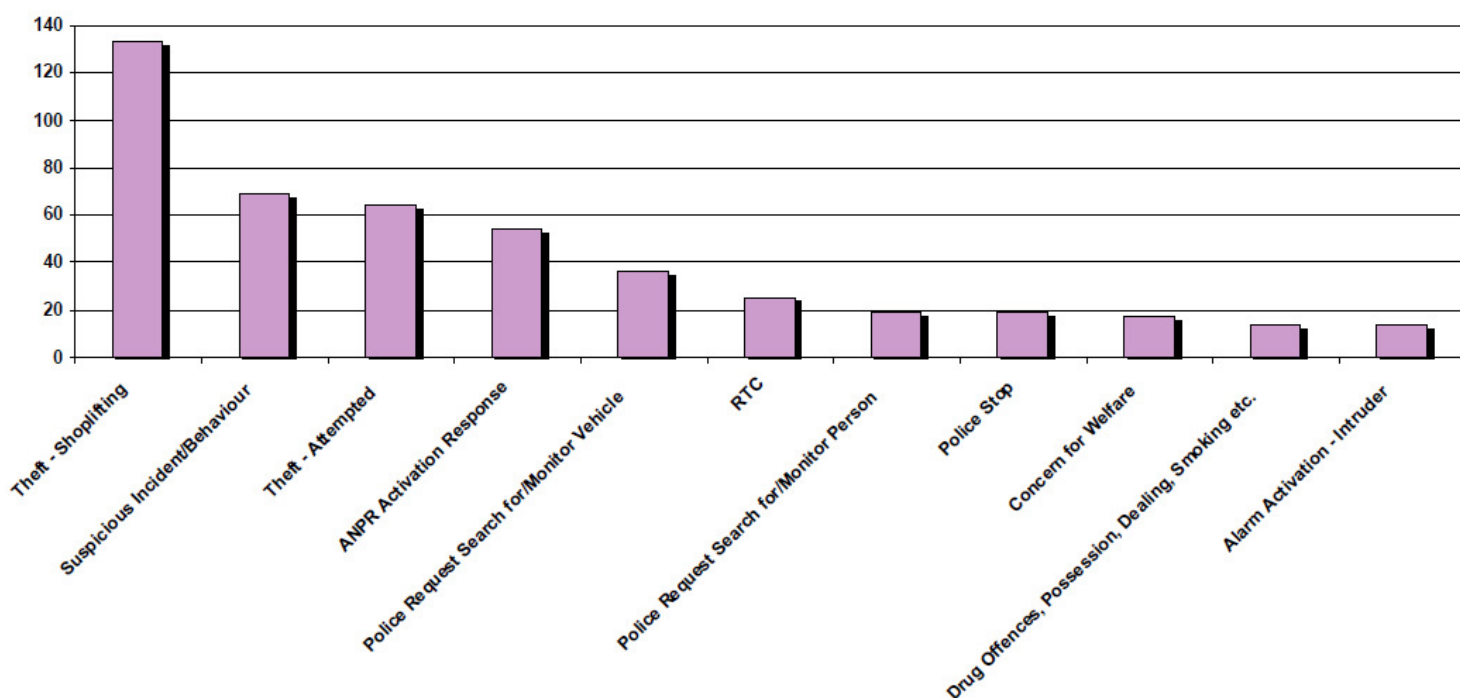
The Council receives regular requests for CCTV footage of road traffic collisions. As detailed above, an individual can request footage of themselves but not another person. Footage of road traffic collisions is therefore only provided direct to the relevant insurance company. An administration fee is payable to assist with the Council's costs in retrieving and disclosing the footage. We received 6 requests from Insurance companies for CCTV footage from road traffic collisions, we charge £100 per request to assist with covering our costs.

Appendix 1 April 2018 - March 2019

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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