

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

# **CCTV Annual Report 2025**

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# Introduction

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council continues to demonstrate their commitment to the Surveillance Camera Commissioners guidance and legal framework to ensure full lawful compliance.

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 introduced the regulation of public space surveillance cameras in England and Wales. As a result, the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice was issued by the Secretary of State under Section 30 of the Act to ensure that the use of cameras in public places are regulated, and they are only used in pursuit of a specified purpose.

The Code aims to balance the need for cameras in public places ensuring individual's right to privacy. The Code applies to the use of surveillance camera systems that operate in public places in England and Wales, regardless of whether or not there is any live viewing or recording of images or information or associated data.

This regulation compliments existing legislation, such as the Data Protection Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. Government would like to see all relevant authorities publish and show transparency regarding their CCTV system.

The Code ensures council owned Public Space CCTV Control Rooms Code of Practice and procedures follow the same recommendations and guiding principles.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils CCTV Control Room has successfully achieved the full certification from the Surveillance Camera Commissioner aimed at those organisations that are compliant with the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice.

This certification is valid for five years, subject to an annual review and a full audit of our system, cameras and procedures working with a checklist against the 12 CCTV guiding principles in the Code.

## **The twelve guiding principles are:**

1. Use of a surveillance camera system must always be for a specified purpose, which is in pursuit of a legitimate aim and necessary to meet an identified pressing need.
2. The use of a surveillance camera system must consider its effect on individuals and their privacy, with regular reviews to ensure its use remains justified.
3. There must be as much transparency in the use of a surveillance camera system as possible, including a published contact point for access to information and complaints.
4. There must be clear responsibility and accountability for all surveillance camera system activities including images and information collected, held and used.
5. Clear rules, policies and procedures must be in place before a surveillance camera system is used, and these must be communicated to all who need to comply with them.

6. No more images and information should be stored than that which is strictly required for the stated purpose of a surveillance camera system, and such images and information should be deleted once their purposes have been discharged.
7. Access to retained images and information should be restricted and there must be clearly defined rules on who can gain access and for what purpose such access is granted. The disclosure of images and information should only take place when it is necessary for such a purpose or for law enforcement purposes.
8. Surveillance camera system operators should consider any approved operational, technical and competency standards relevant to a system its purpose and work to meet and maintain those standards.
9. Surveillance camera system images and information should be subject to appropriate security measures to safeguard against unauthorised access and use.
10. There should be effective review and audit mechanisms to ensure legal requirements, policies and standards are complied with in practice, and regular reports should be published.
11. When the use of a surveillance camera system is in pursuit of a legitimate aim and a pressing need, it should then be used in the most effective way to support public safety and law enforcement with the aim of processing images and information of evidential value.
12. Any information used to support a surveillance camera system, which compares against a reference database for matching purposes should be accurate and kept up to date.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is committed to demonstrating openness and transparency by publishing this report.

The London riots showed how Local Authority town centre CCTV can be instrumental in identifying those committing crime and public disorder offences to the police. Recordings made of the London riots demonstrated the full potential of CCTV, with thousands of arrests made after the incidents, many based upon CCTV evidence. In future, the expectation of similar CCTV coverage may act as a positive deterrent to similar occurrences in towns and city centres.

With more frequent terrorist attacks in public places, makes the need for public space CCTV more significant and essential for the protection and safety of people living, working and visiting Tunbridge Wells.

Coronavirus lockdowns demonstrated how vital this key service is. Monitoring social distancing, crime and public safety while supporting the police and partners, without personal contact or putting anyone in danger. Monitoring the town centre during lockdown revealed the resilience and flexibility of the CCTV service.

# 1. The purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Annual CCTV Report is to show commitment and assurance to the principles and values contained within the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice and demonstrate transparency as much as possible within the guidelines. The preparation and publication of this Annual Report is also a requirement of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's CCTV System Code of Practice.
- 1.2. To demonstrate transparency Tunbridge Wells Borough Council ensures an Annual CCTV Impact Assessment is carried out. The Impact Assessment will be accessible on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's website along with this Annual CCTV Report and our Annual CCTV Review.

# 2. The purpose of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council CCTV System

- 2.1 The primary purpose of the system is to support Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and its partners within the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Community Safety Unit (CSU).

The CSP developed from a multi-agency working, with a formal partnership being formed following the enactment of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The CSP is made up of responsible authorities and voluntary members. Responsible authorities are those bodies for whom membership of the CSP is a statutory obligation. These include Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Services, West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS), and Kent Probation.

The CCTV system enables the Police to respond quickly to a range of incidents.

### 3. Tunbridge Wells CCTV Control Room

- 3.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's CCTV Control Room provide recorded CCTV coverage 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Fully trained and licensed staff provided by external contractors, Enigma, carry out the monitoring of the cameras.
- 3.2 There are 70 cameras, covering Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Rusthall, Pembury, Paddock Wood, Knights Park, North Farm, Fountains Retail Park, Lamberhurst, Hawkhurst, and Cranbrook, including council owned buildings.
- 3.3 In addition to this the control room works in partnership with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council covering an additional 70 cameras, in Tonbridge High Street, West Malling High Street, Snodland High Street including various car parks.
- 3.4 The majority of cameras can pan, tilt and zoom (PTZ) through 360° allowing the operators full control.
- 3.5 All the recording equipment has been upgraded to a digital solution, which permits live viewing, recording and the facility to play back immediately. All digital recordings have an authentication which cannot be altered for increased accuracy and security. Important recordings can be protected to ensure they are not erased or overwritten. Storage of images is quick, easy and cost effective. The digital video recorders have integral hard drives, which store all recorded data for 31 days.
- 3.6 The control room has a video wall was installed with eight large HD slim profile monitors. Each 47" monitor can display one large real-time image for dealing with major incidents or hot spot areas, or up to 4, 6, 9, or 12 images from separate cameras at any time, and this is all controlled by the new equipment.



- 3.7 The CCTV control room covers the West Kent Police area and works very closely with the 'Shopsafe' and 'Pubwatch' Business Crime Reduction Partnership initiatives in Tunbridge Wells, which are based within the Community Safety Unit.
- 3.8 All members of these schemes have a radio link into the CCTV control room. Last year, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 24 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the control room assisted with 628 Shopsafe incidents and 211 Pubwatch incidents in Tunbridge Wells Borough, as well as assisting with 443 Safe Town Partnership calls from various retailers and licensed premises in the Tonbridge & Malling area.
- 3.9 Partnership working with other Council teams and external agencies is an important element of the CCTV service provision. The control room works closely with partners for example Licensing, Environmental Health, Planning, Kent Police, Housing and many more.

## 4. Staffing

- 4.1 Operators are very experienced and well trained in the use of CCTV cameras and relevant legislation, which governs data handling and protection. All CCTV operators are fully licensed by the Security Industry Authority (SIA). Staff must be licensed by the Security Industry Authority to practice the role of a Public Space CCTV Surveillance operator. To achieve the SIA qualification Operators attended a CCTV BTEC course and passed an exam, as well as a practical assessment within the CCTV control room.
- 4.2 Kent Police carry out regular vetting on all staff connected to the CCTV Operations.
- 4.3 Refresher training is provided to staff to keep them updated on relevant legislation, CCTV Surveillance and Health and Safety issues. Operators are encouraged to identify training they feel could benefit the service.

## 5. CCTV Performance Evaluation

- 5.1 Performance of the CCTV Control Room is measured monthly. This helps to identify trends and opportunities for improvement.
- 5.2 During the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the CCTV control room instigated, assisted, or monitored 163 arrests in the Tunbridge Wells area and 112 arrests in Tonbridge & Malling, a total of 275 arrests.
- 5.3 During this period, the control room incidents resulted in 24 CCTV instigated arrests in Tunbridge Wells which were detected solely by CCTV. These arrests included drink driving offences, serious sexual assaults, including a rape, shoplifting, domestic violence's offences, and criminal damage.
- 5.4 Over this year, the control room successfully assisted the police and partners by monitoring 156 Public Order offences within our borough and 38 in Tonbridge & Malling.
- 5.5 Last year the control room dealt with 211 alcohol and pub related offences, dealt with nuisance youths, 18 fraud / deception / scams, 86 traffic related offences, including drink drivers, 12 domestic violence offences and much more.
- 5.6 The CCTV control room is not just about preventing and detecting crime, it is also here for community safety. Last year the control room dealt with 151 incidents relating to vulnerable missing people and concerns relating to welfare calls. As well as getting seriously involved in many life-threatening incidents.

## 6. CCTV Review

- 6.1 A CCTV Review is carried out every year, to assess compliance with the Council's CCTV Code of Practice and Procedure Manual. The report also evaluated the CCTV system to see whether it has met its key objectives.
- 6.2 All points covered by the review were found to be satisfactory and compliant with the Code of Practice. All key objectives were met to an acceptable standard. The control room was found to be well managed and works to a very high criterion. This was reflected in the performance indicators and the quality of the CCTV assisted arrests within the last year.
- 6.3 In addition to the certification from the Surveillance Camera Commissioner, with our annual inspection. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council carry out regular internal CCTV audit and reviews.
- 6.4 The CCTV Code of Practice is regularly reviewed and updated. It has been authorised and accepted by Kent Police and by the Chief Executive of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Copies are accessible on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's website or upon request from the CCTV Manager.

## 7. Directed Surveillance

- 7.1 The law and our Code of Practice permits the use of the CCTV system to monitor or observe individuals covertly via CCTV (i.e. 'directed surveillance') at the request of 'Public Authorities' (i.e. law enforcement bodies).
- 7.2 Targeted operations employing directed surveillance will only be carried out where other methods of investigation are not appropriate or not likely to be effective and where they are considered 'proportionate' to the suspected criminal activity or problem posed. The law and rules relating to covert surveillance are contained in the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Failure to obtain the necessary authorisations under this Act could invalidate any subsequent evidence obtained by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.
- 7.3 Local authorities are required to obtain judicial approval prior to using covert techniques. Local Authority authorisations and notices under the Regulations of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) will only be given effect once an order has been granted by a Justice of the Peace in England and Wales.
- 7.4 A Superintendent or officer of similar standing must make the request in writing on behalf of the Police or other law enforcement body. As a Public Authority, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council can also instigate targeted operations, requiring directed surveillance by CCTV, in compliance with the law.

## 8. The Future

- 8.1 The Council will continue to be transparent regarding its use of CCTV and produce an annual report as required.
- 8.2 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is committed to community safety and helps with the prevention and detection of crime within our Borough. The council is exploring new ways to improve and develop our partnership working with neighbouring councils, to ensure a safer community to live, visit and work in.