

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

# CCTV Annual Report 2026

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# Introduction

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council demonstrates a clear and ongoing commitment to operating its CCTV system in accordance with current statutory requirements and regulatory guidance. This includes compliance with the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice, and applicable data protection legislation, namely the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as enforced and interpreted through current ICO guidance.

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 provides the legislative framework for the use of surveillance camera systems in public places in England and Wales. In line with Section 30 of the Act, the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice establishes principles that remain relevant today, requiring surveillance to be lawful, necessary, proportionate, transparent, and used only for clearly defined and legitimate purposes. The Council applies these principles alongside the UK GDPR's accountability framework to ensure that personal data captured through CCTV is processed fairly and responsibly.

The CCTV system operates under defined governance arrangements, supported by documented policies, regular review, and appropriate technical and organisational measures. These measures reflect current legislative expectations, including the identification of a lawful basis for processing under Article 6, the completion and maintenance of Privacy Impact Assessments, adherence to data minimisation and retention principles, and the protection of data subjects' rights. Collectively, this approach ensures the CCTV system remains compliant, effective, and proportionate in achieving its objectives of public safety, crime prevention, and public reassurance, while safeguarding individual privacy and making the streets safer for woman and girls.

The Surveillance Camera Code of Practice seeks to strike an appropriate balance between the operational need for surveillance cameras in public places and the protection of individuals' rights to privacy. The Code applies to the use of all surveillance camera systems operating in public spaces across England and Wales, irrespective of whether images or information are viewed live, recorded, or whether associated data is processed.

This regulatory framework complements existing legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Human Rights Act 1998, and, where relevant, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Central to this approach is the expectation that relevant authorities demonstrate transparency and accountability in the operation of their CCTV systems, including publication of information relating to their use.

The Code further ensures that council-owned Public Space CCTV control rooms operate in accordance with consistent Codes of Practice and procedures, reflecting the same guiding principles and recommendations set out within the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice.

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.

High-profile incidents of public disorder and serious crime in urban centres over recent years have clearly demonstrated the critical role that Local Authority town-centre CCTV plays in supporting police investigations. Public space CCTV has repeatedly proven to be an effective tool in identifying offenders, securing evidential footage, and assisting in post-incident investigations, leading to successful enforcement outcomes. The visibility and effectiveness of CCTV coverage also provide a valuable deterrent, helping to discourage criminal and anti-social behaviour within town and city centres.

Against a backdrop of heightened national security considerations and the continued threat of terrorism and hostile acts in public spaces, the importance of public space CCTV has become increasingly significant. Comprehensive and well-managed CCTV systems are an essential component of a broader community safety and protective security strategy, contributing to the safety and reassurance of those who live in, work in, and visit Tunbridge Wells.

# 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 81 cameras, covering Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Rusthall, Pembury, Paddock Wood, Knights Park, Calverley Park, St Johns 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 65 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 provides coverage across the West Kent Policing area and maintains strong, collaborative working relationships with the ShopSafe and Pubwatch Business Crime Reduction Partnership schemes in Tunbridge Wells. These initiatives form an integral part of the Community Safety Unit and support a coordinated approach to crime prevention, information sharing, and public reassurance.
- 3.8 All members of these schemes have a radio link into the CCTV control room. Last year, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, the control room assisted with 1144 Shopsafe incidents and 259 Pubwatch incidents in Tunbridge Wells Borough, as well as assisting with 931 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 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, the CCTV control room instigated, assisted, or monitored 156 arrests in the Tunbridge Wells area and 99 arrests in Tonbridge & Malling, a total of 255 arrests.
- 5.3 These arrests included drink diving offences, serious sexual assaults, suicide cases, shoplifting, domestic violence's offences, criminal damage and much more.
- 5.4 Over this year, the control room successfully assisted the police and partners by monitoring 117 Public Order offences within our borough and 49 in Tonbridge & Malling.
- 5.5 Last year the control room dealt with 171 alcohol and pub related offences, dealt with nuisance youths, 16 fraud / deception / scams, 58 traffic related offences, including drink drivers, 68 public order 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 114 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

- 7.5 The Council will continue to be transparent regarding its use of CCTV and produce an annual report as required.
- 7.6 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council remains committed to community safety and to supporting the prevention and detection of crime within the Borough. In anticipation of Local Government Reorganisation, the Council is actively exploring and strengthening partnership arrangements with neighbouring authorities and key stakeholders to ensure continuity, resilience, and effectiveness of community safety services. Through greater collaboration and shared working practices, these partnerships will support a seamless transition under new governance structures and help ensure that communities continue to benefit from a safe environment in which to live, work, and visit.