

Meeting with CCTV

22 March 2006

On the 22 March some of the **Town Forum Licensing Committee members**, namely Michael Larsen, George Lawson and Christopher Thomas went to see how the CCTV operation worked. Our mission was to see how the CCTV system could be used to provide information for the review/renewal of licences.

Upon speaking with Tony, who represented the CCTV unit, it was realised that the CCTV can only be used as part of the overall objective of ensuring Licensees are complying with the Act and also not causing an unwarranted disturbance. The reason being that the CCTV can only see, but not hear. The Public is the recipient of this noise.

Having said this, it must be stated that the CCTV system is an excellent system and is very useful to the Police and to the Borough Council.

In summary, the CCTV partnership covers the area of not only Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, but also Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

The cameras have been positioned so as to gain maximum advantage and to be a useful deterrent. They are not only used by the Police in stopping bad behaviour caught on camera, but also used in following criminals, such as burglars or shoplifters.

Owing to security we couldn't enter the room where the TV monitors were but were able to view them through a special viewing window. The reason being that Police commentary can be heard by CCTV representatives.

The cameras in Tunbridge Wells can view the following venues:

- Rear of Sussex Arms
- Swan Hotel – back and front
- The Forum
- Da Vinci and up the High Street
- The Bedford
- Orson Wells – extremely limited
- The Barn
- Pitcher & Piano forecourt
- Opera House
- CoCo lounge – Precinct
- Guinea Butt
- Prince of Wales
- Crystal Palace
- Foresters
- TN4 (Access only)
- Cassidy's – Castle Street
- Rose & Crown

Should an area become a place for civilised entertainment then the Camera can be moved to another site, although this does cost quite an amount of money.

In order to give extra flexibility as to where cameras can be situated the Police possess portable cameras, which could be set up for a certain period of time, especially if a venue has suddenly become a disturbance.

For those of you who may be concerned about civil liberties we were advised that all CCTV employees are aware of the Human Rights Act and the Data Protection Act(s).

So as to ensure a constant awareness Tony has ensured that cameras are not simply left on automatic panning, but also controlled by manual intervention.

If the cameras pick up an incident this will be reported to the Police. This may include anything from a large gathering of youths, which may cause a problem, to a burglary or even a street brawl. When the incident is referred to the Police they should then give the CCTV operator an incident reference number.

For the technophile the cameras come in a variety of types, but I do not believe it appropriate to say how they work. I need not say that technology is advancing so some of the cameras can follow a car down a high street while easily picking up a number plate. There are various tape recording devices recording what is fed into the system by the cameras, but all tapes are wiped after 31 days in order to comply with Data Protection. Naturally tapes can be requested by the Police and retained by them should an incident occur on the night, which is caught on film.

Pubwatch work hand in hand with the camera partnership and so do the Shop Safety Partnership, both of whom it must be said does a good job.

It was agreed that while we were all aware of the new Council initiative of having Licensing officers visit premises it was hoped that those pubs which cannot be seen on the cameras be given more regular scrutiny than those venues where cameras were watching.

Following this meeting it was agreed that Chris Thomas attend the CCTV operation on a Friday or Saturday evening after a pay day to see how cameras are used on a busy day.

Chris Thomas will also be arranging a visit to see Ted Peel, who is involved with the CCTV workings and is also a Council representative. The objective of this meeting will be to establish exactly how the CCTV personnel communicate with the Council licensing staff and how incidents are logged in the Council files. It is understood that the CCTV operation will soon come under the auspices of Gary Stevenson, which should mean the Council would be able to act more efficiently.

Finally, if members of the Public do witness an incident and report it to the Police they must ensure they get a Police incident reference number.