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Dear Garry

### **The future of CCTV coverage in Slough**

I have been asked to write on behalf of Thames Valley Police in respect of the proposal to withdraw Slough Borough Council CCTV coverage in the town at the end of March 2023. It is intended that this letter will be provided to Cabinet for their consideration.

### **Thames Valley Police position**

It is the position of Thames Valley Police that CCTV coverage of public spaces within Slough is an essential tool in the prevention and detection of crime in the Borough.

### **The evidence base supporting the effectiveness of CCTV**

In 2015 (and updated in October 2021), the College of Policing published a meta-analytic review based on three separate reviews of the use of CCTV in different circumstances incorporating a total of 130 academic studies focusing on the effectiveness of CCTV in reducing crime in the UK and globally ([Closed-circuit television \(CCTV\) | College of Policing](#)). Overall the analysis concluded that CCTV contributes to an overall reduction in crime with a very strong effect impact on crime.

In the first review CCTV was associated with a statistically significant decrease in crime. Across a range of settings crime was found to have decreased by 13% in locations where CCTV was present compared with locations where there was no CCTV coverage. The first review found:

“The studies in Review one looked at the effectiveness of CCTV on different crime types. The meta-analysis showed that drug-related crimes decreased by 20% (six studies) and vehicle and property crime decreased by 14% (23 studies and 22 studies respectively) in places that had CCTV compared to those that did not. No overall statistically significant effect was observed for violent crime (29 studies) or disorder (six studies).”

Importantly, the analysis also found that overall the presence of CCTV did not lead to displacement of crime elsewhere.

The review found that CCTV works by:

- increasing offenders' perception of the risk of getting caught
- increasing the actual risk of getting caught
- encouraging the public use of an area and affecting the criminals' perceptions of risk (by increasing informal surveillance by the public)
- improving citizen awareness to take additional precautions
- signalling improvements in the area to the public and encouraging community pride
- supporting the effective deployment of security staff to incidents
- reducing the number of criminal opportunities

The evidence indicates that CCTV is most effective in car parks, housing complexes and residential areas but less effective in preventing crime in town or city centres.

As well as preventing crime there is evidence that CCTV is also valuable as an investigative tool. Ashby (2017) analysed just short of 252,000 crimes recorded by British Transport Police that occurred on the British railway network between 2011 and 2015. CCTV was assessed as useful in 65% of cases where it was available. Useful CCTV was associated with significantly increased chances of crimes being solved for all crime types except drugs/weapons possession and fraud.

### **Our experience of the importance of Slough Borough Council CCTV in detecting crime in the Borough**

The practical experience of investigators working in Slough supports the academic research that CCTV is a valuable investigative tool in many different contexts. Where CCTV provides coverage of an incident or set of events it gives investigators an unequivocal insight into what took place. Even in cases where it is not possible to identify an individual, CCTV provides critical evidence in respect of what people were doing, how they were behaving, their direction of travel and helps to identify distinguishing features (such as clothing). This is often more reliable than witness evidence which relies on the ability of someone to recollect a sequence of events in some detail after the fact and is often time-limited. Witness evidence also relies on an individual being willing to provide a statement to the police and, ultimately, being prepared to give evidence in court.

CCTV not only assists in identifying suspects and witnesses but also in tracing missing people and assessing crowd flow and density in public order/public safety situations.

There are countless examples of cases in Slough where CCTV has provided critical evidence or, in some cases, been the only evidence on which to build a prosecution. The following examples alone were recited to me by just one Detective Sergeant working in CID:

#### *Murder of Mr. Aziz, Trelawney Avenue, Slough*

The homicide was captured in full by CCTV leading to the identification and arrest of the suspects. A 16 year old boy was recently convicted of murder.

### *Grievous Bodily Harm, High Street, Slough*

The victim was slashed with a knife following an altercation in a shop. CCTV showed parts of the incident and zoomed in on blood at the scene before it became contaminated. A suspect was convicted and is currently in prison.

### *Series of assaults in Chalvey and the High Street on 28/08/22*

Thames Valley Police received a number of calls from members of the public regarding a number of incidents of violence in which members of the public had seemingly been attacked in an unprovoked manner. These reports spanned from RAGSTONE ROAD to the HIGH STREET, SLOUGH. The calls were received between 2045 and 2145 hours. Initially, due to the distance between Ragstone Road and the High Street and limited information known, these incidents were not immediately linked.

By the time officers attended the scene there were no victims or suspects to be found. As a direct result of the CCTV provided, police confirmed that these were a linked series of incidents and led to the identification of two suspects and one victim of assault. The suspects were subsequently arrested and charged (awaiting trial) for the following offences:

- Grievous Bodily Harm with intent
- Attempt Assault occasioning Actual Bodily Harm
- Threats to kill
- Use threatening / abusive words and behaviours x 2
- Criminal Damage

### *Attempted murder, Baylis Park*

A serious assault took place in Baylis Park. CCTV captured the assault leading to the arrest of a suspect who has been charged, remanded and awaits trial.

### *Residential Burglary and associated Fraud, Chalvey*

CCTV captured images of the suspect and footage from Chalvey provided critical evidence leading police to the offender.

### *Sexual Assault in Chalvey*

CCTV footage captured a serious sexual assault taking place. The suspect was arrested, charged and pled guilty.

### *Arson, Empire Cinema, Slough*

CCTV helped put a timeline together for the movements of a female alleged to have poured petrol in the fire exit of EMPIRE cinema on the High Street. The female and a further male suspect were charged with conspiracy to commit arson with intent to endanger life. The male has pled guilty.

There will be many other examples which will be equally serious or less serious but these 7 cases alone illustrate the importance of CCTV in the detection of crime.

It is important not to underestimate the value of CCTV in helping residents to feel safe. Indeed, residents quite often ask for more rather than less CCTV coverage.

### **Thames Valley Police request**

On the basis of this evidence we would ask Cabinet to consider retaining the CCTV coverage in Slough until such time as the PCC can take control.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Barnham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Lee Barnham**