

Control of the Addition of CCTV Systems

There is a need for more centralised control of CCTV development for Merton Council, based on an agreed policy, strategy and delivery plan. If any 'stand-alone' CCTV systems are installed across the council area, these can attract disproportionate installation and on-going revenue costs. When diverse requests for CCTV cameras are made, the applicant or council officer completes a Criteria Form to focus thinking on the reasons why a camera or a complete CCTV system might be needed and implemented and where it fits into the plan to balance unfocused extraneous demands.

The London Borough of Merton will adopt a 'central assessment system' whereby any/all requests for the installation of CCTV across the council area, are considered by the Corporate CCTV Steering Group and weighted and scored against Cost, Operational Requirements, PIA, Fitness for Purpose, Quantity, Quality and Accountability. This applies to both Public Space, Traffic Enforcement and 'stand-alone' systems in council owned premises.

Purchase and Deployment of CCTV Cameras

London Borough of Merton is committed to respecting people's rights to privacy and supports the individual's entitlement to go about their lawful business. This is a primary consideration in the operation of any CCTV system, although there will inevitably be some loss of privacy when CCTV cameras are installed. Therefore, it is crucial that serious consideration is given to the necessity for cameras in a given location and their impact on the privacy of individuals using the areas where cameras are to be installed. Cameras are not to be installed in such a way that they can look into private space such as houses unless they can be fitted with privacy zones, which block out private areas so that these cannot be viewed or recorded.

Covert cameras are not normally to be deployed into areas used by staff or the public. Cameras should normally be clearly visible and signed.

Concealed and unsigned cameras within council property may on rare occasions be deployed in areas of high security where there is no legitimate public access and where staff access is controlled and restricted. Staff who normally work in these areas should where appropriate be informed of the location of these cameras, their purpose and where the monitor is kept.

London Borough of Merton will not use CCTV cameras if there are cheaper, less intrusive and more effective methods of dealing with the problem. If after looking at all the alternatives, it is decided that CCTV is the only suitable solution a clear operational objective for the system and each camera must be identified and an assessment on the impact on privacy must be carried out. A record of these decisions must be retained for inspection and reviewed every year. A copy of these documents should be sent to the council's CCTV Manager.

Authorisation for the purchase and installation of CCTV cameras must be obtained from the council's CCTV Steering Group after production of a business plan/report. How the system will be paid for and its annual revenue costs and how they will be met must also be identified. This applies to **ANY/ALL** LBM departments, including those enforcing traffic regulations, who should channel all CCTV request through one authorised manager. Public consultation for new camera systems must also be considered.

The council's CCTV Manager will be available to give advice at each stage of the above process. Once a decision is made to purchase CCTV cameras advice should be sought from the council's Legal Services Team to ensure that the correct procedures are followed.

It is a requirement under the Information Commissioners Code of Practice and the National CCTV Strategy that any equipment purchased is fit for purpose and will meet the objectives set down for the scheme. There is also a clear requirement for all CCTV schemes to have an effective maintenance schedule and Code of Practice. Officer's purchasing new CCTV equipment need to ensure these requirements are met.

London Borough of Merton does not deploy 'Dummy' cameras as these give a false sense of security. Neither are council officers to purchase cameras that can monitor conversation or be used to talk to individuals as this is seen as an unnecessary invasion of privacy.

Once new cameras have been installed, a copy of a map or building plan showing the location of the CCTV cameras should be sent to the council's CCTV Manager for inclusion in the council's central CCTV records.