

**REPORT TO THE STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

REVIEW OF CCTV PROCEDURES

**COMMERCIAL PUNT OPERATION AND THE USE OF CCTV
CAMERAS ON JESUS GREEN**

1.0 Background

1.1 Over a period of years a number of Independent Punt Operators had been using the length of river frontage at Jesus Green to run their commercial punting businesses. This they had done without any consent from the City Council as the riparian landowner.

1.2 On 8th February 2008, a report was submitted to the Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Committee by the Director of Community Services to address this issue.

1.3 As a result of the recommendations contained within this report, the Leader of the City Council took the decision that enforcement action would commence to prevent the use of Jesus Green river frontage and other land fronting the River Cam owned by the Council for the purpose of commercial punt operation without the express written consent of the Council.

1.4 Enforcement would be on grounds of trespass and would commence from the beginning of the 2008 punting season.

1.5 The report also stated that all identified Independent Commercial Punt Operators should receive a letter informing them of this decision. Also, contact should be made with other riparian landowners and regulatory bodies to ensure that they were aware of the Council's stance and to bring to their attention the possibility of displacement of activity onto their land as a result of the Council's actions.

2.0 For what purpose was the Installation of cameras carried out?

2.1 As a landowner, the City Council has a right to take reasonable steps to protect its property from unlawful use. This can include the use of CCTV.

2.2 The Council should also be seen to carry out its agreed policies.

2.3 The reason for installing a 'stand alone CCTV system' was that the main City CCTV system could not see beneath the overhanging trees along this stretch of the Riverbank.

2.4 The cameras were installed as part of a package of measures. Primarily they were there to act as a deterrent and to discourage commercial operators from using the Green as a base from which to work. To that end they were accompanied by clear and visible signage. They were, however, also intended as a means of monitoring activity levels to ascertain whether or not there was compliance of the Council's policy on unlawful use particularly when officers were not present.

2.5 In the weeks leading up to the beginning of the punting season officers adopted an incremental approach to enforcement issuing letters and maps showing those river frontages owned by the Council, which must not be used by Punt Operators for commercial purposes.

2.6 At the same time as the cameras were installed signs were put up denoting that they were present in the area. These signs were of appropriate size on a yellow background with words denoting that Cambridge City Council was operating CCTV in the area. The words were printed in black lettering with a picture of a CCTV camera in the top corner. Later a contact telephone number was added.

2.7 Shortly after the cameras were installed other signs were erected on the concrete plinth along the Riverbank at Jesus Green denoting that commercial punt operation was considered by the Council as an act of trespass.

2.8 Also, as part of the enforcement package, arrangements were made with the Constabulary for the Police Community Support Officers to carry out patrols in the area with a specific emphasis on observing any unlawful punt operation. The Police would liaise with the Safer Communities Section over any issues that arose.

2.9 The Council's Public Realm Enforcement Team was also asked to cover the river frontages as part of their routine work. In addition, spot checks were carried out by members of staff in the Safer Communities Section.

2.10 All patrolling was conducted as 'High Visibility' and was, therefore, overt.

2.11 Notwithstanding all of these arrangements the amount of time that could be devoted to enforcement was limited by resources.

2.12 N.B. The City Council has now appointed an Enforcement Officer within the Public Realm Enforcement team with a particular responsibility for enforcing the Council's policies on punt operation working alongside staff in the Safer Communities Section.

3.0 What Alternatives to the unlawful use of Jesus Green were offered to the Independent Commercial Operators?

3.1 In March 2008 application forms were sent to those who had expressed an interest in working from the La Mimosa Landing Stage.

3.2 By May 2008 the Landing Stage had been refurbished and was ready for use by the Independent Punt Operators.

3.3 Seven Independent Operators with a total of eleven punts commenced working from the Landing Stage on 29th May 2008.

4.0 Was this Covert or Overt Surveillance?

4.1 Given that the primary purpose of the cameras was to act as a deterrent and to monitor activity levels it was intended that it would be as overt as possible. To this end signs were erected denoting the presence of CCTV in the area and the cameras were clearly visible to the naked eye.

4.2 A request for Authorisation under the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act 2000 would only have been required if this had been set up as a covert surveillance operation.

4.3 A number of people were reported as being present when the cameras were installed and, on 31st March 2008, a day or two after the installation was carried out, an entry appeared on the 'Save Independent Punting' website advising the public as to their presence, their location and the direction in which the cameras were pointing.

5.0 Where were the cameras located and what could they observe?

5.1 At the same time as the advisory letters were being issued, two cameras were installed in the old Bowling Pavilion on the Green this building being adjacent to the riverbank. A third camera was installed on the top of the Refreshment Kiosk near to the River Bridge leading from the Green onto Chesterton Lane.

5.2 Apertures were cut in the wooden sides of the Pavilion (it being redundant and scheduled soon for demolition). The cameras were mounted half inside and half outside the building and were clearly visible to the naked eye.

5.3 The cameras were also surrounded on the outside by a wire grille in order to protect them from any potential acts of vandalism.

5.4 The cameras were of fixed focal length covering the length of the river in two directions. Being set up in this way meant that they could only be used to monitor activity as the images were unlikely to clearly identify any individuals.

5.5 Co-incidentally, the cameras also afforded a small amount of protection for the punts moored on the La Mimosa Landing Stage. Some Operators felt that these were vulnerable when unattended.

5.6 The cameras were in place from the end of March to the beginning of July 2008.

6.0 Who Authorised the installation?

6.1 The Safer Communities Section Manager had the cameras installed following discussion with the Head of Active Communities and the Punting Steering Group.

7. How successful was the Council's action to prevent the unlawful use of Jesus Green?

7.1 Despite a suspicion that, in the early part of the season, certain operators continued to use Jesus Green as a place to embark and disembark their passengers, this quickly diminished and this stretch of the Riverbank was, once again, returned to recreational use for members of the public.

7.2 On the occasions when commercial operators were suspected as using Jesus Green punts were observed moored to the riverbank but the owners were not present at the time. The owners were identified by the Conservators' registration numbers painted on them and advisory letters were subsequently sent to them.

7.3 In terms of the overall effect of the cameras, officers believe that these played a significant role in bringing about the reduction in unlawful use of the River frontage at Jesus Green and in carrying out the Council's policy agreed by Members in February.

7.4 Over the summer, apart from a few advisory letters only one 'Letter before Court Action' and one 'Final Warning' letter was issued in relation to the unlawful use of Jesus Green.

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