



South Essex Parking Partnership

BODY-WORN CCTV CAMERAS
YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

1. Why is Chelmsford City Council introducing body-worn CCTV for its Civil Enforcement Officers within the South Essex Parking Partnership?

Body-worn CCTV cameras are being introduced as an improvement to the health and safety of our Civil Enforcement Officers. Since SEPP's operation in April 2011 there have been several serious incidents whereby Chelmsford City Council and the Police have been unable to take further action due a lack of evidence.

The use of these cameras will help to ensure that, wherever possible, video and audio evidence will be available to the Police and Courts in the event of any our CEOs being subject to incidents of physical or verbal abuse, threats or aggressive behaviour.

The cameras are also being introduced to reduce the number of complaints being made against the officers whereby the allegations made are unfounded.

2. Is there evidence to suggest that the use of body-worn CCTV reduces incidents of assault or verbal abuse toward Civil Enforcement Officers?

The decision to introduce these cameras for SEPP has been taken as a result of their success in reducing the level of incidents toward CEO's employed in other UK locations.

Chelmsford City Council's Environmental Team use body-worn cameras and report a significant reduction in the number of incidents and unfounded complaints since they introduced them.

The Royal Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Hillingdon and Tower Hamlets all report a significant reduction in the number of incidents since they introduced their own systems.

Studies carried out by Health and Safety Teams also suggest that, in the event of recording being activated by an Officer, there are behavioural changes in those being recorded.

3. How will Civil Enforcement Officers use these cameras?

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the regulator of the Data Protection Act 1998 and has issued guidance for the use of body-worn CCTV.

All CEOs will wear body-worn CCTV as part of their uniform. It will be used in an overt manner and the model Chelmsford City Council is using show footage live as it is being recorded.

Prior to recording taking place, wherever possible the CEO will give a verbal warning that recording is taking place, although this is not mandatory. As a general rule, where an Officer is in uniform and clearly displaying a camera in operation with the recording light on and the display facing forward to show that recording is active, the ICO would consider that its guidance on the conditions for the use of body-worn equipment has been satisfied.

4. Can less privacy intrusive solutions achieve similar objectives?

The short answer is no. CEOs will only use the equipment for their own protection when involved in confrontational situations where they believe they may be subject to physical or verbal abuse or when approached in a manner they perceive as aggressive or threatening.

5. What could be done to minimise intrusion for those that may be recorded, particularly if specific concerns have been expressed?

Should a CEO become involved in a situation where recording is considered necessary they will, as far as is reasonable, focus recording on the perpetrator(s) of the incident.

The cameras are mounted on the body around chest height so any recording will be generally in the direction the CEO will be facing which, in most cases, will be face on to the perpetrator(s) but this cannot be fully guaranteed. Any footage taken of a person(s) not involved will be purely coincidental and will not be used for any purpose unless they specifically agree to be a witness. This will be rare and very specific circumstance based.

6. What will Chelmsford City Council be doing with recorded images?

Recorded images and audio will be used to review incidents of verbal or physical abuse against our CEOs. For incidents where the Police have not been in attendance a decision will be made on whether a referral is appropriate.

All data not deemed necessary or not required by the Police for possible prosecution will enter a secure short term archive database and will be deleted as per the software settings.

Any data retained will only be kept until all investigations have been completed or prosecution has taken place.

Footage can only be viewed by authorised personnel and will only be done so if a formal incident log is completed by an officer.

7. How will members of the public be able to view recorded data?

Any request to view captured video by a member of the public, or their legal representatives, should be made in writing to the South Essex Parking Partnership Manager at Chelmsford City Council.

Requests may also be made through the Subject Access Request procedure.

8. Will body-worn CCTV be used as supporting evidence for the issue of Penalty Charge Notices?

Absolutely not. Body-worn CCTV will not be used to gather evidence for the purposes of Parking Enforcement under any circumstances.

The cameras are being introduced purely as part of the Personal Protective Equipment under Chelmsford City Council's Health & Safety policy for Parking Enforcement.

9. Who ensures that Chelmsford City Council follows the correct and proper use of the cameras and footage?

Chelmsford City Council has and will continue to work in conjunction with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's (SCC) office. The SCC is a Government appointed independent Commissioner responsible for all guidance in relation to surveillance camera systems.

They have reviewed and agreed all the policies and operational guidelines issued to staff that will be using the cameras and its software.

As part of this process Chelmsford City Council have followed and complied with all legislation and guidance published in the following:

Data Protection Act 1998
Freedom of Information Act 2000
Human Rights Act 1998
Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
Home Office Surveillance Camera Code of Practice
Information Commissioners Code of Practice

We will consult the Surveillance Camera Commissioner on any updates or amendments to the policies and operational guidance before they take place.