



COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 November 2012

Surrey-i

Purpose of the report:

- To provide an update to the Committee on the implementation and development of Surrey-i; and
- To ask the Committee for comments and feedback to help shape the next phase of development for Surrey-i.

Introduction/Background:

1. Surrey-i (www.surreyi.gov.uk) went live in November 2011 and is Surrey's local information system and data observatory providing a platform for collaborative working and open access to public data. Surrey-i is one of the UK's most advanced local information systems. It gives users the ability to conduct analysis across complex datasets, with integrated mapping and charting tools. There are more than 200 datasets in Surrey-i (see full list at Annex 1).
2. Through Surrey-i the Council and its partners have a shared view of information that is up-to-date and relevant. Providing users with an easy way to access complex data means the Council and its partners are able to put evidence at the heart of service planning, resource allocation, policy making and decision making.
3. Surrey-i was delivered (on time and on budget) through a multi-agency partnership group chaired by Surrey County Council's Assistant Chief Executive. The set-up costs were £235,000 of which £150,000 was grant funded, meaning only £85,000 of the Council's budget was used to develop the website. The annual budget to cover maintenance, hosting and basic development costs is £28,000.
4. The Chartered Institute for Information Technology (the British Computing Society) have shortlisted the Council and its technology provider (Fluent) for the 2012 IT Project Team of the Year award. The nomination in this category is recognition of the innovative, collaborative and professional way in which the project has been delivered.

Has Surrey-i delivered a positive return on our investment?

5. Yes. Taking into account the development costs, staff costs and user statistics, Surrey-i has delivered between £346,000 and £495,000 of user value to the Council and its partners since its launch. These figures (Table 1 below) were calculated using a methodology derived from a detailed research exercise carried out by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)¹.
6. A lot of the information in Surrey-i is available from other sources. Therefore, to help assess the benefits derived from the introduction of Surrey-i the calculations quantify the value of the time saved by using Surrey-i to access information. A detailed analysis of the value assessment method used is available at the Local Government Association's 'Effective Service Delivery' website².

Table 1 – Surrey-i value assessment

	Low estimate	High Estimate
Monetary value of user benefits	£377,500	£540,000
User benefits minus running costs	£289,500	£452,000
Payback period for the system (yrs)	0.8	0.5
Estimated user value to date	£346,041	£495,000

Who uses Surrey-i and what do they use it for?

7. The first 12 months of Surrey-i use have shown that the system works well and is meeting a lot of information needs. There is a good baseline of user data that will be used to plan activity and judge the success of future years.
8. Surrey-i has been designed to meet the needs of a wide range of users. Understanding of visitor numbers and behaviour has been achieved by using Google's free website analysis tools. Since its launch in November 2011 the headline visitor statistics are:
 - 43,546 visits from 26,463 unique visitors
 - 312,384 page views
 - 7 page views per visit
 - Average visit duration of 7.5 minutes
9. The most visited pages (after the front page and search functions) during 2011 were:
 - Local profiles – detailed information at neighbourhood level
 - The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – a comprehensive volume of health and wellbeing information
 - The 2011 Census – early data and analysis
 - Population statistics

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/establishlocalinfo>

² <http://www.esd.org.uk/lis-value-assessment/Assessment.aspx>

10. The analysis of visitor numbers and user behaviour has identified a strong response to targeted marketing activity. A Surrey-i competition in Surrey News led to a large increase in visitor numbers (over 1000 in a single day compared to the average daily visit of 150) and during the week of release for the new 2011 Census data Surrey-i had double its normal weekly visitor numbers.
11. To complement the user data from Google and provide a more complete picture of Surrey-i usage, two surveys have been carried out:
 - A user survey to better understand how and why Surrey-i is used; and
 - A wider survey about general information needs, to make sure future development is focussed on the most relevant information and analysis.
12. The user survey was aimed at regular users of the website and had 160 responses. The key feedback from the survey was:
 - Most users said Surrey-i provides them with the information they need
 - A high proportion did not fully understand everything that Surrey-i can do
 - Users were divided on how easy it is to use the website
13. The feedback from the user survey also suggested that Surrey-i users knew they should be using evidence to plan and deliver services and projects. Respondents understood that Surrey-i can help with this, but were not always clear about how. This is very helpful feedback and suggests the Surrey-i team need to continue to explain the relevance and focus on the usability of the site.
14. The information needs survey had 550 responses. This was a wider survey, asking about the kind of data and information that people need. The survey showed that there is a high demand for:
 - Information about Surrey's population – including new Census data
 - Information about residents views about local services
 - Information about what works best in service delivery
15. There was also feedback from the survey that people in the public sector would like more information about how to use statistics and data and how to design and conduct effective research and evaluation.

The way forward for Surrey-i

16. Surrey-i is one of the most advanced local information systems in the UK. The focus has shifted from 'project delivery' to realising Surrey-i's potential and meeting user needs. The user feedback and visitor data has given useful insight into information needs and Surrey-i user behaviour. Taking all of this into account, there are four key activities planned over the next 12 months:

Embedding the use of evidence in service design and policy making

17. The user surveys showed that people had heard of Surrey-i, but there is still some uncertainty about what it is for and how to make the most out of it. The Policy and Performance Service are working with colleagues in Communications to raise awareness of how Surrey-i can support service design and policy making.

Anticipating future needs

18. The data and information needs of users were used to inform the initial development of Surrey-i, but after a year of use there is a more detailed picture of how people are really using the website. The most frequently used and demanded types of information will be broadened and the Policy and Performance Service will play a more proactive role in identifying information requirements and releasing information that is relevant to key local and national events.

Making information and key insights more accessible

19. Surrey-i has a number of tools that allow users to conduct detailed analysis of datasets. While some of the 'expert users' are making the most of these tools, the majority of Surrey-i's visitors have said they would like more summaries of key data sets. The survey results will be used to develop a plan of information summaries to be produced throughout the year. These will focus on the 2011 Census, key demographic and economic data and information about Surrey's residents.

Continue to develop Surrey-i so it remains a cutting-edge Local Information System

20. The Council's Web Operations team have used the Google visitor data to plan a redesign of the Surrey-i homepage. A timetable is being agreed with Fluent (the technology provider) and the changes will focus on making it easier for people to find the information they need.
21. By continuing to collect and analyse detailed user data the website can be developed in direct response to user needs and experiences.

Financial and value for money implications

22. The annual budget to cover maintenance, hosting and basic development costs is £28,000

Equalities Implications

23. The data and analysis tools in Surrey-i help develop a better understanding of Surrey's communities.

Risk management implications

24. The technology provider has robust disaster recovery plans in place.

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy

25. Easy access to relevant and detailed information about Surrey ensures the effective business management of the County Council and supports the delivery of the Community Strategy, delivering improved outcomes and value for money for Surrey residents.

Recommendations:

26. It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note the successful delivery of Surrey-i
- b) Comment on the proposed way forward

Next steps:

- The Committee's recommendations are fed into the development plan for Surrey-i

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