

## SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

### Project SIREN overview

09 September 2014

15

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Surrey Police and Crime Panel with an overview of the SIREN IT project. The report outlines the history of the project, its termination, the findings of the audit carried out by Grant Thornton and the actions being taken by Surrey Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to address the audit's recommendations.

The full Public Interest report produced by Grant Thornton has been included as **Appendix B**.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Police and Crime Panel are asked to note the report.

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 The SIREN (Surrey Integrated Reporting Enterprise Network) project was concerned with the design, development and implementation of a core suite of ICT products including custody, case and intelligence for Surrey Police. SIREN sought to replace Surrey Police's existing crime, intelligence and custody suite (CIS) which had been in operation since 1992 and was no longer considered fit for purpose.
- 1.2 The procurement process began in 2008 and a contract to develop the system was signed with MEMEX Technology in May 2009. However the project experienced a number of delays and setbacks and, in the summer of 2012, the recently appointed Chief Constable Lynne Owens raised her concerns with the Police Authority that SIREN was no longer the best option for the Force. However, due to the period of 'Purdah' in relation to the pending Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections, the Police Authority was unable to formally consider the matter prior to its disbandment.
- 1.3 On the first day of office, the Chief Constable briefed the PCC on her concerns and the PCC subsequently took action which led to the termination of the contract. The PCC also negotiated with the developer to secure release from the contractual liability to pay any further support costs, preventing further financial loss. Nonetheless, taking all known costs into account it is believed that the total cost of the project was at least £14.86m, with no benefits delivered.
- 1.4 A timeline showing key events relating to the SIREN project is attached as **Appendix A**.

## 2. Audit findings

- 2.1 Upon the formal termination of the SIREN IT project on 9 April 2013 the decision was referred to the Surrey Police and PCC's appointed auditors, Grant Thornton, due to the significant impact on the accounts. Grant Thornton then exercised their statutory powers to issue a report in the public interest, independent of both bodies.
- 2.2 The report, published on 19 June 2014, considered whether the decision taken by the PCC to terminate the project was reasonable and reviewed the SIREN project from its inception to termination, considering the arrangements in place in respect of project and programme governance. The full public report is attached as **Appendix B**.
- 2.3 Although the audit report acknowledged that the initial decision to replace CIS with SIREN was reasonable and that it matched the ambitions of the Force at the time, the auditors identified a number of issues that arose

during the delivery of the project that ultimately lead to its failure. The main findings were:

- The project management approach adopted was not properly understood by the Force and the methodology ultimately proved ineffective.
- There was a failure to recruit, retain and allocate appropriately skilled and experienced resource to the programme, with substantial changes in key roles.
- Scope and cost were poorly controlled.
- There was a failure to understand the controls, checks and balances needed to deliver effective governance
- Benefits of the project were overstated and never delivered
- Progress reporting was rose tinted, overly-optimistic and not always representative of actual progress made by the project – attributed by some to a cultural aversion to “giving the boss bad news”.
- Project reporting was not subject to sufficient scrutiny and there was not sufficient or significant intervention from any of the scrutiny functions in response to the long-term red-rated status held by the project.

### 3. Police response

3.1 The audit report put forward a number of recommendations and these are set out in **Appendix C**, including responses from both Surrey Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. These responses were also detailed at the statutory public meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

3.2 Some of the actions being taken by the Police to address the recommendations in the report include:

- A new joint procurement team with Sussex Police with better risk assessment of large contracts, consideration of break clauses in key contracts, and senior level oversight.
- Tenders which are over the European procurement threshold (OJEU level) will be evaluated with a risk register prior to further consideration.
- Improved governance of change programmes, including a new joint Head of Change working across both Surrey and Sussex.

- Improved training of all officers and staff managing change programmes.
- The Force's People Strategy Work Programme will actively promote a culture of reporting "bad news" upwards.

3.3 The OPCC will oversee the implementation of all the proposed actions and will, where relevant, look to embed the recommendations of the report in its own areas of work.

#### **4. Additional steps taken by the PCC**

4.1 At the Commissioner's request a copy of the audit report was sent to every PCC in England and Wales to help prevent similar failings being repeated elsewhere.

4.2 Whilst the audit report itself doesn't attribute the failure of SIREN to any one individual, the PCC is firmly of the view that there was nevertheless a failure of the former Chief Constable who ultimately had responsibility for the project. It is the PCC's view that the Chief Constable had a vision for an ambitious and high-risk tailored ICT system but did not ensure that the Force had the capability to deliver that system. Had the former Chief Constable still been in post, the PCC has indicated that he would be seeking to hold him to account.

4.3 In light of the above, the PCC has written to the Mayor of London, the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime in London and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, to bring his concerns to their attention.

#### **5. Niche**

5.1 On 7th June 2013, the PCC, advised by the current Chief Constable Lynne Owens, decided to procure an alternative solution to SIREN, known as Niche. Niche has subsequently been implemented in line with planned timescales and Surrey Police now have a robust crime, intelligence and custody suite in place.

5.2 This new system is "off-the-shelf" rather than bespoke and has the benefits of being the same as the systems in place in Sussex, Hampshire, Thames Valley Police and 10 other police forces. Already the benefits of shared intelligence with Sussex have been seen, with an arrest taking place on the first day of Niche being in place where a wanted burglar from Sussex had travelled into the Surrey area.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Members of the Police and Crime Panel are asked to note the report.

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