Siren police IT project's £15m failure a 'debacle'

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The Siren system was intended to help officers store intelligence on criminals

**Surrey's police and crime commissioner has called for one of Britain's most senior police officers to be held to account for the failure of a multi-million pound computer project.**

A report into the £15m system to log crime information found oversight of the project was "not fit for purpose".

Surrey PCC Kevin Hurley said Mark Rowley - chief constable at the time - should take responsibility.

But Assistant Commissioner Rowley, who is now at the Met, defended his role.

**'No misconduct issues'**

The Surrey Integrated Reporting Enterprise Network (Siren) was commissioned by Surrey Police in 2009 but was abandoned last year.

The report, by auditors Grant Thornton, said it was was an "ambitious project that was beyond the in-house capabilities and experience" of the police force and police authority.

Mr Hurley said: "Mr Rowley is no longer employed in Surrey, but if he were I would as PCC be considering how best to hold him to account.

"He is now employed by the Metropolitan Police Service. I will be writing to the Mayor for London Boris Johnson and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, to take action as they see appropriate."

Siren was specifically designed to log crimes and store intelligence on criminals and suspects.

But Mr Hurley scrapped the project after the force concluded that it did not represent the "best long-term option for the force and the public".



Image caption,

Mark Rowley moved to Scotland Yard in 2011

Mr Rowley said he noted there were "no criticisms of individuals or their conduct" in the report but said he agreed with its recommendations.

"I'm sure that all those involved in leading this project as officers or from the Surrey Police Authority share with me regret and disappointment that Siren did not realise the benefits for the public we sought," he added.

The force spent £14.8m on the project from its inception to 31 March 2013. The money was spent on staff costs, training, software, technology and consultancy.

It was replaced with a less costly crime information system which is used by 13 other forces.

Mr Rowley's roles at the Met include overseeing the development of digital technology.

He is due to take up a new post later this month as head of specialist operations, which includes responsibility for counter-terrorism policing.

Echoing his statement, the Met said: "The MPS note that the report does not single out any individual for criticism and does not appear to identify any misconduct issues.

"If misconduct allegations are made in relation to any MPS officer, they will be considered in the normal manner."

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-27911416>

Termination of the SIREN ICT project: Q&A What is this Public Interest Report about? The report provides the findings of an audit carried out in the public interest under statutory requirements to consider the decision taken by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Surrey, Kevin Hurley, to terminate the SIREN ICT project. The report considers whether the decision taken by the PCC to terminate the project was reasonable and reviews the SIREN project from its inception to termination, considering the arrangements in place in respect of project and programme governance. What was SIREN? SIREN (Surrey Integrated Reporting Enterprise Network) was a key element of the Enterprise Programme which, following a formal decision in 2005, sought to replace Surrey Police's existing crime, intelligence and custody suite (CIS). Why was SIREN needed? CIS was a key system which was becoming obsolete and was no longer fit for purpose. The Force had also identified that the system was subject to increased risk of failure and would no longer be supported by the supplier. Following a procurement and evaluation process, SIREN was identified as the most appropriate replacement. What went wrong? The audit report acknowledges that the initial decision to replace CIS with SIREN was reasonable and that it matched the ambitions of the Force at the time. However, the auditors have identified a number of issues that arose during the delivery of the project that ultimately lead to its failure. The main findings of the audit are that from the outset: 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 redrated status held by the project. Why has this report taken so long to come out? Upon formally terminating 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. The report has involved reviewing the documentation produced over the life of the project and conducting interviews with the key individuals involved, including those who no longer work for either the Office of the PCC (formally the Police Authority) or the Force. These comprehensive investigations, combined with strict rules surrounding the publication of audit reports, have meant that it was not possible to share the findings until now. The auditors interviewed over 25 people and consulted with over 40 people across a number of organisations and ensured that all interested parties were given time to respond to consultation. Under statutory requirements and in the interests of transparency the Commissioner is committed to ensuring that the audit is published in full and has, with Surrey Police, arranged a public meeting at which residents and members of the press will be able to question both himself and the Chief Constable on the findings. How much did SIREN cost? Taking all known costs into account, it is believed that the total cost of the project was at least £14.86m. What impact will this have on operational policing in Surrey? The PCC is extremely disappointed that at a time of austerity a significant amount of public money has been wasted on an IT project that has delivered none of the benefits envisaged. Police finances are already under and the Force can ill afford further financial losses. As such, the Commissioner will be sending a copy of the audit report to every PCC in England and Wales to help prevent similar failings being repeated elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Commissioner remains committed to protecting frontline policing and Surrey is the only police force in the country to have increased officer numbers over the past year. By collaborating with neighbouring forces, replacing some PCSO posts with Police Constable posts and by using assets seized from criminals, Surrey has been able to buck the national trend and deliver more visible policing. This will continue to be the PCCs ambition. This year has seen excellent police performance in Surrey with arrests up, crime down and detection rates for burglary and violence improving. Why was the project not stopped sooner? The audit report notes that there was no agreed gateway review process in place and, as a result, opportunities to consider earlier termination may have been missed. Equally rose tinted reporting meant that the true extent of the problems were not fully realised until a late stage. The auditors also note that terminating the project sooner may have carried greater risk and uncertainty. In the summer of 2012 the Chief Constable Lynne Owens brought her concerns about SIREN to the attention of the Police Authority but was precluded due to the period of ‘Purdah’ in relation to the pending PCC elections. On the first day of office, the Chief Constable briefed the PCC on her concerns and the PCC took prompt 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. Who was to blame and is anyone going to be held to account? The former Chief Constable of Surrey Police, Mark Rowley, committed to an ambitious and high risk project but failed to put the necessary skills and processes in place to support delivery. The PCC sees this as akin to a captain of a ship taking a high-risk course without ensuring that his crew and vessel are capable of navigating the treacherous waters and leading to the ship drifting onto the rocks. Had the former Chief Constable, Mark Rowley, still been in post the PCC would be looking to hold him to account and reflecting on how best to do that. However, as it stands, the PCC intends to write to the former Chief Constable’s new employer to highlight his concerns. How are you going to make sure that this doesn’t happen again? The audit report sets out a number of recommendations that have been duly noted and will be carefully considered by the Force and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The PCC and Chief Constable will also be responding the recommendations made at the statutory public meeting to be held on the 27th June 2014 and outlining what actions they will be taking. The auditors also note that the Niche replacement solution was implemented in line with planned timescales, suggesting that the Force has already learned some of the key lessons from the failure of the SIREN project. What is Niche? On 7th June 2013, following the termination of the SIREN contract, 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. 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. Are you required to hold a public meeting? Yes, as the report has been issued by Grant Thornton, the Auditors, as a public interest report. We are holding the meeting on Friday 27th June 2014 at 7pm at HG Wells Conference and Events Centre in Woking. Any members of the public wishing to attend are requested to register by e-mailing CorporateCommunications@surrey.pnn.police.uk or call 01483 571212 with their details.

<https://www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Public-QA-PDF1.pdf>

Surrey Police has been criticised for failing to address a "number of significant weaknesses" and inefficient checks and balances within its management of a terminated £14.8m criminal intelligence system project in an independent audit report released this week

The police force announced last year that its Surrey Integrated Reporting Enterprise Network (Siren) project, which cost the force £14.8m from its inception in 2005/06 to the project’s eventual termination in March 2013, was to be scrapped in favour of a collaborative approach working with other regional forces.

The reasons for the termination given at the time by Surrey’s Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Kevin Hurley was that switching to a collaborative working programme with other regional forces had much greater benefits that those envisaged for Siren when the project was first conceived.

The decision was taken to withdraw Siren and immediately begin to work up a fully costed proposal for an alternative solution.

In [findings](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Public-interest-report_Police-and-Crime-Commissioner-for-Surrey_Chief-Constable-for-Surrey_Audit-2012_13_Termination-of-the-SIREN-ICT-project.pdf) released this week, auditor Grant Thornton accused the police force of failing to understand and effectively make use of an agile approach to manage Siren. It also criticised a failure by the involved parties to factor key elements like national interfaces into the early scope and budget of the project.

The findings added that the awarding of a contract in May 2009 to a supplier called Memex was not itself seen as a reason for the failure of the project. However, the auditor said weaknesses were identified in the procurement and evaluation process that represented a lack of experience in the police force to handle a one off complex procurement like Siren.

Grant Thornton also raised concerns that of the three shortlisted bidders considered for the project, an additional opportunity to submit a "best and final" price resulted in Memex becoming the cheapest bidder – potentially impacting on its ability to deliver the project.

"Based on the evidence made available to us during our review, following our requests for information relevant to the project, we did not identify evidence to suggest that Memex was the wrong choice of supplier, having scored well during the process and being an existing supplier to the Metropolitan Police Service," read the report.

"However, in choosing a ‘tailored development solution’ rather than an ‘off the shelf’ solution, the [police] force chose an inherently riskier option. The force, supported by the authority, was of the view that choosing an option that provided the force with everything they believed they needed was preferable to a generic solution. Having decided to pursue the riskier solution, it was critical that appropriate project management skills and expertise were put in place to deliver it."

Grant Thornton noted that after the termination of the Siren project, Surrey police had taken lessons on board during the subsequent implementation of an ‘off-the shelf’ solution through a third party.

The findings said no individual decisions taken by Surrey Police in relation to the Siren project, or its eventual termination, could be considered "reckless".

"Like the termination decision itself, many of [them decisions] are understandable within the individual circumstances in which they were made. A lack of experience of how to manage ICT projects of this scale and complexity prevented effective corrective action being taken when problems first arose," said Paul Grady, Grant Thornton’s director and head of police sector assurance.

"Siren was an ambitious project that was fully supported by the police authority at the time. It was evident from our review that the staff of the force and the authority were genuinely striving to improve their business for the overall benefit of the public. It is also clear that the decision to terminate the project was supported by a number of external contributory factors that did not exist, and could not have been envisaged, at the outset," Grady added.

"However, there were a number of significant weaknesses in the arrangements for managing the Siren project which contributed to the project’s delays, overruns and difficulties. The ambitious vision for Siren was not matched by the skills and experience available and deployed by the force for a major portion of the project’s life."

Speaking at the time of the decision to withdraw Siren last April, Deputy Chief Constable Craig Denholm said the police force had then advised Surrey Police Authority in 2012 that Siren no longer presented the best long-term option for its operations.

"The management of information is critical in delivering effective policing. Given operational collaboration with other forces in the region, and as the national policing environment has now changed, we must also adapt our plans or risk losing out on the wider benefits," he said.

Earlier this week, the Committee on Standards in Public Life expressed concerns about the "limited monitoring" of third party contractors providing public services and a perceived emphasis on the placing of cost considerations above service quality.

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£15m police IT project scrapped last year was exposed to unnecessary risks and delays, according to a damning independent report.

Auditors Grant Thornton’s review into Surrey Police’s £14.86m scheme to develop SIREN, a system to store criminal records and log crimes to identify county-wide trends found that its ambition was not matched by staff expertise.

The review was published yesterday, more than a year after the project was ditched in March 2013 by Surrey PCC – and then chief constable – Kevin Hurley, following the force’s conclusion that it did not represent the "best long-term option for the force and the public".

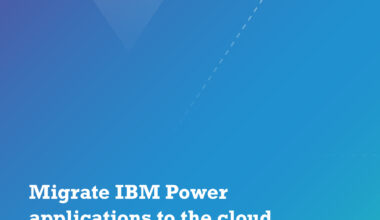
Surrey Police’s Chief Constable, Lynne Owens, admitted it has been a "challenging episode" for the force, and it welcomed the report’s recommendations and findings.

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Grant Thornton compiled a damning list of reasons for the failure, outlined below.

## 1 The ambition of SIREN was not supported by staff expertise

"The Force was not experienced in delivering projects of this type and complexity and the chosen supplier, Memex Technology Ltd (Memex), did not make up for this shortfall in terms of managing the risk to delivery."

## 2 Surrey Police didn’t use the agile work method properly

"The Force had little experience of using the Agile approach to project management, development and delivery, which was central to the way that SIREN would be delivered." This meant the scope of the project was poorly controlled for "a significant period", and meant staff identified delays and shortfalls in funding late in the process. "This was a key factor that resulted in the project taking considerably longer than planned," said the report.

## 3 A failure to accept iterative project modules under the agile development process

However, even when new versions of modules were not being accepted by the police, Memex carried on delivering them. "Neither Memex nor the Force sought to resolve this issue at an early stage. In our view, this contributed to the risk of the project rising above acceptable levels and was fundamental to the project’s failure."

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## 4 Too much staff churn

The project had five Senior Responsible Officers and five Programme Managers – that’s a lot of change.

## 5 The right people weren’t recruited

Maybe this is a corollary of the above point, but as the review says: "There was a failure to recruit, retain and allocate appropriately skilled and experienced resource to the programme. The Force failed to recruit for some key roles until very late in the project’s life – for example, the key roles of business change analyst and test manager, amongst others."  
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https://techmonitor.ai/techonology/10-reasons-why-surrey-polices-15m-siren-it-project-was-binned-4299023