

ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

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High Level Overview of the current IT Strategy for West Midlands Police

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Cover Report

1. *Police and Crime Plan*

- 1.1 This report is intended to give a high-level overview of the IT Strategy for West Midlands Police (“Synergy”). The IT Strategy was produced in 2022 and will be formally refreshed by 2025.
- 1.2 Enabling IT plays a crucial role in supporting the Police and Crime Plan by enhancing operational efficiency, improving public safety, and fostering better community engagement. The integration of modern technology enables data sharing, predictive analytics, and streamlined communication systems, all of which contribute to more effective crime prevention and response strategies.
- 1.3 Digital platforms allow for better resource allocation, improved case management, and increased transparency, ensuring that we can collectively enable operational colleagues to meet the plan's priorities, such as reducing violence, tackling organised crime, and building stronger trust within communities. Furthermore, enabling IT supports collaboration across agencies and provides the public with easier access to services, aligning with the plan's vision of a safer, more connected West Midlands.

2 *Achievements and Challenges*

2.1 **Andi-Esra (101 AI) Implementation**

West Midlands Police have designed and built a 101-voice assistant to take 101 calls: “Andi-Esra”.

2.2.1 **Challenge** - WMP receive c60,000 calls per month with a significant abandon rate and wait times in excess of the national average for 101 calls.

2.2.2 **Achievement** – During a 2-month trial Andi-Esra answered 17,343 calls and prioritised 797 vulnerable callers. Some of the calls classified as vulnerable callers included: Domestic Violence, Suicide prevention and Missing Children. Many of which could be deemed ‘time sensitive’ – these calls were effectively prioritised and sent directly to contact agents.

2.2 Digital Pocket Notebook (DPN)

DPN is a new digital solution, which has replaced the paper-based notebook.

2.2.1 Challenge – Officers were solely reliant on paper notebooks which were easily lost or damaged, with no back-up copy, no password protection, data security or encryption. Information from the DPN had to be manually entered in force systems where required.

2.2.2 Achievement – DPN improves data security and the information is integrated within the Command and Control system (ControlWorks). The DPN also has the ability for officers to add a signature, sketch and free text. In addition, officers have the ability to create an extract of entries and there is also a facility to create hyperlinks to telephone numbers, addresses and websites. The DPN has accessibility features which improves the user experience for all.

2.3 Association of Chief Police Officers Criminal Records (ACRO) Automation

Automation of data sent from the force Records Management System (Connect) to ACRO for requesting conviction data held overseas.

2.3.1 Challenge – ACRO checks are requested under international treaty agreements, so any data shared is under strict conditions. If the same offender is arrested multiple times, ACRO data needs to be requested each time. Submission of these requests was manual, resulting in increased time, effort & error rates.

2.3.2 Achievement – Following the automation, data is sent automatically from our Records Management System (Connect) to ACRO, avoiding manual intervention and saving time. We have used the latest available Cloud Native Services to achieve this.

2.4 Improved process for gathering CCTV evidence.

Creation of the ability for the Traffic Investigations Unit (TIU) to self-generate links for members of the public to allow them to send CCTV footage to WMP.

2.4.1 Challenge – In order to provide WMP with CCTV footage, members of the public need a link from WMP which gives them access to Evidnece.com and the CCTV upload facility. This was an elongated process requiring the TIU to call Force Contact and ask for the link to be generated, leading to delays for the member of the public and an additional burden on Force Contact.

2.4.2 Achievement - Evidence.com has been modified to accept reference numbers in alternative formats, eliminating the need for Force Contact to generate these links on behalf of TIU. This saves both the TIU and Force Contact time as they no longer need to dedicate resources to this process. Members of the public receive their links much faster and CCTV evidence can be secured & reviewed in a timely manner.

2.5 Laptops provisioned for Officers

Over 7,000 laptops for officers have been rolled out across the force.

2.5.1 Challenge - Officers would have to return to the station to type up notes and do their crime recording. Officers did not have access to all systems whilst away from the police stations.

2.5.2 Achievement - Officers equipped with light/small laptops, giving access to all necessary systems whenever and wherever needed. Agile working offers the ability for officers to remain off-site as the need for officers to return to the station are greatly reduced.

3. **Actions undertaken**

As above.

The Synergy Strategy along with the wider force technical delivery plan forms part of the daily on-going work of the IT&Digital Department.

4. **Future Work**

Future work on the realisation of the West Midlands Police Synergy IT Strategy will continue to ensure that the force remains at the forefront of technological innovation and operational efficiency.

This work is multi-faceted and will include further investigation in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) which is essential to improving efficiency. Ongoing development of cloud-based infrastructure will also enable scalable, secure data management and enhance cross-agency collaboration, ensuring seamless information sharing with other public services where appropriate.

Additionally, cybersecurity must remain a priority, with ongoing improvements to protect sensitive information from emerging threats. This includes regular updates to security protocols, software and hardware.

Moreover, continuous feedback loops from both officers and staff will inform iterative updates to the strategy, ensuring that the technology remains user-centred and aligned with the evolving needs of the West Midlands region.

5. **Financial Implications**

The Synergy Strategy is accompanied by a buy hard mantra across the IT function and some examples of recent cost savings are:

Number of Contracts Reviewed 71	Number of Contracts with Savings 21
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£4,492,169

Original Contract Cost

Total cost of the contracts reviewed where savings were achieved

£3,455,402

Revised Contract Cost

New total costs of contracts post savings

£1,062,215

Amount Saved to Date

Please note some agreements/savings were for 2/3/5 year contracts so savings will be achieved over a longer term

e.g. Oracle RightNow is a 2 year renewal, both years will be at the lower cost

Contracts Where Savings Were Achieved

Application	Amount Saved
Oracle RightNow CX/IT Licensing	£361,816.76
Microsoft Azure SCE Agreement	£121,451.43
LivePerson / LiveEngage	£106,604.60
FSD Server Break Fix Renewal	£102,500.06
iTrent Warks Read Only License	£70,000.00
Microsoft Sentinel - 100GB Commitment	£50,820.11
COSAIN	£47,808.00
Risual DFU - Managed Service	£32,834.08
Veritas NetBackup	£29,877.88
StarTraq	£27,552.55
SailPoint	£26,712.00
Microsoft Sentinel - Data Error	£22,728.60
QPulse Upgrade	£14,473.00
XRY Logical & Physical Licenses and PinPoint	£12,233.49
Annual AWS Spend Review - CDPv2	£12,012.00
F5 Renewal	£9,957.00
Adobe SCC Renewal	£4,533.18
Lynx Auditor	£3,329.67
Promaps	£2,857.98
Compact Missing Persons Renewal	£2,054.52
RouteFinder	£58.00
Total	£1,062,214.91

In addition, our work with Robotic Process Automation (RPA) continues to contribute to force-wide cost avoidance and efficiency savings. Since the RPA function became imbedded and fully operable in 2022 we have realised:

- Cost Savings of £3.5m
- FTE Operational Hours Savings of £149.56k

6. ***Legal Implications***

Any contract renewals or new contracts are subject to existing internal governance and are led and managed by the Contracts and Procurement department.

7. ***Equality Implications***

All IT systems and mobile applications are developed to be fully DDA compliant. Members of the WMP Diversity and Inclusion team sit on IT boards and working groups to ensure that the voice of all our user groups are heard and catered for.

Background

The Synergy Strategy is the current IT strategy for WMP, formally signed off by the Force Executive Team in 2022.

Following the transformational change programme (2015-2021), West Midlands Police have new capabilities, ranging from Data Driven Insights, Cloud Computing and Automation through to new transactional systems for records management and command and control. As such, the benefit of technology investment must be demonstrated in terms of a financial return, promoting cost avoidance or adding value by enabling business change.

Since the period covered by the previous transformation programme, we have increased the pace of change, and will continue to do so. We will deliver, and keep delivering the right technology for our users, supporting the wider business of WMP and integrating with national technology as needed.

Technology is changing at an ever-increasing pace; our use of public cloud-based technology already gives us new ways of analysing data; and data sciences are already leading to new insights for the Force. The Synergy Strategy was developed to reflect the needs of the force, both in terms of an ethos of continuous improvement across our technology estate, innovation to keep the force in line with new and emerging technologies, and also, less visible, but of equal importance, the removal of technical debt. Whilst it is recognised that technology has tremendous potential, it is vital that the utilisation of technology reflects the business needs of the force.

The Synergy strategy states our ambition for new capabilities which combine the driving forces of technology and operational insight to make technology the key enabler for operational policing.

The overarching Synergy vision is designed to be simple; meaning officers and staff will simply consume technology effortlessly because it “just works, exceptionally well”.

Some practical translations of the principles underpinning the vision are:

1. Removing barriers in day-to-day process, looking to streamline core processes with seamless user experiences.
2. Deploying smaller/meaningful technology changes, to tighten experience and process. Lots of small improvements/changes making a big overarching impact.
3. Seeking opportunities to exploit technology with partner agencies. We have some beneficial “big tech” company relationships and we continue to innovate in the policing supplier marketplace.
4. Being relentless on our focus to make the police technology experience the best it can be.

Underpinning these principles are a series of building blocks, which we refer to as the DNA of Synergy:

- Data First
- Unparallel User Experience
- Continuous Improvement as Standard
- Ubiquitous Connectivity
- Eradicate Technical Debt
- Platform for the future

This is where we focus our efforts and each building block has a supporting delivery plan and roadmap.

Policing journeys have often been fragmented with silo-based approaches to technology “*replace this with that*” vs a true understanding of the journey people undertake in their roles, the data they need to access, and the often-pressured environment they operate in.

Our aim is to give everyone the best possible technology experience, from our Police Officers and staff, to our partners that rely on our support and data for safeguarding, investigation and crime prevention, through to members of the public who want to engage with us in new ways, through a channel and at a time that suits them. It is our responsibility to deploy the right technology to meet the wider ambitions of the force and to increase the speed and efficiency of technical delivery.

User Experience can no longer be an afterthought if we want our officers and staff to get the most out of the technical services and systems we offer. Achieving improved efficiency through the use of technology is driven by successful user journeys and as such User Experience is key. The Synergy strategy builds on this ethos, with User Experience at the core of our direction.

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Appendix – IT&Digital Strategy “Synergy”

Please see file:

AGB High Level Overview of IT Strategy – APPENDIX 1 – ITD Synergy 2025 document