

# CBSL

## Assurance Review of the Security of Found, Seized and Held Property Arrangements

Police and Crime Commissioner for  
Wiltshire and Chief Constable of Wiltshire  
Police

# FINAL



November 2013

2013/14

# Assurance Review of the Security of Found, Seized and Held Property Arrangements

## - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -

### INTRODUCTION

1. We have reviewed the Security of Found, Seized and Held Property arrangements at Wiltshire Police. The review was carried out in June 2013 as part of the planned internal audit work for 2013/14.

### SUMMARY

2. One Key Risk Control Objective was identified and tested and based on the findings from this work an evaluation of the overall adequacy of the internal controls was established. (Figure 1 below).

*Figure 1 - Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Internal Controls*



### KEY FINDINGS

3. The key control and operational practice findings that need to be addressed in order to strengthen the control environment are set out in the Management and Operational Effectiveness Action Plans. Recommendations for improvements should be assessed by the Wiltshire Police for their full impact before they are implemented. The priorities of the recommendations are summarised below (figure 2):

*Figure 2 - Summary of Priorities of Recommendations*

Urgent	Important	Routine	Operational
0	7	8	1

### RELEASE OF REPORT

4. The table below sets out the history of this report.

Date draft report issued:	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2013
Date management responses recd:	19 <sup>th</sup> November 2013
Date final report issued:	27 <sup>th</sup> November 2013

**MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN**  
**PRIORITY 1, 2 AND 3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Rec.	Risk Area	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer (Job Title)
1	Failure to direct the process through approved policy & procedures.	The revised Seizure, Storage, Retention and Disposal of Special Property Policy and Procedure does not include the policy for Lost and Found Property. It was in the previous Special Property Policy and Procedure but has now been removed as this it is now under a different area of responsibility. The Lost and Found Property is currently being documented.	The Lost and Found Policy and Procedures be documented as planned.	2	<i>The procedure for Lost &amp; Found Property is currently a work stream of the Customer Access Review Team. They are carrying out a significant review of how the organisation manages lost and found property. The team are due to report their findings and recommendations for redesign in by January 2014.</i>	January 2014	John Flynn – Business Owner  Andy Bridge – Customer Access Review Manager
2	Failure to direct the process through approved policy & procedures.	There are guidance procedures available for the DPR system but no procedures documented for the process at both Swindon and Melksham. There has been discussion regarding implementing a special property module to be incorporated within the Niche system; however this has ongoing for several years.	Procedures be documented for the flow of property within the Special Property Office at Melksham.	2	<i>A flow diagram has been produced to assist staff. When NICHE is implemented, this will be reviewed.</i>	December 2013	Records and Special Property Manager

## PRIORITY GRADINGS

<b>1</b>	<b>URGENT</b>	Fundamental control issue on which action should be taken immediately.	<b>2</b>	<b>IMPORTANT</b>	Control issue on which action should be taken at the earliest opportunity.	<b>3</b>	<b>ROUTINE</b>	Control issue on which action should be taken.
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Rec.	Risk Area	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer (Job Title)
3	Seized property is not controlled and stored securely thereby leading to criminal evidence being lost.	The CSI room contains numerous large property bags containing numerous items which are scattered over the floor making a difficult to manoeuvre to the shelving, which is a health & safety risk.	The numerous bags in the CSI room at Melksham be appropriately dealt with and moved to ensure there is room to manoeuvre to minimise the risk of a health & safety incident.	2	<i>A clear out of the room has now occurred dealing with all health and safety issues.</i>	<i>Completed</i>	
5	Seized property is not controlled and stored securely thereby leading to criminal evidence being lost.	At the time of the review there were numerous DPR records on the system at Swindon which had been set up whereby the items have never 'booked into' the Property Store. There are no periodic reviews undertaken to establish whether these records can be closed. Examples include 2012/139, 2012/177, 2012/410, 2012/412, 2012/493 2012/513 and 2013/16.	Periodic reviews be under taken of 'live' dated property items over 6 months old that have not been booked into the Property Store to ensure the system is kept up to date.	2	<i>Items can be added out of hours and therefore discrepancies can occur. On a quarterly basis an audit of the room will occur, ensuring all items are properly recorded on the system.</i>	<i>December 2013</i>	<i>Records and Special Property Manager</i>
10	The actions (or in-actions) of the Force lead to consequential unforeseen costs being incurred by the Force.	The Public Protection Supervisor, at that time, stated that the DPOs should not accept any incorrect drug amounts/weights and that they should query the amounts with the OIC and/or the OICs Line Manager. Details should not be amended unless appropriate authority has been given,	The procedure for amending drug quantities/weights be clarified, formally documented and the Divisional Property Officers advised accordingly.	2	<i>To provide Property Officers with clarity around drugs procedures.</i>	<i>Complete</i>	<i>Records /SPR Manager.</i>

## PRIORITY GRADINGS

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Rec.	Risk Area	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer (Job Title)
		however the DPOs were not fully aware of this procedure, although the DPOs stated that they have not amended any of the original data in the last 12 months.					
14	The actions (or in-actions) of the Force lead to consequential unforeseen costs being incurred by the Force.	A sample of 10 items that included cash and jewellery was randomly selected and checked to ensure they were still present at Swindon and 5 items selected at Melksham. The review revealed that all were present at Swindon but only 3 out of the 5 were present at Melksham. The two missing items at Melksham were serial numbers 206970, a handbag containing £60 cash and various other items which was received on 08 April 2013 and serial number 207009, a Samsung Galaxy Ace mobile received on 3 June 2013.	Controls on found property be reviewed to ensure they are more robust.	2	<i>The Enquiry Office have been informed of the issue and are reviewing processes to ensure compliance.</i>	December 2013	Records Management Co-ordinator

PRIORITY GRADINGS

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Rec.	Risk Area	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer (Job Title)
15	The actions (or in-actions) of the Force lead to consequential unforeseen costs being incurred by the Force.	A review of sample of payments received revealed that there is some delay in analysing the income and therefore a delay in the income received. An Example includes the cheque received in February 2013 related to sales from April to August 2012.	Income received from Bumblebee sales be obtained in a more timely basis to maximise income due to the Force.	2	<i>Finance do not receive the income summary on a regular and timely basis from Exess Consultants Ltd and often have to chase to receive anything. Once received the analysis is turned around quickly but occasionally we still have to wait a long time for the cheques.</i>		Senior Accounting Technician
4	Seized property is not controlled and stored securely thereby leading to criminal evidence being lost.	The visit to Swindon revealed that there were numerous items relating to 2010, the majority of which could be disposed of. As stated in paragraph 11 there were 10,244 items of property at Melksham and 70,007 live items at Swindon. The previous review in November 2007 reported 5200 items of property at Melksham and 42692 live items at Swindon. This highlights a significant increase in property held.	Appropriate temporary resources be provided to reduce the volume of property held and therefore create more space.	3	<i>A decision making framework is being produced. Once this is complete we will undertake a review of Swindon with the intention to reduce volume.</i>	<i>Decision Making Framework – December 2013 Review of Swindon – March 2014</i>	<i>Ops Manager, CJU and Records and Specialist Property Manager</i>

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Rec.	Risk Area	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer (Job Title)
6	Seized property is not controlled and stored securely thereby leading to criminal evidence being lost.	It was noted that in Melksham drugs that are seized are held in unlocked cabinets that are contained in the Armoury store room which has steel door that is double locked. The room is not ventilated and a strong aroma from the drugs is evident not just in that room but in the room next door which is the main office room. This could be a health risk to the staff working in this environment.	The Armoury room at Melksham, where the drugs are located be ventilated.	3	<i>A review of SPR storage facilities is part of the Wiltshire Council Estates Plan. The Estates Plan is currently being discussed at ACPO level. Local Managers are awaiting a proposal.</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>DCC</i>
7	Seized property is not controlled and stored securely thereby leading to criminal evidence being lost.	The SPRs are distributed by the DPOs. The issue and logging of the books was undertaken by the DPO but this stopped when the DPO at Melksham on secondment from November 2012 to March 2013.	The issue and logging of Special Property Register books be re-instigated as planned.	3	<i>The new DPO has been informed of the process and is ensuring compliance.</i>	<i>Complete</i>	
8	Seized property is not controlled and stored securely thereby leading to criminal evidence being lost.	A sample of 15 items were selected from the various locations at Melksham and checked to the SPR spreadsheet. Testing revealed that SPR numbers 271379 (hard drive) and 270827 (suitcase) were not recorded on the spreadsheet.	SPR numbers 271379 and 270827 be recorded on the SPR spreadsheet at Melksham.	3	<i>This was an error which has now been rectified.</i>	<i>Complete</i>	

## PRIORITY GRADINGS

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Rec.	Risk Area	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer (Job Title)
9	The actions (or in-actions) of the Force lead to consequential unforeseen costs being incurred by the Force.	All drugs are recorded on the Drugs Recording System (DRS). The OIC will enter each item onto the database that gives an automated sequential reference number. There is no requirement to complete the SPR, as this would be duplication of effort. The OIC has to weigh the amount of the drug, less the weight of the bag and the seal and enter the amount into the system or count the number of drugs if they are in a tablet form. The OIC then saves the entry and pass the drugs to special property at the appropriate time. Once saved, only the DPOs and the Systems Administrator can amend any details. This was raised in the previous review and discussed with the Records Manager who was unsure as to who in ICT is the current Systems Administrator of the DRS system.	The systems ownership of the DRS system be identified and the details be made available to the Records Manager.	3	<i>Systems owner has now been identified and has been made aware.</i>	Complete	

PRIORITY GRADINGS

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Rec.	Risk Area	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer (Job Title)
11	The actions (or in-actions) of the Force lead to consequential unforeseen costs being incurred by the Force.	Sample testing of items disposed of back to the Form 95s could not be undertaken as no forms are available at Swindon and at Melksham there were numerous forms that were not filed, many of which had not been auctioned.	Action be taken in a timely manner on the processing of disposing of property on a receipt of a Form 95.	3	<i>The process enables DPO's to dispose of property in line with set procedures. During the year spot checks will take place by the Special Property Supervisor.</i>	Complete	
12	The actions (or in-actions) of the Force lead to consequential unforeseen costs being incurred by the Force.	A sample of 10 Form 22s was selected and 3 out of the 10 were not signed by the OIC authorising the release (no emails received).	All Officers be reminded that all Form 22s be signed by the Officer giving the authority to return property to the owners including their Warrant number.	3	<i>Force wide communication sent out.</i>	Complete	
13	The actions (or in-actions) of the Force lead to consequential unforeseen costs being incurred by the Force.	At Swindon there were numerous dated items that have not been claimed and therefore need to be disposed of. Also at Melksham there were numerous bicycles, the majority of which have been brought in from other stations, which have not been claimed. It was noted ten bicycles were received between July 2012 and December 2012.	Action be taken on the numerous bicycles at Melksham and the numerous dated items at Swindon.	3	<i>A recent clear-out has led to the disposal of these bicycles.</i>	Complete	

## PRIORITY GRADINGS

<b>1</b>	<b>URGENT</b>	Fundamental control issue on which action should be taken immediately.	<b>2</b>	<b>IMPORTANT</b>	Control issue on which action should be taken at the earliest opportunity.	<b>3</b>	<b>ROUTINE</b>	Control issue on which action should be taken.
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## OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MATTERS

Ref	Item	Management Comments
1	All Enquiry Office staff be reminded to indicate within the Found Property book whether property has been 'Retained by Finder' or in 'Police Possession'.	<i>Deputy Head Contact Management to remind staff.</i>

## ADVISORY NOTE

Operational Effectiveness Matters need to be considered as part of management review of procedures, rather than on a one-by-one basis

**- DETAILED REPORT -****SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW**

5. The review considers the arrangements for: managing seized, found and held property. The review will include visits to two locations to assess the adequacy of the local arrangements.
6. The following risk areas were considered:

<b>Governance Risk</b>	The process is not directed by an up to date policy and procedures which provide sufficient detail to enable effective delivery of the process in accordance with the approved policy.
<b>Fit for Purpose Risk</b>	The process does not mitigate the relevant strategic and operational risks that could adversely impact on the delivery of the business plan.
<b>Control Risk</b>	The controls in place do not effectively mitigate opportunities for error or loss.
<b>Compliance Risk</b>	Testing indicates that the key controls within the procedure for this process are not being consistently operated.

7. The limitations and the responsibilities of management in regard to this review are set out in the Annual Plan.
8. The review has been carried out by TIAA Ltd as the nominated sub-contractor of Capita Business Services Ltd ('CBSL'). The limitations and the responsibilities of management in regard to this review are set out in the Annual Plan.
9. The matters raised in this report are only those that came to the attention of the auditor during the course of the internal audit review and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist or all the improvements that might be made. This report has been prepared solely for management's use and must not be recited or referred to in whole or in part to third parties without our prior written consent. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared, and is not intended, for any other purpose. TIAA neither owes nor accepts any duty of care to any other party who may receive this report and specifically disclaims any liability for loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature, which is caused by their reliance on our report.

**ASSESSMENT OF THE KEY RISK CONTROL OBJECTIVE**

10. This review identified and tested the controls that are being operated by the Wiltshire Police and an assessment of the combined effectiveness of the controls in mitigating the key control risks is provided. The assessments are:

<b>Substantial Assurance</b>	<b>Robust series of internal controls in place designed to achieve the system objectives and which are being consistently applied.</b>
<b>Reasonable Assurance</b>	<b>Series of internal controls in place, however there are some control improvements that would assist in ensuring the continuous and effective achievement of the system objectives.</b>
<b>Limited Assurance</b>	<b>The controls in place are not sufficient to ensure the continuous and effective achievement of the system objectives.</b>
<b>No Assurance</b>	<b>Fundamental breakdown or absence of core internal controls.</b>

**MATERIALITY**

11. At the time of the review there were 10,244 items of property at Melksham and 70,007 live items at Swindon. We understand that property is also held at other stations.

## AUDIT FINDINGS

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Failure to direct the process through approved policy &amp; procedures and/or losses arising from unauthorised action.</b>
<b>Risk Control Objective</b>	<b>Arrangements in place for the process provide for direction through established policies, procedures and provide for safeguarding the organisation's assets and interests from avoidable losses.</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Limited Assurance</b>

12. The following matters were identified in reviewing the Key Risk Control Objective:

**Risk: Failure to direct the process through approved policy & procedures.**

12.1 The Seizure, Storage, Retention and Disposal of Special Property Policy and Procedure were revised in May 2012. The Policy is available on Firstpoint.

12.2 The revised Seizure, Storage, Retention and Disposal of Special Property Policy and Procedure does not include the policy for Lost and Found Property. It was in the previous Special Property Policy and Procedure but has now been removed as this it is now under a different area of responsibility. The Lost and Found Property is currently being documented.

**Recommendation: 1**

**Priority: 2**

**The Lost and Found Policy and Procedures be documented as planned.**

12.3 Seized Property is recorded on an Excel spreadsheet at Melksham and on the Detained Property Record (DPR) system at Swindon. The DPR system is a software database.

12.4 There are guidance procedures available for the DPR system and but no procedures documented for the process at both Swindon and Melksham. There has been discussion regarding implementing a special property module to be incorporated within the Niche system; however this has ongoing for several years.

**Recommendation: 2**

**Priority: 2**

**Procedures be documented for the flow of property within the Special Property Office at Melksham.**

12.5 The revised Seizure, Storage, Retention and Disposal of Special Property Policy and Procedure.

12.6 The Chief Constable has overall responsibility for the arrangements for seized property. The Records Retention Department within Information Management is responsible for the day-to-day arrangements under the role of the Records Manager. The Records Manager is supported by the Records Management Co-ordinator with the day-to-day responsibility of running the Special Property Stores undertaken by the Divisional Property Officers.

**Risk: Seized property is not controlled and stored securely thereby leading to criminal evidence being lost.**

- 12.7 There are 6 locations at Melksham where property (not including found property) is held; one main store, one office, one CSI room, one armoury, one room contains pre-2012 items and one freezer room. There are also large items that are retained outside of the storage areas due to the size and weight.
- 12.8 The CSI room contains numerous large property bags containing numerous items which are scattered over the floor making a difficult to manoeuvre to the shelving, which is a health & safety risk.

**Recommendation: 3****Priority: 2**

**The numerous bags in the CSI room at Melksham be appropriately dealt with and moved to ensure there is room to manoeuvre to minimise the risk of a health & safety incident.**

- 12.9 There are three locations at Swindon; one main store room, one freezer room and one other room connected to the office which has a lockable storeroom.
- 12.10 The visit to Swindon revealed that there were numerous items relating to 2010, the majority of which could be disposed of. The Seizure, Storage, Retention and Disposal of Special Property Policy and Procedure sets out that "The retention of all items of property taken into police possession must be for no longer than necessary and must be fully justified". As stated in paragraph 11 there were 10,244 items of property at Melksham and 70,007 live items at Swindon. The previous review in November 2007 reported 5,200 items of property at Melksham and 42,692 live items at Swindon. This highlights a significant increase in property held. Discussions with the DPOs revealed that there is insufficient time to work on these dated items to dispose of the property.

**Recommendation: 4****Priority: 3**

**Appropriate temporary resources be provided to reduce the volume of property held and therefore create more space.**

- 12.11 At the time of the review there were numerous DPR records on the system at Swindon which had been set up whereby the items have never 'booked into' the Property Store. There are no periodic reviews undertaken to establish whether these records can be closed. Examples include 2012/139, 2012/177, 2012/410, 2012/412, 2012/493 2012/513 and 2013/16.

**Recommendation: 5****Priority: 2**

**Periodic reviews be under taken of 'live' dated property items over 6 months old that have not been booked into the Property Store to ensure the system is kept up to date.**

- 12.12 It was noted that in Melksham drugs that are seized are held in unlocked cabinets that are contained in the Armoury store room which has steel door that is double locked. The room is not ventilated and a strong aroma from the drugs is evident not just in that room but in the room next door which is the main office room. This could be a health risk to the staff working in this environment.

**Recommendation: 6****Priority: 3****The Armoury room at Melksham, where the drugs are located be ventilated.**

- 12.13 All seized property is recorded in a Special Property Register book (SPR) except at Swindon where it is directly input by the Officer in the Case (OIC) into the DPR system. Each record, which has a serial number, is signed by the (OIC) and signed by the DPO when received into the property stores. At Swindon a printout of the Detained Property Record for each record is retained with an attached Property Movement form which is used to record the location of the property in and out of the location.
- 12.14 The SPRs are distributed by the DPOs. The issue and logging of the books was undertaken by the DPO but this stopped when the DPO at Melksham was on secondment from November 2012 to March 2013.

**Recommendation: 7****Priority: 3****The issue and logging of Special Property Register books be re-instigated as planned.**

- 12.15 On receipt of seized property the DPOs locate the property in an appropriate location depending on the item. Each location has a name or storeroom number. The location number is recorded on an Excel spreadsheet at Melksham and on the DPR system at Swindon.
- 12.16 A sample of 20 items were selected from the SPR spreadsheet at Melksham to ensure the items were in the correct location and sealed accordingly. Testing revealed that each item was either present in the correct location or signed out by the OIC. All items were sealed, where appropriate and the seal numbers agreed with the seal numbers recorded on the spreadsheet.
- 12.17 A sample of 20 items were selected from the DPR printouts at Swindon to ensure the items were in the correct location and sealed accordingly. Testing revealed that each item was either present in the correct location or signed out by the OIC. All items were sealed, where appropriate and the seal numbers agreed with the seal numbers recorded on the spreadsheet.
- 12.18 A sample of 15 items were selected from the various locations at Melksham and checked to the SPR spreadsheet. Testing revealed that SPR numbers 271379 (hard drive) and 270827 (suitcase) were not recorded on the spreadsheet.

**Recommendation: 8****Priority: 3****SPR numbers 271379 and 270827 be recorded on the SPR spreadsheet at Melksham.**

- 12.19 A sample of 15 items were selected from the various locations at Swindon and checked to the DPR printout. Testing revealed that each item could be traced back to the printout of the record on the DPR system.
- 12.20 We understand that there is a project in place to reduce the number of stations at which items are held. Based on the findings from Swindon and Melksham it is evident

that a standardisation of process needs to be introduced as part of this project. The reduction in the number of sites could in turn lead to a significant increase in the items held at the remaining sites and this in turn could put pressure on resources, storage space and also on the current system.

**Risk: The actions (or in-actions) of the Force lead to consequential unforeseen costs being incurred by the Force.**

- 12.21 Seized Property is generally stored in appropriate locations. In both areas visited, drugs were stored in cabinets or shelves in locked rooms, forensic items such as blood, tissue and DNA samples were held in a fridges or freezers, money stored in safes and firearms and ammunition in locked cabinets in locked rooms. Access to the locations at Melksham was via a keypad system (except the armoury) and via a key at Swindon.
- 12.22 Alarm systems are available at both Swindon and Melksham.
- 12.23 All drugs are recorded on the Drugs Recording System (DRS). The OIC will enter each item onto the database that gives an automated sequential reference number. There is no requirement to complete the SPR, as this would be duplication of effort. The OIC has to weigh the amount of the drug, less the weight of the bag and the seal and enter the amount into the system or count the number of drugs if they are in a tablet form. The OIC then saves the entry and pass the drugs to special property at the appropriate time. Once saved, only the DPOs and the main Systems Administrator can amend any details. This was raised in the previous review and discussed with the Records Manager who was unsure as to who in ICT is the current Systems Administrator of the DRS system. This was discussed with staff in ICT, who also could not identify who the main Systems Administrator. ICT confirmed that they set up all officers as basic users only and that the DPOs have administrator access.

**Recommendation: 9**

**Priority: 3**

**The systems ownership of the DRS system be identified and the details be made available to the Records Manager.**

- 12.24 The information from the DRS is submitted to the Home Office for statistical purposes and has to be accurate; therefore DPOs have to amend the information. This issue has been brought up in previous reviews. The Public Protection Supervisor, at that time, stated that the DPOs should not accept any incorrect drug amounts/weights and that they should query the amounts with the OIC and/or the OICs Line Manager. Details should not be amended unless appropriate authority has been given, however the DPOs were not fully aware of this procedure, although the DPOs stated that they actually have not amended any original data in the last 12 months.

**Recommendation: 10**

**Priority: 2**

**The procedure for amending drug quantities/weights be clarified, formally documented and the Divisional Property Officers advised accordingly.**

- 12.25 Drugs are destroyed in a controlled manner. Each drug with its DRS number is placed in bags and the bag sealed accordingly. Each bag is summarised onto a Disposal form (awaiting destruction). Checks are made by two DPOs then checked by two individuals, one of which must be an Officer who then closes the DRS number down

on the DRS system and one other. Both individuals then take the sealed bag for incineration.

- 12.26 The OIC, the OICs' Line Manager or a Senior Officer must approve any disposal of seized property. Although the policy is now changing so that the DPO can, where appropriate, use their experience and judgement to dispose of any items.
- 12.27 Sample testing of items disposed of back to the Form 95s could not be undertaken as no forms are available at Swindon and at Melksham there were numerous forms that were not filed, many of which had not been actioned.

**Recommendation: 11**

**Priority: 3**

**Action be taken in a timely manner on the processing of disposing of property on a receipt of a Form 95.**

- 12.28 In instances where property can be returned to the owner a Form 22 must be completed by the OIC and the details passed to the DPOs. The OIC must sign the form and record their warrant number. The DPOs then contact the owner for them to come and collect the property from the relevant Enquiry Office. In instances where property is unclaimed, a letter will be sent to the legal owner, explaining that it will be disposed of accordingly if not collected within 21 days.
- 12.29 In some cases in Swindon an email is sent to the DPOs instead of a Form 22. A signature of the owner is still obtained. A sample of 10 Form 22s was selected and 3 out of the 10 were not signed by the OIC authorising the release (no emails received).

**Recommendation: 12**

**Priority: 3**

**All Officers be reminded that all Form 22s be signed by the Officer giving the authority to return property to the owners including their Warrant number.**

- 12.30 Full audits of property and the DRS are not conducted on a regular basis. This was identified in the previous review and although accepted in principal it was decided that Wiltshire Police do not have the resources to undertake such a task.
- 12.31 Items sent for forensic examination is carried out in a controlled manner. Detailed documentation has to be completed and signed forms are signed when items leave and when they are returned.
- 12.32 Lost and Found Property is dealt with the Enquiry Office at the main entrance at Melksham and Swindon.
- 12.33 All property is recorded on a Found Property Register Book that is in a quadruple format and is sequentially numbered. The white copy remains in the book, the pink copy goes to the finder, the green copy remains with the property and the blue copy is filed.
- 12.34 The property is held in a secure room at both locations, which can only be accessed by the Enquiry Office Supervisor and Enquiry Officer. Any valuable items including cash are retained in a secure cabinet at Swindon, which can only be accessed by Enquiry Office Supervisor and Enquiry Officer. Items at Melksham are retained in the secure room.
- 12.35 At Swindon there were numerous dated items that have not been claimed and therefore need to be disposed of. Also at Melksham there were numerous bicycles,

the majority of which have been brought in from other stations, which have not been claimed. It was noted ten bicycles were received between July 2012 and December 2012.

**Recommendation: 13**

**Priority: 3**

**Action be taken on the numerous bicycles at Melksham and the numerous dated items at Swindon.**

- 12.36 A sample of 10 items that included cash and jewellery was randomly selected and checked to ensure they were still present at Swindon and 5 items selected at Melksham. The review revealed that all were present at Swindon but only 3 out of the 5 were present at Melksham. The two missing items at Melksham were serial numbers 206970, a handbag containing £60 cash and various other items which was received on 08 April 2013 and serial number 207009, a Samsung Galaxy Ace mobile received on 3 June 2013.

**Recommendation: 14**

**Priority: 2**

**Controls on found property be reviewed to ensure they are more robust.**

- 12.37 There is an option in the Found Property books to indicate if the property was 'Retained by Finder' or in 'Police Possession'. The testing of the Lost and Found Property books at Swindon proved to be time consuming because on numerous occasions the option was not indicated.

**Operational Effectiveness Matter: 1**

**All Enquiry Office staff be reminded to indicate within the Found Property book whether property has been 'Retained by Finder' or in 'Police Possession'.**

- 12.38 Property that cannot be traced to owners is sold via the bumblebee auctions website. Each month Exess Consultants Ltd, who own the website, provide a summary of items sold that includes the VAT, the winning bid, net commission, bidder name and total amount due per transaction. Totals are broken down into three areas of HQ Assets Sales, Found Property and Seized Property.
- 12.39 On receipt of the summary the income has to be analysed into two cheques payments and this is then requested to Exess Consultants Limited. All net income from seized and found property is paid from one of the cheques into the Police Property Account. A review of sample of payments received revealed that there is some delay in analysing the income and therefore a delay in the income received. An example includes the cheque received in February 2013 related to sales from April to August 2012.

**Recommendation: 15**

**Priority: 2**

**Income received from Bumblebee sales be obtained in a more timely basis to maximise income due to the Force.**

**Risk: Ineffective security and failure to review standard control reports may lead to unauthorised payments being made with consequential financial loss to the Force.**

- 12.40 All Officers have restricted access to the DRS system. The DPOs have access to the DRS system to review and amend data as appropriate. They cannot set up any new additions, but can amend any existing records.
- 12.41 The DRS system automatically sequentially numbers each entry. No entries can be deleted.
- 12.42 Access to the Detained Property System at Swindon is similar to the DRS. This is restricted to Officers at Swindon only via terminals in a specific area. OICs enter the location as 'temporary location', which is then amended by the DPOs when received and re-located.
- 12.43 The Excel spreadsheets maintained by the DPO at Melksham can only be accessed by the DPO and the Records Management Co-ordinator.

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