



## School IT Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015

**Present:**

Gordon Smith (Chair) (GS)  
Richard Bartlett (RB)  
Caroline Edmonds (CE)  
Robin Uttin (RU)  
Lydia Drumright (LD)  
Guy Williams (GW)  
Peter Maccallum (PM)  
Randy Read (RR)

**1. Apologies:**

Afzal Chaudhry (AC), John Sinclair (JS), Chris Wallace (CW) and  
Litsa Biggs (LB) Richard Mee (RM) and Bertie Gottgens (BG)

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the last CSCS Steering Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014 were approved.

**3. Matters Arising**

CE opened the meeting by explaining how this new Committee came into being. She said that the University's IT review, which was completed a couple of years ago, recommended that each School should set up an IT Committee to take an overview of IT provision within their School. As a result of this recommendation, the School Council had decided that the CSCS Steering Committee should be re-formed as the new School IT Committee.

PM asked RB for an update on the issue of wireless coverage, and said he would like better access points both inside and outside the CRUK building. RB told him that he was planning to talk to a number of people (CRUK, CIMR, MRC units and NHS IT/HP) about upgrading wireless coverage over the whole Biomedical Campus.

The Committee then discussed the draft Terms of Reference:

- RU pointed out the reference to CBS should be CBR and RB agreed to correct this error.
- PM queried the phrase "oversee the provision of IT across the School of Clinical Medicine" under the Objectives in section 2.2. CE explained that this wording was lifted from the requirements set out in the IT review as to what the School IT committees should do; she said the intention behind the wording was to ensure that different IT providers within each School work together rather than (inadvertently) against each other.
- PM also queried the phrase "agree high level policies" and asked what would happen if one department was in disagreement with other departments – would the Committee have the final say

in this scenario? CE replied that where the Committee was acting as the School's mouthpiece its decision would be final, however the main purpose of the Committee was to help the different departments reach agreement on high level policies. RB added that the Committee would help the different service providers share knowledge and formulate a common approach to areas such as data management and information security.

#### **4. Policy**

The Committee discussed the School's proposed Minimum Standard of IT Service (as set out in a document previously circulated by RB). RB said he had sent the proposed policy to Dr Rachael Padman in the User Needs Committee (UNC, a sub-committee of the Information Services Committee) but Dr Padman had not been able to comment directly on it as the UNC had yet to come to any conclusions in this area.

RB told the Committee that the UIS was in the process of formulating a University policy on minimum standards but he did not know what the finalised policy would look like. GS queried what the University regarded as the "minimum" provision and asked RB whether the University had set out what would be provided free of charge. RB replied that the University had set out the minimum IT service provision which users could expect, but they had not specified how this would be funded. LD asked RB whether the University provided central funding for IT and RB explained that each School paid for its own IT services out of the central UEF funding it received from the University. RU added that in the Clinical School, UEF funding was used to pay for IT infrastructure and staff salaries but not MINTS services.

PM asked about timescales with regard to targets set out in the IT review, and RB informed him that the Review had not set out any expectations as to timescales for compliance. He added that the SCM was very much ahead of other Schools in formulating a policy on minimum standards.

RB asked the Committee if there was anything else which should be included in the policy on minimum standards, and in particular, whether it should deal with information security. The Committee discussed whether it would be beneficial to have an agreed policy on information security. LD stressed the importance of ensuring that data was secure and said she was concerned that some researchers did not have the technical skills or knowledge to ensure that their data was completely secure.

***Action Point – RB to draft a policy on information security, with input from LD, PM and GW and Carolyn Read. This policy will then be distributed to each department in the Clinical School.***

#### **5. Strategic planning**

RB opened the discussion by asking the Committee whether there were any areas where the School should formulate its own strategy. He highlighted the issue of data storage and suggested that the School should decide what its requirements are and then advise the UIS accordingly. He also advised the Committee that whilst there were currently resilience low capacity (1GB) links to the Campus there were no high capacity links to the West Cambridge Data Centre, and resilient high capacity links would not be possible until at least mid-2016. It was agreed that high capacity non-resilient links were preferable to no high capacity links at all and CSCS should procure a link as soon as possible, and this link might be made available to other School institutions in the future.

***Action Point – RB to procure a high capacity link to the West Cambridge Data Centre as soon as possible***

PM queried the philosophy behind the draft CSCS Strategy (previously circulated by RB) and wondered whether value for money was its primary concern. He noted that many of the researchers in CRUK now regard access to IT as being essential for their research, and he wondered whether CSCS should be providing more guidance and specialist technical expertise. GS told him that CSCS's role was to provide the nuts and bolts infrastructure, and he said he thought that specialist IT services (such as bioinformatics) worked best when devolved to each department rather than being run as a central service.

The Committee then discussed the issue of remote access, and GS asked RB when the VPN service would be implemented. RB informed him that CSCS had not had sufficient resources to start working on this

project. He said that the CSCS Core Team had been extremely stretched both with the day to day running of the network and also as a result of their involvement in a couple of major strategic projects. He added that they had recently recruited a new member of staff which will hopefully give them more bandwidth once he was up to speed. GS and LD stressed that viable remote access was essential for academics and one of their highest priorities. RB said that while CSCS was very keen to provide this service it was crucial that it was properly planned. He said that if it was implemented without sufficient planning the CSCS Service Desk would be overwhelmed with users phoning up to report issues. RB pointed out that there was a Citrix based remote access service (Mints@Home) which was about to re-launch in an improved form, and that access to email specifically was possible from any location both offline and online. GS asked RB about the timescale for implementation, and RB confirmed that CSCS would have a pilot service in place before the next IT Committee Meeting.

**Action Point – RB to implement a pilot VPN service before the next IT Committee Meeting**

## **6. Performance**

RB asked the Committee whether they thought that metrics would be useful for measuring service performance. He said that CSCS intended to include metrics in the Service Level Agreements which would go out to each department. He added that Martin Keen, the CSCS Service Development Manager, had a specific responsibility to liaise with departmental administrators and PIs in each department to establish what their needs are and to obtain feedback on CSCS's services. GS queried whether CSCS asked users to provide satisfaction based feedback. RB said that users could provide feedback on the CSCS website, although he added that they needed to tread a fine line – although they were keen to obtain feedback they did not want to annoy users by being over demanding in requests for feedback.

CE and LD both said that it would be useful to publish some basic metrics, so long as it would not be too time consuming or expensive and the metrics were meaningful. The other members of the Committee agreed that this would be a good idea.

**Action Point – RB and PM to discuss and agree on service performance metrics.**

## **7. CSCS Finances**

RB gave a brief update on CSCS's finances for the first half of the current financial year (1/8/14 – 31/1/15). He said the finances were healthy, and CSCS expected to be able to pay down £100,000 towards a historic debt (the cost of refurbishing the Level 5 Server room) at the end of the financial year. He added that, based on current projections, they may well be able to pay down a further £100,000 over the next one to two years. RU confirmed that he had no concerns regarding CSCS's finances.

## **8. University IT (UIS and ISC).**

RB informed the Committee that Richard Mee was leaving the University at the end of April, and Paul Calleja, the new Head of Research and Institutional Services, was likely to replace him on the Committee.

He added that the newly appointed deputy directors in the UIS would start very shortly, and a restructure of the whole department was likely to take place in the near future.

## **9. NHS IT Matters**

LD provided an update on the EPIC project. She said that the EPIC build team had now finished and had handed over responsibility to an NHS team. She added that there were still minor problems regarding a number of obscure issues, however generally everything was now working fairly smoothly.

LD also updated the Committee on the NHS data sharing project. She said that the data sharing agreement had now been signed by the Committee and a proof of concept had been agreed. She added that she would be making an ethics application for anonymous use of data.

## **10. AOB**

RB raised the issue of Committee membership. He noted that a number of people had sent their apologies for the meeting which meant that the Committee was barely quorate. LD said that there was no point in

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both her and AC being members and the Committee agreed that she should replace AC as the NHS representative. RB also noted that LB had not attended a meeting for over a year and he wondered whether David Robinson, the new Head of Undergraduate Education, should represent the Education Division.

***Action Point – RB contact LB ref Education representation on the committee.***

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1.00pm – 2.30pm.