



## School IT Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**Present:**

Gordon Smith (Chair) (GS)  
Richard Bartlett (RB)  
Caroline Edmonds (CE)  
Robin Uttin (RU)  
Lydia Drumright (LD)  
Peter Maccallum (PM)  
Chris Wallace (CW)  
Martin Bellamy (MB) (standing in for Paul Calleja)

**Apologies:**

Randy Read (RR), John Sinclair (JS), Litsa Biggs (LB), Guy William (GW) and Bertie Gottgens (BG)

### 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of last School IT Committee meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June were approved.

### 3. Matters Arising

None

### 4. Policy

RB informed the Committee that two policy matters which were discussed at the last Committee meeting in June had not been progressed. These were a data back-up policy and an information security policy. He explained that CSCS had not had sufficient staff resources to make progress on these policies. He added that an existing member of staff at CSCS would be seconded to the newly created position of Senior Security Engineer very shortly, and this would enable them to move forward with the information security policy. He said that this would have to be done in conjunction with the other IT departments within the School.

RB also raised the possibility of formulating a policy on data centres. He told the Committee that he had recently met with Steve Jones, from the MRC Cancer Unit, who had asked him what onsite storage facilities were available. RB said that he thought the School should make a decision on how to proceed, and a discussion then ensued on advantages and disadvantages of onsite storage versus offsite storage, and in particular, the West Cambridge Data Centre (WCDC). LD noted that there was a need to specify what type of data could be stored locally and what data should be sent to WCDC. She said that in her view, day to day data could be stored locally; whereas anything involving high performance computing should be sent to the WCDC.

MB advised the Committee that the general direction will be towards using offsite storage centres such as WCDC. LD requested that she would like to have the option of using both onsite and offsite facilities. CW added that she would also like to have access to local onsite servers as well as offsite centres.

RB reported that while CSCS did not provide any high performance computing facilities, there were a couple of School groups who had requested a local facility, and the CSCS Infrastructure Team were setting up a

small scale local cluster, in collaboration with the UIS Research Computing Services team, which should be finished by March 2016.

LD asked MB about access to cloud storage. MB described how the MRC had provided funding to put in a platform for private cloud storage. Groups who put up the funds (in this case Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute (CRUK CI) and the Wolfson Brain Imaging Centre) would have priority but other users should be able to access it too. It was hoped to have service up and running by March 2016, although he could not provide any further details at present.

GS asked MB what the long term plans were for storage sites (i.e. in 10 years' time). MB advised that the direction would be towards a small number of centralised sites. He said that there was need to add to the facilities at the WCDC, and although there were currently two additional storage sites (in the Roger Needham Building and the Soulsby Building adjacent to the Veterinary School) there were concerns that there was insufficient physical separation between these sites. He added that three further options for storage were currently being considered: the Cambridge University Press which had space in its data centre, possible storage space at CRUK CI, and the shared data centre in Slough which was operated by JISC and was available to all Universities.

PM asked whether the School had a view on whether departments should be using onsite or offsite storage facilities. CE suggested there should be a guidance note on this matter, and GS added that it would be helpful to consider how the School could make best use of the facilities at the WCDC.

**Action Point – RB to meet with PM and other School IT managers to discuss storage facilities at the WCDC.**

The Committee then discussed the links to the WCDC. CSCS had recently ordered a new 10Gb fibre link to the WCDC and the fibre should be in place by the end of the month. Three customers had requested this link and other departments would also be able to use it. He added that by the end of next year two 10Gb links should be in place and these would follow different geographical routes to the WCDC.

The Committee was also updated on the issue of cloud based Dropbox storage. UIS would shortly issue guidelines on where to store different classes of data. The Committee discussed whether PID could be stored in Dropbox and LD said that, in her view, as a matter of University policy, that PID data should never be uploaded to Dropbox.

The UIS planned to make Microsoft OneDrive available throughout the University by early next year. CSCS was currently testing Microsoft OneDrive which, if successful, would lead to the decommissioning of some storage and lower MINTS storage charges for users. This would be made possible by providing cloud based storage for users' personal data. CSCS would be producing some test documentation, fairly shortly, and would then ask a selected group of users to try it out. This should happen early next year. CW expressed interested in this new service and said she would like to be part of the pilot group.

**Action Point – RB to provide a brief summary of the new service at the Council of School meeting in January 2016.**

## **5. Strategic Planning**

RB updated the Committee on the progress they had made with the JSCS project. He said that the requirements gathering phase – which dealt with what users wanted and whether it could be provided by a joint service – was now complete, and they were now planning the next two stages of the project. These stages were the technical design and a finance and governance review. With regard to the review, he explained that CE and RU, in conjunction with their opposite numbers in the School of Biological Sciences, would consider the feasibility of running a joint service and also whether economies of scale could be found. He added that the intention was to take a proposal, for a joint school computing service, to the Council of both Schools, in January 2017. This proposal would include a recommendation as well as an implementation plan. He said that they had recently engaged two external reviewers (from Oxford University and University College, London) to provide an expert and independent 'second opinion' on both the way the JSCS project was run, and the conclusions drawn by the project.

**Action Point – RB to provide a brief update on the JSCS project at the next Council of School meeting.**

## **6. Performance**

The Committee's attention was drawn to a draft policy document, which had been previously circulated, on the proposed metrics for measurement of IT Service Delivery throughout the School; feedback would be appreciated. RB said he would like to know what users wanted from their IT service provider, and what in particular, what services were important to them. He added that CSCS was currently considering how it could best obtain feedback from its users. They were thinking about doing this at two different levels, firstly by looking at immediate happy/sad face feedback on the web self-service pages; and secondly, at a much higher level, they were thinking of surveying PIs to find out what their priorities were based on feedback they received via the JSCS project.

PM wondered who would approve this proposed service delivery policy; CE advised that she thought this Committee should be able to do this, and should also provide assurances to the Council that a certain level of performance would be guaranteed. LB noted that the document provided a relatively low benchmark as to what services should be provided. RB explained that these were "minimum" standards which every service provider would be expected to provide and PM added that it was important to bear in mind that some departments have a very low IT staff to user ratio. CE suggested that services should be categorised with bronze, silver and gold standards. Finally RB emphasised that it would be essential to obtain agreement from all the other School IT service providers before finalising a School policy on service delivery standards.

**Action Point – RB to produce a second draft of the policy document, having taken into consideration all the discussions at this Committee meeting.**

## **7. CSCS Finances**

RB briefly reported on CSCS's finances. He reported that as the CapEx reserve had sufficient funds in it, he would like to request permission to take out £100,000 to pay down another tranche of the server room debt and he added that he would also like the Committee's permission for future drawdowns to pay off this debt. GS confirmed that this would be fine.

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

MB gave a brief presentation to the Committee on the progress made by the UIS in implementing the recommendations put forward in the IT review, and he circulated a paper which summarised the progress (paper now attached to these minutes). This led on to a discussion about Service Catalogues, particularly with regard to the JSCS project; the Committee agreed that there was a need to establish where the gaps were but also avoid duplication of services.

## **9. NHS IT matters**

LD updated the Committee on the position with regard to NHS data sharing. She said that by the end of March 2016, the School's research capacity would significantly increase as researchers would be able to access NHS data. However she cautioned that there was still some work to do on information governance issues and she also said that NHS data would have to remain within the Clinical School and could not be stored within UIS facilities until and unless all the necessary security controls were in place. She added that EPIC data would always have to remain within the School. CE advised her to make sure that Carolyn Read was involved in any discussions regarding data sharing and approved of all the security arrangements.

With regard to EPIC data, LD explained that all patients would be invited to join a data registry which could be accessed by researchers. She said there was a need to publicise this registry and CE suggested that she could circulate details via the Regius' newsletter, if LD could write a short note.

## **10. AOB**

None

## **11. Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1.00pm – 2.30pm