



School IT Committee Meeting

Thursday, 24th November 2016

Present:

Gordon Smith (Chair) (GS)
Richard Bartlett (RB)
Caroline Edmonds (CE)
Robin Uttin (RU)
David Robinson (DR) (standing in for Litsa Biggs)
Richard Hey (RH)
Peter Maccallum (PM)
Soren Barage (SB)
Bertie Gottgens (BG)

Apologies:

Randy Read (RR), Lydia Drumright (LD), Guy Williams (GW),
Chris Wallace (CW), John Sinclair (JS)

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of last School IT Committee meeting held on 22nd June 2016 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

RB noted a request from RR regarding the (now withdrawn) UIS Web Hosting policy. RR had requested that his group should have some autonomy to develop their own solutions, and in particular, implement some web Mathematica-based services on their website. RB confirmed that he would consider this request in his capacity as a member of a small working group involved in drafting a new policy.

4. Policy

RB gave a brief update on a number of policy matters:

- The Information Security and Data Backup policies had been agreed and all staff, including CSCS staff, would have work to do to ensure they complied with these policies.
- A new committee had been set up to oversee the finances, operating model, and strategic planning of the HPHI cluster at the West Cambridge Data Centre, on behalf of the School. The HPHI Oversight Committee would meet for the first time in a few days' time.
- Further work would be required next year to implement the Minimum Standards Policy, and this should drive significant improvements in a number of areas.

5. Strategic Planning

i) UIS initiative on strategy for information services

RB referred to a document circulated before the meeting on the School's Strategic IT requirements. He explained that the UIS was currently formulating a strategic long term policy on information services and they would appreciate input from users and institutions. He informed the Committee that the purpose of the document was not to consider specific School IT requirements, but rather what the School's long term strategic objectives were and how IT would help to achieve these objectives. RB said he would like suggestions from Committee members, as well as other senior members of staff within the School, which could be passed on to the UIS. CE told RB that she

could pass on notes from the Heads of Departments meetings which would help to inform the information strategy. CE also highlighted the School's particular issue with timetabling. She noted that this would be a very complicated piece of work and would require specialist software.

Action Point – DR to draft and circulate a document on the challenges the School faces in terms of timetabling and what its requirements are.

ii) The JSCS

RB provided an update on the JSCS project. He said that within the last six months, three out of the four members of the project's technical team had left to join the UIS (two from SBS and one from CSCS), and consequently the original project schedule was no longer feasible. CSCS had asked SBS for more resources and the Head of SBS had requested a business case from CSCS which would be presented at the next Council of School meeting. This meeting was scheduled for the following week, and RB anticipated that SBS would make a decision as to whether they were willing to put more staffing resources into the project. He said that if they decided not to provide further resources, the project would be terminated.¹

RB added that in the event that the project did not continue, CSCS had still learnt a number of valuable lessons which would be used to make a number of changes to its cost recovery model. These included, amongst other things, replacing monthly billing with annual billing and reduced service charges due to falling network and storage infrastructure costs.

CE also pointed out that if the project did not continue, individual departments within SBS would still be able to request services from CSCS. A discussion then ensued on the issue of scientific computing, and CE noted that the School would need to review its requirements whether or not the JSCS project went ahead. The Committee noted that there were various different scientific computing user groups within the School and RB volunteered to try and bring these groups together in order that they could pool their knowledge.

Action Point – before the next meeting, RB to consider how the School could help staff who work in scientific computing.

6. Performance

No matters to report

7. CSCS Finances

RB gave a brief update on CSCS finance matters. He noted that RYBI was currently in deficit due to the decant to Bay 13 and the related audio-visual equipment costs, he said that funds would have to be journalled into this cost centre to cover the deficit. He added that CSCS had had to pay for a number of temporary staff out of soft money which had put some pressure on its day to day finances. However, he said that the CSCS finances were generally healthy and sustainable and there were no big ticket items of expenditure coming up.

8. University IT (UIS and ISC)

RH gave an update on various UIS matters:

- An advert for a UIS School IT Relationship Manager (to be shared with the School of Physical Sciences) had recently been posted, and interviews were expected to take place in January.
- The issue with the Titan rooms, around continuity of service during the renovation period, had been dealt with.
- The UIS was working closely with WBIC and would undertake a strategic review of its IT requirements.

RB also raised a couple of UIS related issues:

¹ The SBS Council of School met on 28th November, and did not agree to provide further funding or staff for the project; consequently, the Clinical School took the decision to abandon the project.

- The Schools' UIS engagement meetings - RB said it was important to establish the School's requirements for these meetings and a more structured approach would be beneficial. He suggested that the Committee and other senior members of staff within the School, should consider what mechanism they could use for doing this; CE added that virtual meetings would be preferable to setting up another School committee.
- High Performance Computing Service Committee - RB advised that the School needed more representation on this committee, and asked for nominations. He said that it would be helpful if two senior members of staff, preferably PIs, could sit on this committee, with at least one of them attending each meeting.

Action Point – RB to contact John Danesh to whether out he could nominate anyone from PHPC to sit on this committee.

10. NHS IT matters

In the absence of LD, RB gave a brief update on NHS IT matters:

- The CUH and University data sharing project was currently looking at improvements in logging and auditing; it would also start looking at how to move clinical data from Epic to the West Cambridge Data Centre in the near future.
- RB noted that there were still ongoing problems with phone calls to the Trust from the School. He said staff should let him know if they experienced any problems.

11. Date of Next Meeting

2pm – 3.30pm, Wednesday, 22nd March.