

22<sup>ND</sup> JUNE 2016

DECOMMISSIONING OF THE WEST SUSSEX GRID FOR LEARNING (WSGfL)  
AND THE ALTERIAN PLATFORM

REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMERCIAL SERVICES

Executive Summary:

There is an urgent requirement to decommissioning the West Sussex Grid for Learning (WSGfL) application currently hosted on the Alterian server platform because it is not compliant with Public Service Network (PSN) requirements.

Recommendation:

To note that a Business Case has been submitted to the Corporate Leadership Team seeking their authority:

- To progress with the urgent decommissioning of the WSGfL.
- To proceed with the acquisition of a proprietary product 'SLA Online', a comprehensive system to manage schools correspondence and the selling of services, including ordering and invoicing for external customers.

1. Background

- 1.1 WSGfL has evolved over many years and, although many WSCC services use the website for their work with schools, it has not been owned or maintained effectively as a result of service restructurings. For this reason, the usefulness of the website in communication with schools has been significantly reduced. Consequently, schools use of the WSGfL has diminished.
- 1.2 Furthermore, WSGfL is one of the few remaining applications which sits on the Alterian platform that must be decommissioned in the very near future because it is not compliant with Public Service Network (PSN) requirements. PSN requires effective Operation Security and Vulnerability Management and that all applications running on the corporate network are supported, patched and any detected vulnerabilities properly mitigated.
- 1.3 WSGfL is no longer fit for its original purpose as the requirements of schools and the County Council have significantly changed since the original conception of WSGfL. A decision about the replacement of WSGfL is now urgently required due to the impending decommission of the Alterian platform.
- 1.4 The original purpose of the WSGfL was to provide a single application for the majority information for schools including guidance, access to procured services, legislative and curriculum information. It provides 'a paywall' for

access to some protected packages within paid Service Level Agreements (SLAs). It does not support a robust communication tool necessary for the regular and timely cascade of information to schools. Likewise, it does not provide a comprehensive single point of access for schools or the public to search for information provided by WSCC about schools and education arrangements.

1.5 An effective communication platform is required to facilitate the current and future schools' educational and commercial engagement requirements. It has been recognised that providing good quality and up to date information to schools is essential to ensure schools can focus on the efficient and effective provision of education and improve outcomes for pupils.

1.6 New applications are now available that can provide key information which is public and 'paywall' protected as well as providing a simple self-service process for accessing and purchasing SLAs. This has also been identified as a key requirement to keep abreast of the changing commercial relationships between schools and WSCC.

1.7 The consultative approach taken to date with schools includes:

- April 2016. Intensive school engagement including WSGfL survey and engagement with 25-30 representatives from 3 schools and the West Sussex eLearning Forum. Quick & valuable survey completed. Consolidated responses shared at facilitated validation and feedback sessions.
- May 2016. Invited school representatives to attend an event with Dorset County Council to demonstrate their schools portal (SLA OnLine) introduced 4 years ago.
- Presented update to Resources & SOCA Sub Group (7/6/16).
- Conducted internal stakeholder interviews with WSCC officers including exploration of existing systems/solutions.
- Extensive Local Authority engagement, market analysis, networking & benchmarking
- It is proposed to request attendance at Primary, Secondary and Special School Headteachers' Executive meetings and to provide briefings for governors later in 2016.

## 2. Proposals

2.1 The existing services/functions currently provided on the WSGfL need to be transferred to replacement solution(s). 'SLA OnLine' is the preferred solution currently being considered by the Council. This offers paywall capability. We are working towards a tender process leading to procurement of a replacement alternative platform in order to deliver a number of the key services/functions. Other content not supported by SLA Online may be moved to the WSCC website however, a decision cannot be made until further research (e.g. user testing, analytics etc.) has been carried out.

## 3. Conclusion

3.1 The current preferred option is to procure a proprietary product known as 'SLA OnLine'. A Business Case has been submitted to the Corporate Leadership Team for consideration this month. This reflects the justification for decommissioning the West Sussex Grid for Learning (WSGFL) application

from the Alterian server platform and presenting options for replacing it with the new solution for the ongoing communication and engagement with the schools community. A decision is awaited and an update will be provided at the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2016.

- 3.2 The timing of the proposed procurement of a product to replace WSGfL supports the WSCC Commercial Engagement Strategy including potential increased trading with schools currently under development.

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