

<b>Report to Cabinet Member for:</b>	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services	<b>Date of Issue:</b>	22 July 2021
		<b>Date of Decision:</b>	30 July 2021
<b>Subject:</b>	Procurement of Schools Management Information System		
<b>Report of:</b>	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Is this a Key Decision?</b>	No	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	No
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

## Summary

This report seeks authority to commence a direct award procurement exercise for the provision of the SIMS Management Information System, which is predominantly used within the majority of schools within Sefton.

## Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

Authorises the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services to direct award a new contract for SIMS with Education Software Solutions Ltd using the KCS Software Products and Associated Services 2 (Y200011) Framework for a period of 3 years. A true-up is carried out each year so the Council doesn't commit to purchasing licences which are not needed by schools.

## Reasons for the Recommendations:

To enable the continued use of SIMS in schools which is an essential software application for their administration and management.

## Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

To provide schools with an additional and alternative Management Information System (MIS), known as Arbor. As detailed further into this report, schools were consulted with but there was a low response rate to which only a few schools notified the Council that they would consider using this product.

There is no risk to the Council in not providing the Arbor product. Schools who currently use it will continue to do so by buying the product directly from the supplier and schools who are interested in using it would also simply buy it direct from the supplier.

Tiered discounts are available if the product is bought in bulk by local authorities with these discounts remaining unavailable to schools at the moment. The decision could be revisited in the future however if there was greater interest shown by schools for the Arbor product.

### **What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

#### **(A) Revenue Costs**

This application is purchased using existing revenue budgets but is then wholly recharged back to schools under a service level agreement.

#### **(B) Capital Costs**

There are no capital costs.

### **Implications of the Proposals:**

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b> There are no resource implications. This is to renew a contract for an existing product in use by schools.
<b>Legal Implications:</b> There are no legal implications
<b>Equality Implications:</b> There are no equality implications

**Climate Emergency Implications:**

The recommendations within this report will

Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

A neutral impact because this procurement does not change how the application will be used so there will be the same impact as we currently have now.

**Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

<b>Protect the most vulnerable:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Commission, broker and provide core services:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Place – leadership and influencer:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Drivers of change and reform:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Greater income for social investment:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Cleaner Greener:</b> Not Applicable

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

**(A) Internal Consultations**

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD 6471/21) notes the financial implications for the Council.

The Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD 4672) has been consulted and has no comments on the report.

**(B) External Consultations**

Not applicable

**Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of Cabinet Meeting

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	David Harris
Telephone Number:	0151 934 3721
Email Address:	david.harris@sefton.gov.uk

**Appendices:**

None

**Background Papers:**

None

## 1. Background

- 1.1 SIMS is a Management Information System (MIS) currently used by the majority of schools within Sefton.
- 1.2 The product is currently purchased by the local authority and recharged back to schools under a service level agreement (SLA). Under this SLA, licencing for SIMS and FMS (financial management system) is provided and product support and training is provided by the Councils ICT partner Agilisys. The service level agreement also provides schools with the option of a paid backup for their data.
- 1.3 The Council purchases the product on behalf of schools as the supplier, Education Software Solutions (ESS), provides volume discounts to local authorities. Schools can go direct to ESS to purchase the solution however in doing so do not receive any discounts.
- 1.4 SIMS has been provided to schools in Sefton for many years and since its ownership and management returned to the Council from Arvato in October 2018, has been renewed via a waiver annually.
- 1.5 SIMS has now been included on the Councils latest ICT Roadmap and a route to market has been identified that will allow a direct award via KCS framework (a subsidiary of Kent County Council). Since the sale of the SIMS product by Capita to Education Software Solutions Ltd, this is currently the only framework available to the Council that it can be procured from.
- 1.6 The Council is proposing to enter into a new contract for a duration of 3 years for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 and also asking schools to commit to this period under a new service level agreement. The anticipated cost is £140k per year or a total contract cost of £420k.
- 1.7 In addition to SIMS, the Council has been aware of another emerging MIS product known as Arbor and over the past few years, a few schools have switched to using it procuring it directly themselves. The Councils ICT Partner Agilisys is also an accredited support provider so schools using Arbor can opt to take support from either Agilisys or Arbor.
- 1.8 Twenty schools within the authority currently use Arbor. All 20 schools purchase it directly from Arbor with 8 also taking support from Arbor. The remaining 12 schools take support from the Council IT provider Agilisys.
- 1.9 The Councils ICT Lead for Contracts, Procurement and Schools had advised schools during the 2020/21 SIMS renewal that the Council would investigate the feasibility of offering Arbor from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and made contact with Arbor to inquire about the product and how it could be procured.
- 1.10 In order to then help decide whether it would be feasible for the Council to also provide Arbor as a second option for schools, all 98 schools who currently take the MIS SLA from the Council were consulted with to ascertain their MIS plans from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.
- 1.11 The response rate was 33.6% with 6 schools who currently use SIMS confirming that they would possibly like to look at switching to Arbor. Eight schools who currently use

Arbor, confirmed they would be continuing to use it.

- 1.12 With the outcome of the low response and relatively low interest in additional schools wanting to take Arbor from April 2022, the recommendation (towards the beginning of this report) was made to not procure Arbor, on behalf of schools as it would not provide any economic benefit for schools at this time.

## **2. Timescale for procurement, implementation and go-live**

- 2.1 Should Cabinet Member approve the request, then the following indicative timeline would be adhered to;

July/August 2021	Procurement Activity
September 2021	Award Contract
October/November 2021	Signing up schools
November/December 2021	True-up licence numbers with schools
April 2022	Go live with new SLA to schools