EXECUTIVE GROUP
3 September 2014

TAKING CONTROL OF BBSRC’S INFORMATION SYSTEMS

SUMMARY

The short attached paper sets out plans to move the majority of BBSRC Information Systems from UK SBS and into the Cloud, in line with Government policy along with plans to develop a refreshed IS strategy.

Action

Executive Group is invited to:

- **AGREE** the proposal to move relevant services into the cloud, recognising the financial, service level and people implications

- **SUPPORT** the development of a refreshed IS Strategy.

CIMG - Paul Chitson/Paul Gemmill
August 2014
Taking control of BBSRC's Information Systems

A – Moving services to the Cloud

Background

1 It is becoming increasingly clear that the services provided by UK SBS are going to continue to deteriorate as more staff leave and UK SBS seek to further reduce costs. This is in a wider context of the development of a Government wide ‘Cloud First’ approach which UK SBS are also pursuing. The assessment of resource etc implications below is based on BBSRC experience of moving services etc onto the ‘ph’ domain in 2011.

2 The UK SBS move into the cloud is planned to take place by April 2015 at the latest (although this may be optimistic) – this will include Oracle.

Implications for BBSRC

3 We will have to move our services (e.g. SharePoint, Achiever, ReSource, KnowledgeGraph email etc.) to the cloud and at the same time BBSRC will need to move from the ‘ph’ domain to its own domain. In addition we, with the other RCs need to review how a suite of ‘facilities’ services e.g. telecoms, Swindon Office LAN are provided in future – currently their provision sits with a range of players and could benefit from centralisation/simplification. Annex 1 provides a high level view of how services could be provided when we move to more cloud provision and out of the UK SBS data centre. We will attempt to align the architecture with that adopted for MRC, with ownership of many of the components probably remaining in BBSRC.

4 The question then becomes one of timing – we have to do this, so when is going to be the best time? In considering this there are a number of factors to consider: quiet times in office terms, busy times in IS terms – not necessarily the same time, how much disruption is acceptable, resourcing, benefits of moving early/or of moving later and all in the context of how long it takes overall to carry out such a proper transfer properly – planning, execution etc..

5 Given that to carry out this type of transfer of services properly takes 3 – 6 months it is clear that time is of the essence. In addition we believe there will be benefits to BBSRC in moving early i.e. beginning this in mid-September, including avoiding year end and getting some of our services back under our direct control rather than remaining with UK SBS. We will work with UK SBS to ensure that any slippage that might affect year end is mitigated in the same manner as the previous domain move during the closure of BITS.

6 This will mean that there will be some disruption to the office at some point in early 2015 as we move services. This disruption is inevitable so it is best that we drive when it occurs rather than being forced to follow UK SBS timescales which could well lead to disruption at year end.

Resource implications
7 There are financial and people implications in carrying out this move. Taking these in turn:

- Financial – logically if we are taking reduced services from UK SBS one would expect some form of rebate/reduction in cost to BBSRC in relation to UK SBS’ services. Logic is fine, reality is what matters – the reality is that we will have to pay for our services that we move to the cloud and BBSRC is unlikely to get anything back from UK SBS/BIS – the current estimate of the annual cost to BBSRC of doing this is a maximum of £100k - this can be expected to reduce over time as cloud based services are coming down in price very rapidly whilst giving BBSRC greater flexibility in delivering its IT services and meeting its Business Continuity requirements. It is expected that this will be funded from within the current CIMG budget. In addition we are working with UK SBS to leverage some of their approved spend to move things to the cloud. We expect this to cover the costs for moving services in the building and their continued provision if they are changing and for any UK SBS involvement in supporting the transition. We should also reduce “maintenance costs” on the physical hardware we have in this building which would otherwise rise from the current £15k to at least £35k/year by 2017 followed by hardware replacement of at least £45k – these increased future costs will be avoided by doing this.

- People – the IS team will have to work extra days i.e. weekends which need to be paid properly i.e. as overtime and will not be able to take leave in the normal manner whilst this work happens. As the leave year ends with the calendar year there will be a need for special dispensation to carry over additional leave/ buy out some leave.

**Additional benefits**

8 We would envisage that in such a move we can look at some of the current projects as being part of the move. This includes:

- Share Point 2013 upgrade
- UKRO portal change
- Possible future social media tools (yammer)
- Moving move the corporate website to the cross council solution rather than migrate the existing service to another provider
- Changes to support identified Business Continuity requirements

9 The BBBSRC approach is deliberately being done as an ‘open book’ on design to work with other RCs (PSU, NERC) as well as aligning where appropriate with the MRC. This will mean that our approach should benefit other RCs’ move to a more flexible provision. The approach also aligns with the BIS ‘Tower model’ for service provision, demonstrating again BBSRC’s leadership amongst the RCs.

**Potential disbenefit**
10 The work on this and OOF will tie up much of the IS team for the rest of the calendar year and this is likely to mean that lower priority activities will be delayed.

B – refreshing the overall IS strategy

11 The move to the cloud, allied to continuing change e.g. social media and the impact of OOF on BBSRC SO has made clear that we need to refresh our overall IS strategy. In doing so it will be important to have EG involvement and support such as through meeting with the Head of IS to discuss views on future requirements and on how we want to able to work in future to maximise the benefits from technology rather than being its slave. This work will be a third strand of activity alongside the move to the cloud and the OOF related activities.

Action

12 Executive Group is invited to:

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- **SUPPORT** the development of a refreshed IS Strategy

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