

**From:** Richard Long TD, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills  
**Matt Dunkley CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education**

**To:** Children's, Young People's and Education Cabinet Committee –  
15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Subject:** SIMS Contract for LA Maintained Schools

**Decision Number and Title:** 20/00119 - To award a contract to Capita ESS for 5 (3+2) years for the provision of SIMS to LA maintained schools in Kent

Key decision: yes - – for the reasons that:

- *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions*
- *It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m – including if over several phases*

Classification: **Unrestricted version**

**Past Pathway of report:** N/A

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet member decision

**Electoral Division:** list the electoral division/s, and local Member/s affected:

*Identify Members using this link:*

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

### **Summary:**

The current SIMS contract has been in place for Kent maintained schools since 2014. Most Kent schools use SIMS, provided by Capita, which is the market leading schools information management system.

The contract end date of the current contract is March 2021, so a new contract needs to be in place for April 2021. The contract is solely for maintained schools, as it is a Local Authority (LA) contract. If schools convert to academy status, they are no longer LA schools, and at that point they are obliged to move to SIMS standard pricing. For this reason, the cost per year changes due to the number of maintained schools in the LA.

Stakeholder engagement took place in October and November 2019. Schools that currently use SIMS provided by the Local Authority were surveyed by the Analytics team within Strategic Commissioning. Most schools are happy with SIMS and are not looking to move away from it.

It is recommended that Kent reprocures SIMS for its maintained schools, as if schools buy direct from SIMS the cost is significantly higher (between 2 and 10 times the current cost depending on size and phase of school).

Under the current SIMS contract funding has been de-delegated from maintained

schools based on the number of pupils in each school. The Schools' Funding Forum has agreed that this model of de-delegation for SIMS should continue.

**Recommendation:**

12.1 The Children's, Young People's and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposed decision to:

- (i) award a contract to Capita ESS for 5 (3+2) years for the provision of SIMS to LA maintained schools in Kent, attached as appendix A.
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to take relevant actions, as necessary to implement this decision.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Every school has a management information system (MIS) that handles key attendance and performance data on its pupils. It supports the day to day running of the school and produces statutory returns throughout the school year such as the school census. Most schools manage their finance and budget within the same system.
- 1.2 This report outlines the current usage of SIMS in Kent Maintained schools, explores a range of options for future contract award, and makes a proposal to ensure ongoing system continuity for schools with the best possible value.

## **2. Use of SIMS by Kent Maintained Schools**

- 2.1 The current SIMS contract has been in place since 01/04/2014, and ends on 31/03/2021, so a new contract needs to be in place for 01/04/2021.
- 2.2 Most Kent schools use SIMS, though they are free to use whatever software they like (some academy chains have adopted alternative school software).
- 2.3 The contract is solely for maintained schools, as it is a Local Authority (LA) contract. If schools convert to academy status, they are no longer LA schools, and at that point they are obliged to move to SIMS standard pricing. For this reason, the cost per year changes due to the number of maintained schools in the LA.
- 2.4 Further information in this section includes commercially sensitive information and is exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, refers.

## **3. Stakeholder Engagement and Findings**

- 3.1 Stakeholder engagement took place in October and November 2019. Schools that currently use SIMS provided by the Local Authority were surveyed by the Analytics team within Strategic Commissioning. Most schools are happy with SIMS and are not looking to move away from it. Further details in this section include commercially sensitive information and is exempt - Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, refers.

#### **4. Contract Award**

- 4.1 It is proposed that Kent enters a five-year contract with Capita ESS, for an initial three year agreement with an option for a further two years. The contract is for the current SIMS platform, SIMS 7.
- 4.2 The contract is solely for maintained schools, as it is a Local Authority (LA) contract (a group contract is not available for academies). If schools convert to academy status, they are no longer LA schools, and at that point they are obliged to move to SIMS standard pricing. For this reason, the cost per year changes due to the number of maintained schools in the LA.
- 4.3 Capita ESS are developing a new cloud-based SIMS system, SIMS 8. This is currently being piloted. As it gets rolled out more widely there will be associated cost changes. However, it is not yet known at which point in the contract schools may move over and in what numbers, but there will be provision for this within the contract and will be managed with contract variations.

#### **5. System Stability and Business Continuity**

- 5.1 Resources in Kent schools are very stretched currently, and may be for the foreseeable future due to Covid-19, so it is vital that schools can be managed efficiently and smoothly. System stability is vital at a time when Kent schools are so focused on the impact of the pandemic on its pupils, to ensure children are supported and safeguarded. These systems support the accurate recording and monitoring of pupil sickness and absence.
- 5.2 By remaining with SIMS, the schools workforce remains well supported as both Cantium (technical support and hosting), The Education People (Schools Financial Services support) and Management Information (support, guidance and data quality for statutory key stage returns and school census) know SIMS systems well.
- 5.3 Remaining with SIMS also ensures business continuity for KCC. There would be a significant impact of moving away from SIMS on Cantium, TEP and MI, with significant loss of income, or significant resources and time required to re-train in other systems to be able to support them as well.

#### **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The total contract value over five years, is £2,191,919.98, which is the full contract period (an initial term of 3 Years with 1 x 2-Year extension option). Further information in this section includes commercially sensitive information – Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, refers..

#### **7. Legal implications**

7.1 Contract award will be made using direct award against the Kent Commercial Services Y20011 framework, which is in line with the framework terms and conditions.

## **8. Equalities implications**

8.1 EqIA screening has indicated this to be low risk, as there is no change to the information that is recorded, the way it is recorded, or the software on which it is held.

## **9. Other corporate implications**

9.1 Re-procuring with SIMS ensures ongoing system functionality and stability for Kent's LA Maintained schools, which supports Kent to fulfil its statutory duties around education provision and safeguarding of pupils.

## **10. Governance**

10.1 The Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education will be authorised to be the delegated officer to enter into the relevant contracts on behalf of the Council. As determined in 25. (d) of the County Council Constitution: Ensuring that all applicable obligations and responsibilities are complied with by the Directorate as well as internal and external commissioned providers.

## **11. Conclusions**

11.1 Kent seeks to continue buying SIMS for maintained schools at a reduced rate, for a contract term of 3+2 years.

11.2 The contract value will be funded by de-delegation of maintained schools' budgets, in line with the current de-delegation arrangements, as agreed by the Schools' Funding Forum.

## **12. Recommendation(s):**

12.1 The Children's, Young People's and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposed decision to:

- (i) award a contract to Capita ESS for 5 (3+2) years for the provision of SIMS to LA maintained schools in Kent, attached as appendix A.
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to take relevant actions, as necessary to implement this decision.

## **13. Background Documents**

13.1 None.

## 14. Contact details

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