

Meeting: Governor's Web Forum
Date: 4 April 2006
Subject: Implement Web Forum Infrastructure
Responsible Officer: Geoff Wingrove, Director of Strategy
Contact Officer: John Kane, Senior Professional ICT Strategy
Portfolio Holder: Bill Stephenson
Key Decision: No
Status: Public

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

To note and comment on the options on the technical infrastructure and support required for the provision of the Governor's web forum. This can be provided by either:

- An LGFL Solution
- An in-house HITS solution

A decision needs to be obtained as to which of the two options is preferable.

Reason for report

To provide Governors of Harrow Schools with a secure forum where they can pose questions and receive answers from their peers.

Benefits

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A benefit of the system will be the sharing of ideas and best practise and provision of a format for consultation and engagement.

Cost of Proposals

A monthly charge of £500 will be levied to account for administration and support should the LGFL solution be chosen.

The HITS solution may require security tokens to be purchased for each user at a cost of £250 per annum.

Additional costs will be incurred if there is a defined need for content to be reviewed/moderated.

Risks

- Internet fails (LGFL/HITS) so users cannot communicate on issues
- Users don't use the system as a collective
- Major customisation is required to the existing environments (not costed)

Implications if recommendations rejected

No implications, as alternative methods exist for communicating on shared topics; e-mail, meetings, paper documents

Section 2: Report

Brief History

There is a requirement to provide all Governors of Harrow Schools with a secure forum where they can pose questions and receive answers from their peers.

A key feature of the identified solution is that it must be capable of being implemented quickly and at minimal cost.

Options considered

This paper looks at the two options that have been evaluated:

1. Extending the capability that already exists within LGFL
2. Using the forum/chat room facility that has been developed by HITS and the Communications and PR unit

The following information was used to determine the most appropriate solution:

1. How will the forum be administered and by whom?	
LGFL	HITS
<p>LGFL Consultants will manage administration activity.</p> <p>Existing processes will be used to support any requests and minimal additional work is required.</p> <p>New users can be added by LGFL Consultants (or trained staff) within 24 hours.</p> <p>If required, other personnel can be shown how to maintain the environment. An average of two hours "hands on" training will be required in order to put control elsewhere.</p> <p>If problems are identified then the LGFL Consultants can provide telephone or remote support. Costs to provide this cover will be minimal and are estimated at 0.5 – 1.0 day per month (which will/ not be charged for)</p>	<p>HITS staff will administer the system and will just require adequate notice when forums need to be enabled/disabled</p> <p>The individual forums need to be enabled for particular time periods and subject categories defined by the sponsor of the forum.</p> <p>Moderation of the forums will be provided by the Communications Team (to understand potential legal/libel issues that the Council might face).</p>

2. How would ongoing costs be managed?	
LGFL	HITS
<p>The existing infrastructure will support what is currently required.</p> <p>If additional features/software is required or if there is a large workload placed on the LGFL Consultants then a cross charging mechanism may be required. Neetha Atukorale (Governor's Support) may also be trained to provide support.</p>	<p>No additional hardware/software costs are envisaged but if additional Communications Team resources are required then they will need to be funded.</p>

3. How will "private" and "public" areas be managed?	
LGFL	HITS
<p>LGFL Consultants currently manage the separation between public and private areas.</p> <p>Training can be given to identified personnel if this area needs a specific focus.</p>	<p>Discussion forums have a login feature and HITS indicate they may be able to restrict particular forums to specific groups of people (the forum they ran allowed anonymous participation, so HITS would need to test out a restriction facility).</p>

4. How will "public" areas be available to the general public?	
LGFL	HITS
<p>Public areas which have been authorised and setup by the LGFL Consultants can be linked from the Harrow website (this will require a minimal change).</p> <p>Alternatively, a separate environment can be provided, working with the LGFL Consultants but this would be at additional costs and has not been quoted for in this study</p>	<p>Public areas will be available through the website, perhaps through a 'Have your Say' link</p>

5. How will links to partner organisations be addressed?	
LGFL	HITS
<p>Links to other partners can be easily setup and is covered in the training that can be provided.</p> <p>No additional costs will be incurred.</p>	<p>They can be set up in the same way as other restricted forum users i.e. with a login and password.</p> <p>HITS could consider setting up restricted forums on the Intranet and providing securid tokens to governors/partners but there would be a cost associated with token admin (£250 p..a.) - but this is dependent on the sensitivity of governors forums and the need for this extra security.</p>

6. Other items	
LGFL	HITS
<p>The physical LGFL solution can be implemented in 2-3 days provided that there are no major issues and the information that will be required prior to setup (pictures, documents, etc) is easily available.</p> <p>Once a structure has been identified for a forum and given to the LGFL Consultants (or trained staff) then the duration to have that forum up and running is only dependent on the complexity of the forum but it is not envisaged that this will be a lengthy and time consuming activity.</p>	<p>HITS have separate pieces of software for discussion forums and web chats which are currently available.</p> <p>Dependant on the rate of activity, no additional resources will be required to administer/support the environment.</p>

Consultation

None. This has been a desktop evaluation only.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Legal Implications

Legal Dept's view is that there is no legal requirement to set up such a forum

Equalities Impact

Not applicable

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

Not applicable

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Appendices:

None

For all reports

No other background papers are available.