OFE UK Public Sector Group (PSG)
21st Meeting
Wednesday, 19th September 2012, 11:30 – 13:00
Cabinet Office, 70 Whitehall
Draft Outline Minutes

PRESENT:

Liam Maxwell	(LM)	Cabinet Office	Co-chairman
Linda Humphries	(LH)	Cabinet Office	
Tariq Rashid	(TR)	Home Office	
Toby Ellenor	(TE)	GPS	
Nikki Barrows	(NB)	Home Office	
Sam Roddick	(SR)	Deloitte	Co-chairman
Graham Taylor	(GMT)	OFE	
Chris Francis	(CF)	IBM	
Alasdair Mangham	(AM)	LB Camden	
Peter Dawes-Huish	(PDH)	LinuxIT	
Andrew Katz	(AK)	Moorcrofts	
Charlotte Thornby	(CT)	Oracle	
Phil Scott-Lewis	(PS-L)	Redhat	
Jim Graham	(JG)	Bramble	
Alexander Gallagher	(AG)	Canonical	
Lee Bonham	(LB)	Canonical	
Nikki Barrows	(NB)	Home Office	
Basil Cousins	(WBC)	OFE	Joint Secretary
Stuart Mackintosh	(SM)	OpusVL	Joint Secretary

APOLOGIES:

Michael Lotarius	(ML)	Government Procurement Service
Roger Marshall	(RM)	Socitm
Roger Maxwell	(RMx)	Home Office
Sarah Hardy	(SH)	GPS
Simon Godfrey	(SG)	Oracle
Maha Shaikh	(MS)	Warwick Business School
Jeff Nott	(JN)	Alfresco
Gavin Beckett	(GB)	Bristol CC
Amanda Brock	(AB)	Canonical
Stephen Fellowes	(SF)	Photonlogic
Tony Cornford	(TC)	LSE
Paul Vagg	(PV)	Home Office

1) *Welcome and Introductions*

Sam Roddick welcomed and introduced all.

Liam Maxwell stated that the Open Standards consultation is a key priority and that the progress made in the finalisation of the Open Standards Consultation now being circulated across UKG departments with the intention of publication in later this year. LM confirmed

that there was a very good response to the consultation. He noted that the Bournemouth University processing of the results was a peer review of the consultation and that the economics had also been considered in this process.

The current Government IT Strategy is being refreshed in line with the Digital Strategy. This would be backed by a separate implementation plan, both for publication by the end 2012/early 2013. The intention is that revised strategy would move to a more platform based approach to both internal and public facing systems.

This will include the current transition to Open Standards-based platforms. The desktop is a key component in this strategy and the Government is determined to adopt a consistent approach on the desktop provision across the landscape..

LM stated that there is currently a lack of capacity in Government and the market to use OSS. He also points out that "line of business" applications can hold back choice in the desktop space, and applications based on macros have a significant effect on the Government's ability to unlock the procurement processes.

Under this strategy, Cloud based approaches such as Google Apps, when they are implemented, will have a significant effect on Government IT.

Liam is examining the security implications working with CESG. The vast majority (95%) of government users do not routinely work with sensitive information. New "tiered" classes of security are being agreed to simplify certification of devices and Cloud application providers. Google Apps, amongst others, are being assessed in line with these new standards.

Liam noted the lack of visible capacity in the market to handle Cloud based services. "There is an absence of defined capability, the market must stand up and say they can do it". He also noted the strong tendency of Cloud suppliers to lock-in users to their services. He stressed that he was militant about Open Standards.

He emphasised that SMEs and SI's should compete side by side, that there should be no preference or bias. Graham Taylor asked if the message about Open Source has got through to SI's, Liam responded that in general it had not.

LM described the following time line:

      End Oct – Open Standards Consultation release

      Q4 – digital strategy published

      Q4/Q1, IT strategy

New offer (Framework) for Commodity Software published October / November 2012 and will go to market January 2013

Finally he suggested that a date for the next PSG should be agreed.

2) Summary Progress Reports and related actions

Tariq Rashid and Basil Cousins introduced the Action Teams summary progress report . The following outcomes were noted:

AT001 Commodity Software: Frameworks and Model Contracts that encourage component 'mix and match'.

AT002: Knowledge Base Repository - Working specification circulated; demo due by mid October.

AT003: Procurement Guidelines – Draft due mid-October.

AT004: EUD.   This was being approached at two levels. Tariq was leading a team seeking to determine which interoperability and security standards to adopt for individual functions; Peter Dawes-Huish was coordinating OFE support.

3) Measures of Success - Metrics

Basil Cousins presented an initial draft Measures of Success and Metrics developed with Tariq Rashid who noted that the existing set of metrics used by Government could be better. The discussion focused on the key metric to be used by the Cabinet Office which encouraged behaviour change regarding open source and a level playing field. Liam re-iterated his strong support for open standards including the mandation of key examples. It was proposed that should be a clear route for exceptions which would need to determined on a case by case basis.

Graham Taylor suggested a metric to determine by how much the lock-in cost of software acquired was being reduced. The vacuum of data about TCO costs should be replaced urgently by a series of approximations to be refined over time.

He and others stressed that the metrics should be used to drive behavioural change, transparency and expectations within the software procurement process both among users and suppliers in order to achieve the level playing field (LPF).

Sam Roddick proposed that metrics should seek to ascertain whether positive changes were being achieved.

Peter Dawes-Hush suggested that it would take time to develop an agreed set of useful metrics

Chris Francis emphasised that the main point of measuring success would be to look at the effect of the processes, not at the processes themselves.

Chris Francis and Graham Taylor stressed the need for a rigorous audit of the approval process in order to enforce government policy both within the Systems Integrators and the government users. Peter Dawes-Hush felt that it would take time to evolve and identify the most effective metrics.

Tariq suggested calling a workshop to review and develop the key Measures of Success and related Metrics.   This would include determining how a "Cost of Exit" quote could be examined.

4) Proposals

1) Level Playing Field Guiding Principles/Definition

Andrew Katz introduced the concept of fairness in that "*All entrants must play by the same rules, and be judged by the same criteria".* He noted that this was the commonly accepted definition , but that it was clear that it did not work in this context; indeed it was questionable whether there would be any definition which would work: it was more important to look at the outcomes.

Liam Maxwell commented that the Coalition Agreement laid down the principle of equal access to equal opportunity. This principle applies equally to an HP as it does to a LinuxIT.

Andrew Katz proposed that it was essential to lower the barriers to entry to give equal access to innovative suppliers. Every part of the procurement process needs to be examined. Potentially good candidates should not be winnowed out artificially, for example, by the need to provide unnecessary qualification information.

The complexity of the 400+ pages of current contract chokes off a wide range of potential innovative suppliers. The current style of government contracts seek to eliminate every conceivable risk, a Pandora's box hedged by indemnities and warranties, each of which adds to the cost that Government incurs. They add cost, but every additional term has the effect of further deterring potential quality candidates, and the question is whether, in the round, this means a real reduction in risk for the government, taking into account the loss of potential tenderers.

The way to determine if there is a level playing field is to look at the outcomes, not the

definition. It will be essential to agree key metrics to determine the 'fairness' of the contract process.

2) Modular Procurement Documentation proposal

The solution is to provide a simpler set of modular contracts in plain English. Andrew Katz has been developing such a set of modular contracts with clients for a number of years, easy to understand, allocating risk in a sensible manner. This draft needs updating to cover development processes such as agile.

The present draft can be updated within weeks, on a small pathfinder contract.

This could be used to review with the Treasury Solicitors how risk can be handled effectively in government contracts without increasing the cost of the final contract to government engendered by unnecessary indemnities and warranties imposed on suppliers.

ACTION: Liam Maxwell proposed that Sally Collier and Andrew Katz should review and develop a proposed way forward."

5) Detailed Progress Reports

Action Team 001 Commodity Software
Toby Ellenor noted that AT001 aimed to support the LPF through participation in the GPS (Government Procurement Service) market engagement activity on upcoming software procurement.. Key engagement areas are:

- Procurement Structure

- Terms and Conditions (Framework and call-off)

As background, the current GPS route to community software is a software reseller lot on the CITHS Framework. GOS Software Category plan to establish a commodity software engagement aligned to the Government ICT Strategy:

- Transparency pricing (products and services)

- Catalogue Products

- LPF for Open Source

- .Procurement time scales.

Toby Ellenor noted that 2x workshops had been held by GPS to capture OFE UK PSG thought on LPF and potential procurement structures. These would be circulated as an

RFI as part of the pre-market engagement activity. There has also been some high level discussion of T&Cs. OFE UK PSG have a better understanding of GPS and the commodity software procurement.

It is planned to circulate procurement structure options as part of pre-market engagement activity and to involve OFE UK PSG in this including review of framework and T&Cs. Feedback was requested on how procurement could be structured to ensure LPF.

Action Team 002 Toolkit/Catalogue

Stuart Mackintosh introduced the proposal for the development of comprehensive Free Software Catalogue which would complement and feed into the Cabinet Office Toolkit developed by Tariq Rashid and his team. The Catalogue would act as a repository of open source solution patterns, reliable knowledge which could be browsed by users seeking information in their decision making process. The proposal contained a schema and was akin to an EU meta project for open source software repositories.   A business model could be built around this concept in which software suppliers could pay a subscription for the inclusion of their products in the Catalogue.   The development of the proposed design and of the catalogue itself would take a considerable effort which would need to be paid for by paid consultancy.   This could be combined with some aspects of 'crowd sourcing'. Some investment would be required to enable this proposal.

Stuart Mackintosh stated that he had validated the requirement and designed a schema that supports the requirements of GPS, Industry and Community. To progress, support from the PSG was requested to build the commercial model which would fund the development. Support was offered by Graham Taylor, Peter Dawes-Huish, Tariq Rashid, Toby Ellenor and Chris Francis.

ACTION: Stuart Mackintosh to arrange a session to investigate funding models and report back to next PSG.

Action Team 003 Guidelines

Chris Francis noted that the first draft guidelines would be published by mid October.

Action Team 004 EUD (End User Devices)

Tariq has established a group working to develop the interoperability and security standards for end user devices. OFE were invited to input into this group, alongside others. Peter Dawes-Huish is the contact for OFE. The OFE is asked to provide practical feedback on feasibility and technical guidance.

Tariq had previously circulated a draft Desktop Transition and Transformation Framework

Requirement Document prepared by GPS.

Graham Taylor raised question was raised about the status of the tender issued by a Cabinet Office Contract for the maintenance of a technical architecture framework, guidelines and standards for the End User Device Programme issued at the end of August 2012 with 7 days to respond. This tender raised issues about the potential conflict between pro-bono support being provided by OFE and its members and contractual obligations. Tariq undertook to clarify the issue (since completed).

5) UKG Consultation on Open Standards

Linda Humphries noted that the draft report was in circulation across government departments. It was planned to issue in late October 2012.

6) Minutes of 20th OFE UK PSG held on 19th June 2012

Agreed.

7) Other matters

Tariq noted that recent Hillsborough Disaster disclosure had been completed primarily using open source technologies, both for the website itself, and for its development and testing. SMEs were also engaged for that project, which used agile development approaches.

He also mentioned that Volume Licensing Trap issue was discussed with PSL and possible solutions considered , a variant of which is now being applied by the spend controls team at IT Reform.

8) Summary

SR thanked the meeting for their input, stressing the urgent for view of the End to End process in Government Software and other IT procurements. The present system appeared confused. A comprehensive picture would be essential to enable the PSG to contribute effectively.

9) Meetings Programme

Basil Cousins will liaise with Linda Humphries about a date for the 22nd Meeting in early November 2012

Basil Cousins & Stuart Mackintosh

Joint Secretaries