

CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



Date of meeting:	7 March 2023
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nia Jeffreys
Liaison Officer:	Nia Gruffydd
Contact Telephone Number:	01286 679 461
Item Title:	Cyngor Gwynedd acting as Lead Authority for LMS Cymru (Library Management System)

1. Decision:

The Cabinet is asked to:

Agree to the proposal that Cyngor Gwynedd acts as the Lead Authority for LMS Cymru which means:

- That Cyngor Gwynedd's Procurement Unit undertakes the procurement for a new LMS which means acquiring a system on a framework not only for the North Wales Library Consortium but for Welsh Library Authorities who wish to be members of an LMS Cymru Consortium, an agreement which will last for the duration of the contract for 7 years from 2023/2024.
- That LMS Cymru is based on a Consortium Agreement which will commit each member to pay their full share of the costs, and any potential costs such as redundancy costs, for the duration of the consortium agreement.
- As part of the Consortium Agreement, to employ an LMS Support Unit staffed by 3 full-time officers (neutral location) for the duration of the agreement.

2. Reason for the decision:

Currently, 20 out of 22 Library Authorities/Trusts in Wales share an LMS (which enables users and staff to search, order and borrow library resources), and a new LMS will have to be procured when the current agreement expires at the end of December 2024.

All the membership of SCL Cymru (Society of Chief Librarians of Wales) are keen to continue sharing a system for Welsh Libraries which will act as a National Digital Platform for Welsh Libraries, that will mean increased benefits for users in terms of developing and improving services.

In order to protect the interests of Gwynedd and the North Wales Library Consortium, and to support Welsh Libraries, we are asking Cyngor Gwynedd to take on the role of Lead Authority for LMS Cymru, or if LMS Cymru cannot be achieved as a project, to take on the role of Lead Authority for the North Wales Library Consortium as the second option. This would mean leading on procurement for a system on a framework, and leading a consortium arrangement supported by a Systems Support Team, employing 3 full-time officers.

We expect financial support from the Welsh Government for the project , and if LMS Cymru is realised it will be an example of a flagship innovative project for Wales which will ensure a single digital presence for Welsh Libraries - something that has not been able to be realised in the UK to date . It will be a means to drive improvements in the performance and quality of library services and ensure continuous development.

The cost will be neutral for Gwynedd. No other Council has proposed to act as Lead Authority.

3. Introduction

The LMS project for the whole of Wales was started in 2011, with a pilot scheme involving 6 North Wales Authorities (Gwynedd, Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham) as well as Grwp Llandrillo Menai Further Education College. The intention of this pilot project was to eventually extend the LMS to all Public Library Authorities in Wales, with the intention of offering a high quality Library service to library users across Wales, as well as offering significant savings to the Library Authorities themselves .

An LMS for the whole of Wales was one of the main priorities of the Welsh Government at the time. LMS Cymru as it came to be known was implemented in 20 of the 22 authorities in Wales, with Merthyr Tydfil and Pembroke Authorities choosing not to join currently for specific and practical reasons. It must be emphasized however that there is no formal structure to the current LMS Cymru in terms of governance.

We are in the process of negotiating an extension with our current supplier for an additional 12 months in order to give time to put the appropriate arrangements in place to plan for a new Welsh LMS, which will see the supply agreement expire in December 2024.

SCL Cymru managed to secure funding from the Welsh Government to commission the company Actica to create a report on LMS Cymru and options for future governance. A strong recommendation from Actica was the need for a Systems Support Team for LMS Cymru, to replace the current unsustainable and high risk goodwill model.

Gwynedd Libraries, as part of the North Wales Library Consortium , see great benefits to being part of the current consortium, in terms of benefits for the user. Gwynedd Libraries would need to retender for a new LMS system when the current agreement expires in December 2024, and our wish is to procure on the basis of a framework not only for the members of the North Wales Library Consortium, but for the rest of the Welsh Library Authorities and Trusts.

The Welsh Government has already given financial support to create a new system requirements document for the tender and we are in close dialogue with them at the moment in terms of further support towards the capital costs of the system and support for a Systems Support Team. This support has already been agreed in principle, recognizing that a collaborative system like this is core to the development and quality of Library services in Wales for the future .

4. Rationale and Justification for recommending the decision

No other Authority has expressed a desire to act as a Lead Authority and we need a decision regarding Gwynedd acting as a Lead Authority due to the following benefits:

- Enable Gwynedd to continue being part of the north Wales consortium sharing a catalogue and Systems Manager in order to improve the service for our users
- Being able to share books and offer a better library service to the people of Gwynedd

- Being able to save the costs of purchasing books to meet demand by sharing stock with other Library Services.
- Be able to ensure system security and suitable governance
- Being able to be part of an all-Wales arrangement that will be able to attract the support of the Welsh Government
- Being able to be part of an all-Wales arrangement to improve the quality of Libraries' digital services in general, and ensure that key skills are nurtured in order to drive digital developments and improvements forward, ensuring a single digital gateway to Library services for the user.

5. Next steps and timetable

The next steps are to draw up a Consortium Agreement which will be scrutinized by the Conwy Legal Unit (where there is an arrangement in place for Legal services via the Gwynedd, Mon and Conwy Bibliographic Unit arrangement).

Cyngor Gwynedd's Procurement, Human Resources and Finance Units are aware of this request and have contributed to the process through:

1. Putting forward a fully costed procurement proposal - accepting the proposal for Gwynedd to be a Lead Authority would mean over £15k of revenue for the Procurement Unit and £3k of subsequent revenue for maintaining the contract
2. Appraising the proposed Systems Support Team job descriptions.
3. Working on core costs and administrative costs - a contribution from all LMS Cymru members would mean that there is a neutral cost for Gwynedd.

The work of drawing up a Requirements Document for the tender has been completed.

February 2023 – further discussions with the Council's Procurement Unit

March-May 2023 – Completion of the tender documents

June 2023 – Publication of the tender

June-August 2023 – Sign the LMS Cymru Consortium membership agreement

October-December – recruit and appoint officers to the Systems Support Unit

November-December 2023 – Award of the Tender to the winning supplier

January – December 2024 – Renewal or implementation of the new system

6. Any Consultations undertaken prior to making the Decision

National

Actica Report

Engaging with users – WLGA Digital Unit

Requirements Document – engaged with staff and users

Market Assessment Report

Discussions with members of SCL Cymru

Discussions with the Welsh Government

Local

Discussions with North Wales Library Authorities

Discussions with Cyngor Gwynedd service units

Cyngor Gwynedd Procurement Unit

Chief Finance Officer's opinion:

"I can confirm that Finance officers were involved in the discussion in preparing the report and we will continue to work with the Economy and Community Department as the plan develops."

Opinion of the Monitoring Officer:

"No observations to add in relation to the propriety of the decision. However, I note that as Gwynedd are the lead authority it will be necessary for Gwynedd Council Legal Services to have input into the Consortium Agreement to ensure that Gwynedd's interests are acknowledged in the documentation."

Local Member's Opinion :

