

Ref: MS/WAN 003

Date:

CC: Chair of Governors

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Dear Headteacher

SUBJECT: Future Schools Network and Services

I am writing to provide an update regarding the Council's actions to secure network services once our current contract with Nasstar (formerly KCOM) ends on 31st October 2022. The current contract and services are managed by emPSN on our behalf and also provide educational broadband services for schools. The Council is one of the Local Authority owners of emPSN.

Procurement with emPSN Commenced

As I explained when I contacted you in July, following in depth analysis the Council took the decision to continue to use the emPSN managed network and, with emPSN, is in the process of procuring a new contract for managed connectivity services. I wanted to let you know that the procurement is now underway, and I will be in a position to notify you of our future connectivity provider by May 2022. However, we expect to be able to advise of your future pricing from emPSN in April 2022 and will seek to do this earlier if possible. Any change of connectivity service provider will likely be because of an improved price and / or quality of service being offered; it is a condition of the procurement that your current service will continue without any disruption.

Protecting Services

The Council's decision to continue to use the emPSN network was influenced by the excellent services and competitive rates emPSN currently provide to us, the Districts and schools. It is essential that we protect continuity of service and mitigate any risks to our network. emPSN provide us with a secure and reliable public sector compliant network along with additional network management services, which extend beyond the provision of an internet connection.

The Council is confident that through this procurement we can retain these high quality services and also achieve a competitive market price for connectivity services which will benefit Lincolnshire councils and schools.

Option for Schools

As you are aware schools will be required to secure and fund the full cost of broadband services from their delegated budget through a direct contract between themselves and a provider from 1st November 2022. As I mentioned in my previous letter, schools have the option to either:

1. Maintain continuity of current services or seek enhanced services through a direct contract with emPSN, which the current procurement exercise is intended to secure connectivity services going forward.
 - To do so please contact Kathryn Young at emPSN on 01604 438043 or by email at support@empsn.org.uk
 - Information is also available from emPSN at www.empsn.org.uk/lincolnshire
 - emPSN will provide you with their comprehensive offer, including pricing in April 2022 and will continue to engage with you ahead of this. Please look out for further correspondence from emPSN.
 - Lincolnshire County Council will continue to be one of the Local Authority owners of emPSN.
2. Procure alternative arrangements independently
 - The Council recognises the complexity of procuring this kind of specialist and technical service and I attach once again the procurement guide we have drafted to help support you through this process and outline your responsibilities, should you opt to procure alternative provision.

Services to schools

Once again, I would strongly advise schools to carefully consider this important decision. The Council, through emPSN, will ensure continuity of your current managed connectivity services.

Appendix A attached outlines the comprehensive services provided by emPSN, and to avoid significant disruption to your services, you would need to ensure any future provision covers your requirements in full.

I will contact you again once the procurement has been concluded.

Yours sincerely

Martin Smith
Assistant Director for Children's Education
Lincolnshire County Council

Appendix A – Background information and examples of current services provided by emPSN to schools

- emPSN is dedicated to the public good, connecting schools and local organisations to safe, secure, and stable internet networks (through its current communications provider Nasstar (formerly KCOM)) covering the East Midlands region and beyond.
- emPSN is more than just an internet connection, it is 20 years' experience of listening, adapting, and delivering reliable and safe connectivity to schools.
- emPSN has a network infrastructure that is built to protect schools and provide reliable, consistent connectivity that schools can feel assured is safe for all users.
- emPSN has provided excellent services at a competitive rate, enabling schools to have a resilient, safe, and secure network and most schools have benefited from upgrading services allowing them to continue to grow.
- Instrumental in securing central government (DCMS and DfE) funding to roll out Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme, enabling gigabit capable full fibre connections for schools. (Over 120).

In addition to connecting schools, emPSN offer the following services:

- Manage the key contract with the communications providers which meet the changing needs of schools over time. (Ensuring services continue to provide relevant services).
- Regular monitoring of contract performance (to make sure it is doing what it is meant to be).
- A fully managed network and firewall to ensure all schools have internet access and are protected with 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, proactive monitoring to minimise disruption.
- Enhanced protection from 'Denial-of-Service' (DDoS) attacks. Without these services schools would experience availability and access problems along with potential cyber-attacks.
- Around the clock access to network support centre and service desk.
- Integration with other networks within the emPSN cloud (networks of networks). Secure VPNs for MATs and school federations.
- Private Peering connectivity into many organisations such as Microsoft, Google, BBC and more. (Offering a greater, safer, improved experience).
- Multiple diverse connections to the public internet (resilience).

Schools on the emPSN network can also benefit from:

- Multilingual web filtering from industry leader Netsweeper, updated on a real-time basis to accommodate new websites and allow schools to determine filtering profiles for groups of students (e.g., by age) and staff helping to prevent unsuitable material being accessed.
- Partnerships with integrated support providers such as ARK ICT and F1.
- Other ISP services including SSL certificates, DNS hosting and name registration.