



**BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL, EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL, SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL AND WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ORBIS PUBLIC LAW JOINT COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 15 APRIL 2019**

**LEAD OFFICERS: PHILIP BAKER (ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ESCC), ABRAHAM GHEBRE-GHIORGHIS (EXECUTIVE LEAD OFFICER FOR STRATEGY, GOVERNANCE AND LAW, BHCC), AND TONY KERSHAW (DIRECTOR OF LAW AND ASSURANCE, WSCC), AND GEOFF WILD (INTERIM DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE, SCC).**

**SUBJECT: IT ENABLING PROJECTS**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

To update the Orbis Public Law Joint Committee on a number of IT projects which enable the operation of the single service.

**INTRODUCTION**

Orbis Public Law's (OPL) Practice Management Team is implementing a number of projects which will provide the processes and systems to generate savings and enable OPL to operate as a single service.

This paper outlines the progress and benefits of:

- The digital court project,
- A single instance of the case management system.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Orbis Public Law Joint Committee notes the benefits already realised and the future benefits these key projects will bring for all OPL partners.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

To demonstrate the infrastructure that is required to support OPL, to update Members on the progress and benefits already realised.

## DETAILS:

### **DIGITAL COURT**

1. Digital court is the term used to describe the change of provision of case bundles by Orbis Public Law (OPL) partners to the family court in hard copy lever arch files to electronic bundles (E-bundles). In order to enable this transition OPL partners have procured a cloud based software solution called CaseLines and equipped the family courts in Surrey and Sussex with IT equipment.
2. The project is now fully implemented in the Sussex and Surrey family courts. Tier 1 Magistrate implementation for Surrey and Sussex is planned for April 2019.

### **BENEFITS**

3. E-bundles provide both efficiency and cashable cost savings to the local authority and key stakeholders, these being the judiciary, the court service, solicitors and counsel. This paper details only the cost savings to OPL partners, however it will seek to share anecdotal benefits realised by stakeholders too.

### **CASHABLE COST SAVINGS**

4. OPL have paid back the initial investment within the first 6 months of implementation. Using the data from this period, conservatively the annual savings for OPL in relation to digital bundles will be £90k in 2019/20 shown in table 1.

Table 1 – Total Predicted Cost v Savings 2019/20

	2019/20 Full year
Identified Saving (administration staff and stationery, paper, print, courier, postage and destruction of papers).	£263K
Less total annual cost (CaseLines and internet)	£173K
<b>Total Saving</b>	<b>£90K</b>

## EFFICIENCIES

5. OPL will make efficiencies in the legal teams in family court matters through the use of CaseLines. This is not costed as a cashable saving in this report as it is too early to assess the impact.
  
6. Judges reported significant efficiencies in hearing preparation. They noted the ability to be able to work at home without the need to transport numerous lever arch files as well as being able to make notes electronically and move swiftly between pages during reading of the bundle. Solicitors and Advocates have reported similar benefits.
  
7. Court time saving functions include:
  - a. The judge and parties are all accessing the bundle in the same digital cloud location. This saves time as everyone is accessing the same information and therefore pagination matches.
  - b. It provides the ability to access the full master bundle and previous documentation presented in court if required.
  - c. During hearings with witnesses in attendance the software is used to automatically direct parties and witnesses to a particular page. This has meant less time is spent moving between the pages of the physical bundle.
  - d. Court administration staff have reported time savings as there is no need to receive, process and move physical bundles to court rooms.

## OTHER BENEFITS

8. There are significant benefits that cannot easily be quantified, however the impact that they have on OPL staff as well as stakeholders should not be underestimated:
  - a. Security of information as the information is not sent by email or post.
  - b. The positive impact on OPL's reputation and stakeholder relationships in delivering an innovative solution to support better outcomes for children.
  - c. Environment factors such as the reduced paper and physical consumables and the reduced reliance on couriers.

## A SINGLE INSTANCE OF THE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

9. A key driver to enable the development of teams and efficiencies of practice as part of the single integrated service is the database rationalisation (DR) project. The project aim is to create a single instance of the case management system, Civica Prescient Plus, whereby data may be shared between OPL partners.
10. The OPL Executive Board approved the project in April 2018 and good progress has been achieved. In order for the databases to be aligned Civica confirmed a multi-tenanted licence (a single instance of a software application serving multiple customers) would be required and as a result required each partner to relinquish existing contracts to transfer to a single contract held by the lead database authority, Surrey County Council (SCC). This agreement marked a watershed moment for the partnership in terms of commitment to full integration and commitment of financial resources. Over 5 years the revised contract will cost the partnership £334,500 (which includes £52,000 project costs) and deliver a **£68,572 saving** against remaining on current contracts.
11. Benefits of the single contract:
  - a. Enables OPL to operate as a single service.
  - b. The **£68,572 saving** is based on contracts alone and does not include the operational savings possible for Legal, IT and Procurement had partners separately procured.
  - c. Despite a **£68,572 saving** new modules will be added to the system as part of the revised contract, these are;
    1. GDPR module - this will ensure that data can

be anonymised in the live, test and training systems as well as ensuring that there are no contacts in the system which cannot be identified.

2. By joining the systems all partners will be able to access the Precedent H Litigation costs module (currently only held by SCC).
3. The client portal module – The portal provides web based access for internal and external clients to submit work requests (instructions), track case progress and share documents between the lawyer and client.

12. Much of the project progress to date has been IT technical, for example scoping the differences and scale of the data transition, in order that accurate timescales for implementation can be established.

13. There is significant work for the OPL practice management team to undertake in early 2019 in terms of system readiness based on the operational requirements from the Interim Leadership Team (ILT) and system testing to ensure the single database is fit for purpose.

14. OPL plans to have the single system in place over the summer/autumn period in 2019.

## CONCLUSION

15. OPL has made substantial progress to implement the infrastructure and operational processes to support the single service.

16. As well as being the key platform for OPL, learning from the database rationalisation project will provide substantial benefits to the Orbis IT&D teams and may support best practice for future projects of this nature.

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**Appendices:** None

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