<u>Minutes of the Computer Committee meeting held on 1ᵘ June 2020 at 13:00pm via Teams</u>

Present: Jason Randall, Charlie Weiss, Catherine Reid, Jason Carroll, Aylmer Johnson, Rouchelle Sriranjan,

Apologies: Allison Lewis, Ian Elliott, Ben Cole (UCS)

1. <u>Declarations of Interest</u>

None

2. <u>MMA</u>

None

3. <u>IT Department Update</u>

JR reported that the IT department had been running smoothly over the last few months with none of us having been furloughed.

We have had to attend site twice during this period to change tapes. The tapes used to be changed weekly but this is now being done approximately every three weeks to minimise being on site.

After a busy start to working from home the amount of calls we are getting has gone down to an average of around 2 calls per day covering everything from a simple PC reboot to much longer jobs. A good example of the latter occurred last weekend when JR was required to help the Head Gardener and his deputy to move large amounts of data which took over two days using VPN.

Working from home is going smoothly and there isn't much that we can't do. The Head Porter has asked JR to come up with a plan for returning to work although JR is unaware if there is a specific date in mind or if this is just planning for the future. JR asked if a date had been discussed at the last HODs meeting (which he was unable to attend) but CR stated that no specific dates had been mentioned. IE is currently shielding so any return to work will probably involve AL and JR coming in on a rotational basis. The guidelines state though that we should work from home wherever possible.

There are currently 28 people working over the VPN which is holding up very well.

JR has been involved with a project to upgrade the software which controls doors to a product called Salto Space.

IE has been remoting into all college PCs to ensure that they are all fully patched with the latest Windows security updates as many people have fallen behind with these installations. He has also been taking the opportunity to upgrade the PCs to the latest version of Windows 10.

An issue which has arisen in the last week is where Chinese users are unable to access the University VPN as it is blocked in China. JR has been talking to UIS about this but there is currently no solution and the problem has been escalated to JANET to see if this can be circumvented but it is extremely doubtful. JC asked if this issue was specific to Cambridge or if other Universities have also been affected but JR was unaware if this is the case. JR has started to look at alternative ways to circumvent this but all of these solutions involve setting the system up before you arrive in China because you can't download anything once there. We can only hope that UIS can come up with better advice. CW suggested physically mailing an SD card as a potential solution as he had done this in the past. JR will investigate this further.

Current building work is going well with Old Court about 50% manned and St Regis 20% manned. The latter is now being fitted out internally so with that in mind we are now looking to start placing orders for wi-fi access points and network equipment such as switches and patch leads. This was originally due to go on the IT revenue budget but the Bursar wants it put onto the project budget in order to keep our revenue budget down as much as possible. JR has this morning received the final quote for the network equipment which has been passed to the Estates Manager for purchase.

UIS have inspected plans for the wi-fi at St Regis and expressed concern about the access point placements. This concern is because the distribution is fairly floor by floor with access points directly above each other instead of being staggered along corridors so they can create their own wi-fi bubble. The 3-4m distance from each other which is currently planned means that they are too close which makes them turn their power down causing loss of signal. UIS have asked if they can make some recommendations to have them redistributed so the Estates Manager will speak to the builders this afternoon.

The estimated completion date for St Regis is November 2020. UIS have told us that they are currently unable to place any orders so as we rent our access points from them we are unable to progress with the order at present. JR has asked to be kept informed when this situation changes. This should also be added to the risk register as we cannot allow students to live on site with no IT facilities although it is possible that we could go with a wired option.

JR met with Rebecca Willatt last week to discuss the IT budget. It has been decided to use our actual spend so far this year (as opposed to our budgeted figure) and roll that over to next year. Anything outside of this figure has to be requested so JR has asked for extra money to purchase a replacement laptop for the department as our oldest is around six years old.

Over the summer we need to address how we provide an IT service when the students eventually return to college. JR asked if anyone knew when students might be on site and both JC and AJ said that they were currently planning for October. JR said we would need to thin out the equipment in the MCS rooms to ensure social distancing and CR mentioned that she had seen other Universities were planning to load MCS software on student laptops to reduce the need to attend the public areas. CR asked if we had any plans to do anything similar and JR replied that there is an existing facility called DS-Remote but that usually only covers certain applications and entails extra cost to the student. It is technically possible to deliver the entire desktop but licencing issues mean it cannot be done..

JR had planned to purchase ten replacement MCS PCs this year but this has not happened thus saving around £10k as there is no point in having so many PCs if we are going to remove some of them for distancing purposes. We also plan to put anti-bacterial wipes in the MCS rooms so the students will need to take personal responsibility for cleaning mice and keyboards both before and after use. CR said that it would be useful to meet with JR to discuss the future use of FML facilities as reducing traffic within these rooms would be preferable.

4. UCS Report

The UCS rep was not present.

5. MCR Report

RS reported that the MCR website is being revamped over the summer. The website was initially created in 2014 but has not been patched or updated since so when it crashed last year it could not be resurrected. The events booker has moved to Upay meaning that the website essentially has nothing functional on it. The MCR also maintains the punts booker and although this is held on a separate website you have to go through the MCR website to access it. This has also not been patched or updated so a revamp is taking place in collaboration with Kings College developers and RS expressed her satisfaction with the work being done.

6. AOB

CW asked if JR knew why the University has not activated the classroom function in Microsoft Teams but JR was not aware of the reason. JR stated that he had experimented with the whiteboard facility and screen sharing in Teams and found them useful along with now being able to invite external parties to online meetings.

AJ thought that Teams was not as useful as Zoom and could not understand why the University had favoured Teams but CW said that Teams is much easier for document management.

JR then mentioned the need to migrate your Hermes account to Exchange Online in order to access the Calendar function within Teams. CR confirmed that she had already done this and found it straightforward although she failed to receive any notification that the transfer had taken place which resulted in a short period of time where she wondered where her mail was! You also need to remember to put in the "forward" to your @clare.cam.ac.uk address in Exchange Online.

RS said she that has been using Zoom for supervisions and asked if Clare has a paid Zoom subscription they could use as she has been using the MCR subscription. JR said that we don't have one as we tend to use the free Zoom but to maintain some level of security he recommended creating a new meeting direct from the Zoom website because that gives you a randomised meeting organiser.

AJ asked if security levels can be maintained on Zoom by using the waiting room as we do on Teams. JR said that they can indeed be used but there are still end to end security issues with Zoom and he wouldn't recommend sharing files on this platform. He also recommended changing your organiser ID regularly. Teams will soon be updated to enable more video sessions.

CR told JR that she had been persuaded by the Bursary to postpone future computer hardware replacements and wanted to ensure that JR was aware. JR said that this was fine but CR should be aware that if any issues occurred we might not have a spare PC that we could use to replace a faulty one which could potentially put her over budget should we then have to order a new one.

Provisional dates for next year's meetings

Monday 12th October 2020
Monday 23rd November 2020
Monday 25th January 2021
Monday 15th March 2021
Monday 17th May 2021