



Meeting of the Karten Network Board

09.30 on Thursday 9th July 2020

Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams

Directors present:

Arwyn Jones
Max Bianconi
Vicky Myko
David Finch
Rohan Slaughter
Joe Cash
Paul Doyle

In attendance:

Dawn Green
Martin Pistorius
Sal Cooke
Liz Howarth
Inés Meza-Mitcher (minutes)

Apologies:

Robert Boyce

Minutes

1. Apologies

- Apologies were received from Robert Boyce.

2. Declarations of Business Interests

- No business interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

- The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the last meeting by those present.

4. Matters arising

- It was noted that matters arising would mostly be discussed as part of the agenda.

- Directors were informed that the symposium had been discussed at the March meeting of the Karten Trustees but that Covid had temporarily halted this.
- Trustees approved financial support for Policy Connect's AT and Employment commission. The commission is well under way – RS actually attended navigational session and then first evidence session which both DG and RS attended – RS was influential in terms of bringing supported internships into scope. Specialist Colleges were well represented in the first evidence session, with involvement from a learner from Hereward College and his job coach. **ACTION: minutes to be shared round the board.**
- AJ gave Directors a brief update on an issue with the Nuvoic project to accompany an email sent previously. Directors noted that there had been a fraudulent activity undertaken by a third party whereby funds destined for the Karten Network were diverted to a fraudulent bank account.. Directors will be kept up to date on this situation.

5. Covid-19 support for centres

- DG gave Directors a verbal update on the current situation and noted that focus of support had had to change quite radically. It was noted that remote support and learning had prompted useful development for people who are unused to technology, but such developments had occurred in the absence of a strategy for many organisations. TechAbility, Natspec, Jisc and Karten have been key organisations in piecing together comprehensive support for organisations in terms of guidance material and webinars.
- VM noted that independent specialist colleges are understandably struggling to cope but are nonetheless discovering that they can use technology in a different way.
- SC noted that there seems to be evidence that individuals who would not normally attend webinars have been going to them – Dolphin and RNIB are two organisations who have noticed a change in the demographic of their attendees.
- DF noted that it has been great to get real case studies of the types of technology used and to see how schools connect with young people and deliver resources online.
- AJ thanked DG & MP for all their ongoing work.

6. Ian Karten Charitable Trust Grant applications

- DG took questions on the papers which were prepared for an extraordinary meeting of Karten Trustees on 25 June. Trustees were updated at that meeting on the current situation and have been thinking creatively about how they can support Karten centres in an affordable

way. DG is currently working with organisations who have submitted applications to make any necessary tweaks, and these will be discussed at the September meeting.

- DG noted that the focus would be on supporting established centres rather than new ones.

7. Centenary Event update

- DG confirmed that this event has now been cancelled and Directors were supportive of this.
- It was noted that the plan now is to celebrate Ian Karten “101 in 2021”. DG has been working with some of the Higher Education Institutes such as Warwick, who have good content to put on the Karten Network website and are keen for their scholars to give testimonials as to the impact of scholarships. Other activity includes the celebratory video Newbridge are working on. There was a lot of recording activity prior to lockdown.
- DG, SC and DF have also been discussing the awards and have agreed it is best to wait to launch these at a physical event.
- It was noted that Karten Trustees were keen that if the event and awards were delayed that the rescheduled event should take place at the same time of year. Therefore, the event and awards will take place in the 2021 Autumn term. There is no confirmation as of yet that this will be part of a TechAbility conference.
- DF reminded Directors that not everyone is able to access live events and that it is important to learn from new online ways of learning over this period to be inclusive. DF asked how TechAbility fed back into the board. Directors were reassured that the Karten Trustees have a great deal of insight into their work and are satisfied there is sufficient scrutiny.

8. Nuvoic Project update

- Liz Howarth, new project coordinator for the Nuvoic project, joined the meeting.
- LH noted that, in the early stages, a lot of work had been centred around ethics requirements; we need to develop documentation around eligibility criteria and recruitment processes. Also need to give info around data storage, handling and processing to ensure GDPR compliance.
- Early stage meetings had also involved awareness raising and LH is now working on more detail in the form of promotional materials, flyers and slides.
- LH gave an update on the staffing model; originally the plan was to recruit the equivalent of three FTE assistive technologists to travel between sites, but in light of Covid 19 restrictions, there is a possibility of being more flexible with this and instead to use budget for comms support from within

partner organisations. As part of the ethics submission we also need to consider if we're going to look for external ethics approval.

- DG gave an update on the current situation with the Nuvoic finances and Directors noted that for the purposes of this discussion they would assume that the diverted funds would be recovered, and the payment of €350,000 will be released into our account.
- The project will run for 3 years (until April 2023), although this may be extended due to Covid 19. Prepayment has been released (for the purposes of this discussion) – but there is likely to be a cashflow issue as, as for all European projects, there are reporting points. The first periodic reporting point is 24 months into the project. Final project payment will be at the end of the project. DG reminded Directors that the project would be fully funded and there would be no cost to the Trust of the Network, but that there would be a possibility that advances might be needed, which would then be repaid. Directors noted that this is normal practice for EC projects. It was also noted that we are currently unsure how a no-deal Brexit would affect funds coming in from the EU. **Action: SC agreed to ensure Trustees were aware of the cashflow situation.**
- LH gave Directors further information on ethics. Part of the ethics materials that we need to submit is a consideration first of all as to whether we need to apply for an external ethical review. This has been looked into with Voiceitt and it was agreed we do not need to apply to the NHS ethical review board because eligibility criteria mean that is not necessary at this stage. However, we would like to ask for an internal ethical review from within the Karten network. DG suggested the possibility of a sub-committee amongst board members, with the idea being would submit the same material we would submit to the EC. This would include documents around eligibility, recruitment processes and obtaining informed consent on data processing. RH and DF volunteered for the sub-committee.
- DG reminded Directors that at the last meeting they had asked for a risk register. This was presented in the pack of papers received by Directors.
- RS noted that it would be useful to develop a decision making flowchart for people joining as participants **ACTION RS to send LH relevant materials.**
- It was noted that at some point legal input would be required for reassurance moving forwards.
- DG and Directors thanked LH for her work.

9. 2019-20 Strategic and Operational Plan update

- It was noted that a paper had been circulated on this and DG gave a verbal update to accompany it. It was noted that the strategic goals were agreed up to the end of 2020. At the next board meeting, some

workshop activity should be scheduled to do some creative, critical thinking around those goals moving forward.

- **ACTION 45 minutes to be scheduled at the next meeting to discuss the strategic goals of the network over the next 3-5 year horizon.**
- DF noted that it would be useful to see a specific section on impact. **ACTION DG to redraft with a focus on impact.**

10. Karten Network Development Co-Ordinator update

- It was noted that DG had provided a written paper and this was taken as read.

11. Mobile Technology Adviser update

- It was noted that Martin Pistorius had provided a written update.
- Directors were reassured that we have improved the security of our IT systems as a result of the Nuvoic issue. However, it is important to note that there were no breaches of the Karten system found which lead to this fraudulent activity.
- **ACTION: MP agreed to provide a paper outlining which sections of the website are most popular for the next meeting.**

12. Israel Karten Centres update

- DG's paper was taken as read. It was noted that Israel is currently experiencing a second wave of Covid 19.

13. Any other relevant business

- DF asked whether it was a conscious decision not to link the Karten Network and TechAbility on the website. **ACTION: DG & MP to look at how that might work.**

Date and time of next meeting: 12th November at 11.15. Time and venue to be confirmed closer to the time.