Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

Approved minutes

Monday, 18th November 2013
Robert Gordon University

Present:

Chair

Steve Watt	University of St Andrews	SW

Secretary

Fraser Muir	University of Edinburgh	FM
Alan Doyle	APUC	AD
Andy McCreath	RGU	AM
Brian Gilmore	University of Edinburgh	BG
David Beards	SFC	DB
David Hall	RGU	DH
Dean Drew	University of St Andrews	DD
Dean Phillips	University of Aberdeen	DP
Frances Neilson	JANET UK	FN
Fraser Ross	RCS	FR
Jem Taylor	University of the Highlands & Islands	JT
John Maher	University of the Highlands & Islands	JM
Mark Cockshoot	Heriot-Watt University	MC
Mark Toole	University of Stirling	MT
Paul Hopkins	Glasgow Caledonian University	PH
Richard Lynch	RGU	RL

In attendance

Mary Ann Watt (Notetaker)	RGU

1. **Apologies were received from the following:**

Caroline Cochrane	RCS
Gerry Dougan	Scotland's Colleges
Alun Hughes	University of the Highlands & Islands
Gordon McLoughlin	Glasgow School of Art
Catherine McMillan	University of Strathclyde
Kathy McCabe	University of Stirling
Brian Mullins	University of the West of Scotland
Paul Saunders	University of Dundee
Sandy McDonald	Glasgow University
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh
Colin Watt	Glasgow School of Art

| 2. | **Minutes of the previous meeting:** | **Action** |

The minutes of the meeting held at University of St Andrews on 18th September 2013 were approved subject to the following changes: Jem Taylor and Mark Toole did not attend the meeting.

Matters arising:
Define data centre landscape & future direction - SW due to meet Jim Gordon next week with a view to inviting him to the HEIDS meeting in February.   SW

Ernst & Young report on Shared Services – FM and DB to follow up   FM/DB

Draft JANET Services Environment paper – further feedback to FN required   All

| 3. | **Data Centre Landscape findings – discussion and feedback on paper previously circulated** | **Action** |

HEIDS have an opportunity to provide guidance to other sectors; excellent progress is being made in HE.

It was felt that the group could best maintain the initiative via production of a position paper; SW and FM will pull all the comments together - everyone to forward on their thoughts on the matter. Aim is to have a draft document for discussion at the February meeting.   SW/FM
All

Some points from the discussion: 6 data centres, and services mostly in the cloud is too simplistic e.g. fibre networks (AM); Cloud doesn't provide cost effective solution for all services – financials don't add up (PH, DP, MC, JM); Cloud can add value e.g. 24x7 (SW, DP); benefits to the sector/nation as opposed to individual institutions (JT); willingness to share across sectors, but agreement across sectors very difficult to achieve (SW, AM); funding could assist timing where asset replacements are out of phase (DP, JT); report refers to mandating though probably some way off yet – mandating charities i.e. this sector would be huge change (BG, DB, DP)

DB: Carbon footprint return - a request will be sent out soon

| 4. | **Reports from shared services report progress groups** |

The Chair asked each of the sub-group convenors to report on any progress with their relevant shared services work.

4a. IT Continuity and Storage

PS/SM unavailable to report. Members felt that there was still interest in a follow up session   PS/SM

4b. Collaboration tools

AM referenced the SCURL documentation on mobile devices circulated recently. There was no further update.

4c&d. Blackboard; licensing and hosting

MT clarified that nine institutions are using Blackboard in Scotland; Aberdeen,

Dundee, Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt as reported last time, but also Stirling, Queen Margaret, Glasgow Caledonian, UHI, and Abertay.

4e. Moodle

AD reported on a meeting he was able to attend at Napier. A co-operative approach to the sharing of knowledge and expertise is proving beneficial.

5   Out of hours support models and arrangements

Catherine Macmillan (CM) raised the issue as Strathclyde have a demand for out of hours support. Strathclyde current provide out of hours cover on an ad-hoc basis. FM updated members on behalf of CM and briefed them on the issues raised.

Feedback from those institutions represented:
St Andrews
SW reported that they had 9 staff on a rota for out of hours on call – weekends only remunerated with a fixed annual amount. Managers triage the calls received and call staff out if/as required. Noted that as systems are becoming more reliable, the number of call outs was reducing.

There are currently high levels of goodwill from staff on the rota. No demand for additional support from campus customers at present. Assumption is that if they stopped paying for cover, staff would be unwilling to provide any simply on a goodwill basis.

RGU
RL reported that the only formal out of hours processes relate to cover over the Christmas and New Year period – standby cover from all technical areas is provided. HR have been involved in setting up the process. Rest of the year is 'best endeavours' with high levels of goodwill from staff so far. Also reported that service robustness is reducing the number of call outs and recovery is quicker. Time off in lieu (TOIL) usually preferred to payment.

Noted that 24x7 response rather than support appeared to be the actual business requirement. Gold/silver/bronze approach to levels of cover for festive period couldn't be repeated easily for rest of the year.

A formal system had been investigated – estimated the cost would have been considerable.

UHI
JM reported that they relied on goodwill with call outs being on a 'best endeavours' basis. Also reported that the number of call outs was reducing as a result of service reliability improvements. Increasing need to more out of hours scheduled work – more pressing than out of hours support. Discussion on a formal process is about to start.

Edinburgh
BG reported that they pay staff who support network and telephony services to provide out of hours cover, with telephony services considered to be the most important. The use the NORMAN service for support calls in other areas. Not seeing Cloud or service resilience as a solution. Agree with most of what was reported from Strathclyde. Also seeing increase in the need for out of hours

scheduled work. Expects that goodwill is likely to reduce if hours are formally extended and the costs will go up quickly as goodwill reduces.

Aberdeen
DP reported that they use NORMAN as a means to provide out of hours response mechanism. They find it can help to see trends. They also have a process in place to cover the festive season. As new contracts are being introduced to address planned out of hours work, they are seeing changes in attitude to out of hours working. Staff turnover as a result of the buoyant oil sector – would like to be able to claw back training costs if staff leave within 12 months as happens in the private sector.

RCS
FR reported that they rely on goodwill to provide cover.

Stirling
MT reported that, like others, they rely on goodwill and informal processes. They review requirements regularly by don't expect to change from this system meantime. They cover the festive period via unpaid on call.

Heriot-Watt
MC reported that they also provide out of hours cover on an informal goodwill basis. Agreed with comments from BG. They do also have a further option – 'follow the sun' support by making use of their campus in Dubai and campus in Malaysia. They don't have a formal process in place, and their staff also usually prefer TOIL to payment.

Glasgow Caledonian
PH reported that they also rely on goodwill. Sees the service from a client perspective though. Thinking about using NORMAN – risk might be that as they already support 38 universities they may become stretched. Key area of concern is DBA cover. Issues with HR to be overcome.

Discussion: 'normal' out of hours vs. major incidents/business recovery (AM, JM); group wide agreement – flu pandemic (FM); need for institutions to define their requirements before engaging HR and formalising the process (DH).

FM/SW to see if this issue can be raised via the HR equivalent of HEIDS.   FM/SW

FM to provide feedback to CM and collate, seeking responses from those not present.   FM

6.   Reports from groups
6.1   SFC

DB: New chair appointed. First mention of technology for some time – use of technology to transform business. HEIDS is advised that carbon footprint now forms part of the university outcome agreement. JISC – central investment will continue at the existing level.

6.2   UNIVERSITIES SCOTLAND

No update received.

6.3   JISC

MT: Co-design project progressing – work likely to run on to Feb when the next

phase is due to start. Looking to bring more partners in, though not ready for Finance directors yet.

First stakeholder meeting is due in December – Principals have been invited but some concern as to how many may take up the invitation (AM, BG). Organisational structure continuing to evolve (BG)

6.4   JANET UK

FN: Continuing with the JANET Scotland strategic meetings – the next is in May 2014. Janet technical group meetings will be advertised to all – the 'North' meeting will be in Aberdeen in January, and the 'South' one in the central belt in June.

6.5   SMCG/SWAN

Was some concern over the direction that SWAN is taking, but a recent presentation has provided reassurance; Steve Percival (JANET) was one of the attendees. (MT, DB)

6.6   RSCs

DB reported on 'JISC Scotland' – HEIDS have an opportunity to shape ideas on how this might be developed.

6.7   SCURL/SCONUL

MT: The platforms taskforce is working on procurement of Library Management systems. Sharing is a possibility – views will be sought. The pace on the procurement is slow but the market is immature. Interoperability is key for new systems.

The mobile devices report was well received.

Collaborative procurement (e-books and printed books) is on-going.

The joint project work (IT Directors, Library Directors, JISC, and others) is making slow progress. Focus is to identify those areas which are best done as shared initiatives.

URL for further information to be circulated   MT

6.8   UCISA

A note from UCISA was circulated. FM is happy to take comments back. MC urged everyone to go to the special meeting and vote (structures, organisation and charitable status).

6.9   APUC/Procurement Scotland

AD: the IP handset framework is now in place – 10 lots largely, but not all (e.g. consultancy) based on manufacturer. The AV ITT is due to go out next week with an expectation that the contract will be awarded in March. VC and AV will be combined this time.

The annual prioritisation workshop is in January 2014. APUC would welcome

more technical input to their discussions; mostly attendees are from procurement teams.

HEIDS input to procurements would be greatly valued and is being sought.   All

6.10 FE/HE ICT Sector oversight

DB: SW has joined the group. £450k has been awarded to support shared services through APUC.

Study into college MIS systems (data warehousing, SQA interoperability). Regionalisation process has made it hard to get the college view. College application systems – waiting lists issue – don't want to rush into implementation of a new system as a fix for this.

7   2014 meeting venues and timing

FM asked for institutions to indicate their willingness to host a HEIDS meeting in 2014. DP offered the University of Aberdeen and JM the University of the Highlands & Islands as venues for May and September respectively. All members were asked to indicate their willingness to FM as soon as possible.   All

8   AOCB

There was no other business.

Following the meeting there was a presentation on RGU approach to designing learning spaces followed by a tour of Riverside East – the new RGU Campus building housing the Schools of Engineering, Computing and Digital Media, Pharmacy and Life Sciences, and the Library.

Mary Ann Watt
Fraser Muir
November 18, 2013