



## Central Executive Committee (CIO)

### Minutes

Public minutes from the meeting on 21 February 2019.

#### 1 Welcome and apologies

Sheila MacNeill (SMN)

Present: Daniel Clark (DC), Martin Weller (MW), Nic Whitton (NW), Elizabeth Charles (EC), Peter Bryant (PB), Sarah Sherman (SS), Maren Deepwell (MD) (ALT), Martin Hawksey (MH) (ALT)

Apologies received from: Bella Abrams (BA), Lorna Campbell (LC)

#### 2 Strategic updates from Trustees

Strategic updates from Trustees including representing ALT, new developments relating to ALT or trends/changes that we have noticed (5 min each). These informal updates are not minuted.

#### 3 AoB

One other matter was raised.

#### 4 Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the last meeting approved

#### 5 Matters arising from the last meetings

Trustee reviewed the Minutes from the previous meeting and approved them as an accurate record.

Recommendation: Trustees approved the minutes.

#### 6 Senior Staffing Report

MD and MH reporting jointly, noted that we continue to have a very busy period. Highlighted this December was exceptionally busy. MD and MH reported that excellent progress has been made against the 2017-2020 strategy. Ambassadors formally thanked and highlighted that they continue an advocacy role via the ALT Assembly. MD reported that the updated Trustee role description has now been finalised.

Recommendation: Trustees unanimously adopted the updated Trustee role description

#### Strategy and policy

Overview of recent strategy and policy developments. Noted great response and reaction to/from members to the Technology and Data Ethics Inquiry. Highlighted that ALT is increasing FE engagement by joining the Networking the Networks initiative. Trustees noted that the report highlighted a number of speaking engagements related to strategy and policy.

Trustees discussed whether ALT should formally respond to the Independent review of TEF. Trustees highlighted that the consultation was more focused on institutional implementation rather than sector wide. Agreed to refer the consultation to ALT's previous response.

Action: MD to write news update for Members re TEF consultation pointing to ALT's recent policy responses.

Recommendation: Trustees noted recent developments in strategy and policy liaison

### **Operations**

MD and MH reported that there hasn't been no change with risks around Brexit. Highlighted that risk has increased due to long term staff illness. MD outlined how ALT will be implementing a new reporting format for 2019 which includes more focus KPIs and budget/income

Recommendation: Trustees reviewed the Brexit risk register and mitigating actions taken.

### **GDPR**

MH reported on GDPR incidents from the last quarter. Noted that ALT continues develop and implement improved data handling and processing procedures.

### **Projects**

EC expressed interest in joining the Further/Higher Education (FHE) Digital Accessibility Working Group (FHE DAWG). MD reported that the BLE reported had concluded and ALT had completed all of it's reporting on time. SS suggested that given BLE was a useful link for ALT membership to consider whether ALT should support other FutureLearn MOOCs.

Action: MD to follow up with EC.

### **Staffing and HR**

MD noted ongoing support for our Operations Manager with support from our HR consultant Jo Cairns. MD and MH provided feedback from our former Events Manager Emma-Jane Brazier and the positive experience she had working with ALT.

Trustees noted thanks to all staff and transition to virtual operations.

Recommendation: Trustees formally noted the updated risk register and the actions taken to mitigate the risks identified

Recommendation: Trustees reviewed progress on GDPR implementation and the incident reported

Recommendation: Trustees noted the update of HR activity in Q4

## **7 Financial Report**

DC presented this report, which covers the period from November to the end of ALT's financial year, ending 31 January. T

### **Financial Report Q4 (preliminary year end)**

Trustees noted that we have completed the financial year, ending 31 January, and are now in the process for preparing for the audit. We are in a stable financial position as we close the year and currently projecting a surplus instead of a deficit. This is an good outcome for a year of transition but largely due to generating extra income from the final stages of the BLE project. Membership and CMALT are largely generating income as planned, but as previously reported delegate fees for the Annual Conference were lower than projected.

Here is an overview of how we performed against the key aims for this financial year:

1. **Increase the restricted reserves to £150,000 by the end of the current strategy period as ALT is now an independent employer:** Achieved. Reserves were increased to £160,000 and now meet the minimum required to cover 6 months of essential operating costs;

2. **Increase the staffing resource for CMALT and operations to meet the growing needs of ALT's activities in these areas and support senior staff:** Achieved. The new Operations Manager role has been created and recruited in July 2018;
3. **Ensure project participation continues to be limited to those activities that are strongly aligned with strategic/operational aims:** Ongoing. Currently there are no externally funded projects confirmed, although we are exploring a number of small bids;
4. **Manage designated reserves, e.g. OER conference fund and the remaining OLP bequest in line with strategic aims:** Ongoing. The OER conference fund is currently fully invested.
5. **Allocate appropriate funding for Member Groups and Special Interest Groups as their activities increase and in line with their existing policies:** Ongoing. The policy has been updated and additional financial reporting established to manage this.

Recommendation: Trustees reviewed and noted preliminary outturn for 2018/19.

### **Outline plan for audit**

ALT will complete the year end process and audit more quickly. This is going to facilitate better financial planning for the new strategy period and also enable us to focus more strongly on generating income.

Recommendation: Trustees formally noted the audit plans for 2018/19.

### **Financial Policy**

Following on from the discussion at the last Trustee meeting, DC and MD have sought advice for managing cash reserves and exploring possibilities regarding investment strategies as agreed. MD also discussed the matter with our auditor at our recent annual meeting. DC reported advice including:

- ALT does not currently hold "significant" reserves, as the current amount covers only app. 6 months of essential running costs (£160k)
- ALT's relatively new status as an employer increases the importance of cash reserves for reassuring staff, particularly in the current uncertain climate
- in many instances better return on investment would require a large sum to be invested (Min £500k - £1m) and that the staff time/admin fees should be considered carefully

Recommendation: Trustees reviewed the advice, and took the decision that the current approach best meets ALT's needs at this time, and to update the financial policy so that from now on the reserve investment is carried out regularly, i.e. every 1-3 years.

### **CMALT fees for 2019**

The new pathways (Associate and Senior) will be launched to new candidates from February 2019. We have now reviewed fee levels, taking into account the operational models for the current scheme. Noted that the fee structure includes a special introductory period so there was an opportunity to revisit at the end of this period to review subscription model as part as consultation for the next strategy. Clear that this is an area that should be reviewed inline with sector wide developments. Highlighted that scale is a factor when considering CMALT options against other schemes.

Recommendation: Trustees approved the new Associate and Senior CMALT fees as part the 2019 budget.

### **Budget for 2019/20**

Recommendation: Trustees agreed to delegate approval of budget for 2019 to GPC.

Alongside the financial report, Trustees noted the Membership Report, which included the following highlights:

- **Total membership** continues to grow. Recruitment and retention rates remain high.
- **Members Groups:** the Policy has been updated, and a new ALT East group will be proposed
- **Membership fee changes:** a 2% fee increase was approved and has been implemented across membership categories.
- Trustees were asked in the last report to note planned **developments in membership**

**administration**, involving a transition to self-renewal for Associate members. December and January have seen a phased implementation, and early signs in relation to impact on user experience and retention rates are positive.

## 8 Activity: Assembly and Annual Survey

MW started the reporting back from the ALT Assembly, covering what the first meeting of the Assembly covered including an overview of the strategy and progress made to date, how we put our values into practice. MD covered new changes to governance, explaining how the Assembly will work in practice. Trustees who attended shared their reflections also, good to see a diverse number of representatives coming together and sharing areas or interests.

MH then presented a preview of the 2018 results from the Annual Survey, this included changes to current areas of importance, trends in the drivers and barriers of adoption of Learning Technology. Also included in the preview was examples of how the strategic aims relate to the survey responses and how that in turn shapes activities for 2019.

The report from the survey is due to be published this month.

Recommendation: Trustees approved the survey report for publication.

## 9 Reporting on recent developments

### Events

Trustees welcomed the report from Jane Marsh and Emma-Jane Brazier, this report covers the period between November 2018 and February 2019 which includes the Online Winter Conference and looks ahead to OER19 and the Annual Conference. Trustees noted the following items specifically:

### **OER19 - Recentering open: Critical and global perspectives**

In 2019 the OER19 moves to Galway, Ireland 10-11 April. **Scholarship fund:** We have been able to fund a record 9 applications for the scholarship fund, including 7 students and 5 participants from outside of the UK. The Board of Trustees of ALT freed up an additional fund to be able to meet the high demand for scholarship places this year. Applications for funding closed on 31 January.

### **Annual Conference 2019**

ALT's Annual Conference 2019 seeks to foster a critical dialogue on technology in education and its political, social and economic context. The conference will be co-chaired by Melissa Highton, Louise Jones and Keith Smyth. The Call for Proposals has been published (<https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2019/call-for-proposals/>) and our keynote speakers have also been announced as Sue Beckingham, Ollie Bray and Jesse Stommel (<https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2019/keynote-speakers/>).

### **2018 Online Winter Conference**

This year the conference attracted a diverse range of submissions totalling 31.

The conference had a record number of registrations at 521. In 2017 there were 409 registrations and in 2016 455. This highlights the growth that the conference has experienced.

Registrations were steady throughout the promotional period with a surge in late registrations over the final week. It was also a truly global conference with nearly 60% of delegates being from outside Europe and Central Asia.

For the first time in its history, the Online Winter Conference was able to attract a paying sponsor - DigitalEd. The conference also secured the highest donations on record making it a financial contributor to the organisation. Total revenue gained was £585.00 - which in terms of direct revenue the event generated (not taking into account membership contributions for example) is a small but positive increase on previous years.

We had excellent coverage of the conference from our both our social media community and media

supporters before, during and after the conference. Twitter was the main source of promotion and due to technical difficulties became the main platform for sharing information.

### **CMALT**

Trustees reviewed the report on CMALT from Susan Greig. Trustees noted progress on developing a new CMALT Online submission and assessment system and also the BLE project completion and continuation of CMALT accreditation option. Recent activities including current cohorts were also noted. Trustees discussed funding via the Doug Gowan Fund. Take up for the fund still remains low, but seen as an important way to support our aim to be a diverse organisation.

Recommendation: Trustees approved £1500 for the Doug Gowan Fund for this financial year.

## **10 Reporting from the journal**

NW reported on the journal and the report focused on:

1. The Journal Strategy paper has been finalised and reviewed by GPC, circulated to the Editorial Board and Editorial Team
2. New Editors have been recruited, the appointments approved by GPC and the new Editors announced
3. Urgent recommendations from the Journal Strategy paper have begun to be implemented
4. The journal has already published 7 articles in 2019, getting the year off to a flying start.

Priorities for the next few months:

- Complete applications to COPE and OASPA as planned
- Establish new Publons recognition for reviewers which is now available
- Progress other recommendations set out in the strategy paper

### **Journal Strategy Paper**

The Journal Strategy Paper with recommendations to Trustees from the Journal Strategy Working Group chaired by Nic Whitton was reviewed. The paper sets out recommendations for the journal's development in relation to ALT's three strategic aims.

Recommendation: Trustees formally approved the Journal Strategy Paper

### **RLT Editor appointments and Journal update**

1. Joining the Editorial Team: Simon Thomson, Sarah Honeychurch, Liz Bennett, Michael Flavin
2. Liaising editor for the #altc blog (to help for example develop case studies etc): Chris Rowell (already editor of the blog)
3. Joining the Editorial Board: Michael Thomas

Recommendation: Trustees formally noted the appointments approved via GPC in December.

### **New developments**

As Trustees discussed that the journal was offline for a couple of days before the Christmas holidays. This was because an issue was detected in the number of spam accounts registered as subscribers to the Journal. The issue was investigated with support from Positive Internet and PKP Services. Fortunately the investigation concluded that this issue had no GDPR implications. To resolve the issue, the planned upgrade to OJS3 was brought forward to 22 January. The upgrade was carried out by PKP Services, who we have a support contract, and the upgrade was an opportunity to clean the journal contact database and implement the Publons extension, which allows our reviewers to record and showcase their peer review and editorial contributions for RLT and other journals. During this time the Journal was offline for a short period. After the upgrade the journal has re-opened for user registration and submissions and Open Academia are supporting new and existing editors

through the new review workflow.

The following actions set out in the journal strategy paper have thus been progressed:

- Action: for OJS to be updated to OJS3 in 2019
- Action: for authors, to develop use of article level metrics as a priority
- Action: for reviewers, to adopt Publons for OJS3

## 11 AoB

One other matter was raised.

Minutes written by: MH and MD/21 February 2019

Reviewed by: Sheila MacNeill 28 February 2019