



## **Minutes of a meeting of the Karten Network Board**

**10.30, Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

### **Directors present:**

Arwyn Jones (Chair)  
Rohan Slaughter (Vice-Chair)  
Joe Cash  
Vicky Myko  
David Finch  
Robert Boyce  
Paul Boyle  
Max Bianconi

### **Staff present:**

Dawn Green  
Sal Cooke  
Martin Pistorius  
Liz Howarth  
Sean Connolly  
Geena Vabulas  
Inés Meza-Mitcher (minutes taken after the meeting via recording)

#### **1. Apologies**

- There were no apologies noted. Directors consented for the meeting to be recorded for the purposes of minute taking.

#### **2. Declarations of Business Interests**

- There were no declarations of business interests.

#### **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

- It was noted that there were a few items noted on the previous minutes which had been initially agreed for discussion at this meeting, but that these would now be scheduled for the November meeting, where appropriate.
- The minutes were otherwise approved as a true record of the meeting by those present.

#### **4. Matters arising**

- It was noted that all matters arising would be dealt with either as part of this meeting or at the November meeting.

## **Items for discussion/decision/approval**

### **5. KN Ltd governance options, including review of terms of reference**

- It was noted that the auditors have highlighted the fact that it is timely to take stock of our current governance arrangements. In February, colleagues agreed to have a sub-group to discuss this, and the options that were considered have been summarised in the paper provided to Directors. Initially, one consideration was to merge the Network and the Trust, but on balance it was felt this would not work. Therefore, the paper presented alternative options to Directors. potential other options for what that separate entity could look like.
- The fourth option, for the Network to form a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, was the group's recommendation. It was noted that if this proceeds, Directors will cease to be Directors and will instead become Trustees. It was agreed that, although the difference was in theory minimal, there may be training needs arising from this change and that these would be further discussed at a later date.
- DG made it clear to Directors that, if the recommended option was to go ahead, there would be a transitional period when the Karten Network would need to be continued because of ongoing activities (particularly the Nuvoic project).
- Directors agreed to support the recommendation. **ACTION: it was agreed that this would be examined in more detail at the November meeting.**

### **6. University of Dundee MSc Educational AT programme**

- RS gave a presentation on the University of Dundee MSc Educational AT programme, which commenced in January 2021. Part of the driver for creating the course is to give formal recognition to the role of an Assistive Technologist working in education; this is seen as an emerging profession and the

curriculum equips students with the breadth of skills necessary to be successful in this multidisciplinary role.

- Directors were given an overview of the module content, modes of delivery and the entry requirements. RS also gave an overview on the activities going beyond the MSc, including aims to have a wider impact through policy engagement with government.
- Full details can be found in the slides which **DG will circulate to Directors**. RS was thanked for the presentation and colleagues were given the opportunity to raise any questions or comments. DF particularly flagged that there was a growing interest in how Assistive Technology could be used in employment as well as in education, which was noted by Directors.

## **7. Nuvoic project update and demonstration**

- Liz Howarth joined the meeting for this item, alongside new technologists Sean Connolly and Geena Vabulas. Sean and Geena introduced themselves to Directors and gave a brief overview of their current activities. Directors viewed the following video clip on the Voiceitt project:  
<https://youtu.be/ClwZGEARwLM>
- The team were thanked for their excellent work. Directors asked if feedback was being collected from participants. LH confirmed this was the case and also reported that the communication aspect of Voiceitt was now being used. She noted that this feedback would continue to be collated.
- SC felt it was important that a report on the Voiceitt project was given to Karten trustees. **Post meeting note: this presentation is scheduled to take place on 5 October with Karten trustees.**

### **Items for information**

## **8. KN Ltd 2020-2021 and Nuvoic expenditure to date**

- It was noted that previously financial information has not been shared with Directors, given it has largely been administrative reimbursement of costs by the Trust, but this has now changed with the Nuvoic project. Therefore, in the future there will be a standing item on finance.
- DG's papers on these matters were largely taken as read. However, it was noted regarding the summary of Nuvoic activity that (due to advance payments from Voiceitt) there is some money that hasn't yet been spent. However, now the new technologists are on board, and there are independent contractual arrangements in place, expenditure will now increase.
- Allocation of funding was also discussed: it was noted that the release of the next tranche of funds and their allocation was a matter for the European Commission.

## **9. Risk Register**

- It was noted that a first draft of the risk register had been circulated by DG. **ACTION: it was agreed the directors should review the risk register after the meeting in preparation for a more substantive discussion at the November board meeting.** DG particularly felt that the discussion should concern the transitional period and how the document could be most helpful during that time.

## **10. 2021 Strategic and Operational Plan update**

- DG's paper on this item was largely taken as read, with it being noted that excellent progress had been made in most areas despite the ongoing pandemic.
- The Ian Karten Charitable Trust awards were discussed, particularly the Lifetime Achievement awards, with Directors

agreeing that it would probably be preferable to wait until these could be held virtually rather than in person. **ACTION: it was agreed that this would be discussed at the September board meeting of the Karten Trust and DG would report back accordingly.**

#### **11. Karten Network Development Co-ordinator update**

- DG's update was taken as read. DG was thanked for all her excellent work behind the scenes.

#### **12. Mobile Technology Adviser update to include MCP proposal**

- MP's update was largely taken as read, but the proposal for his Microsoft Certified Professional training was discussed. Directors were supportive of this training being undertaken. It was noted that this would likely (from both a time and expense point of view) take place across two years rather than one. **ACTION: it was agreed that, as Directors were supportive, AJ, DG and MP would pick this up between them to progress.**
- MP was thanked for his excellent work.

#### **13. Israel Karten Centres update & presentation from Centre for Deaf Blind People**

- Directors viewed a video from the Centre for Deaf Blind People, which can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/9aZXeLJoWsU>

#### **14. Policy and protocols**

- It was noted that DG had been working on ensuring business continuity, particularly considering how to restore key systems in the event of certain individuals suddenly becoming unavailable. The following policy and protocols were sent to trustees and were noted and agreed:

- Disaster recovery (updated)
  - GDPR (updated)
  - Use of devices and managing data (new)
  - Covid 19 visit guidance (new)
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- It was further noted that MP had been working on backing up Office365 and that this had now been completed.

## **15. Any other relevant business**

- DG gave a brief update on Smile Home. Smile Home is a modular home with integrated technology. They required an organisation to host a prototype, and after discussion with Karten Centres, Portland College was selected for this. It is hoped that this will be fully installed by the end of August ready for the new academic year. installed by end of August but that's well advanced now ready to start new academic year.
- PD raised that he had been working with the British army to instal a robot for an individual with a spinal cord injury for which he has received funding; the army has been questioning why this isn't funded by the NHS.
- There was no other relevant business raised.