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Executive summary

The following contains the minutes of the Tech Committee meetings held since the December board meeting. The committee has met twice in that period: 7th January and 4th February. No decisions have been referred to the board and the following is for information.

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Apologies and introductions

Attendees

In office

- Katherine Bavage (KB)
- Harry Burt (HB)
- Carol Campbell (CB)

- Katie Chan (KC)
- Michael Maggs (MM)
- Charles Matthews (CM) (chairing)
- Richard Nevell (RN) (minutes)

Participating remotely

- Jonathan Cardy (JC)
- Emmanuel Englehart (EE)
- Tom Morton (TM)
-

Apologies

CM chairing meeting. Joseph Seddon and Padimini Ray Murray sent their apologies.

Meeting began at 14:12

Policy and impact

MM gave the committee feedback from the last board meeting. Board is considering structure and impact of the charity's various committees and how to support them. The board wants committees to be active, to meet regularly, and take on projects which have the potential for an international or widespread impact.

Opinions on the purpose of the committee were invited. HB asked whether project manager role was discussed at board meeting in December. MM reported that the Board felt the proposal needed to be developed – with a firm job description and gave the go ahead for discussion about the post to proceed. KB highlighted that the model of WMDE involves assessing grant applications for time and resources; projects could be put to Tech Com for consideration. HB noted that success of something like WikiData was intensive of staff time, but that if a member of staff could take care of administrative tasks it would free up the committee to consider higher level aspects. JC suggested that Tech Com could support initiatives which the community feels are important but which may get overlooked by the Wikimedia Foundation. CM pointed out that there would be considerations regarding different priorities within the context of the movement when it comes to assessing which projects Tech Com takes on.

Wikimedia Switzerland have an ambition tech section in their FDC proposal, with some details [here](#).

KB suggested structure of Tech Com may need to change to ensure it is effective. The contractors (EE and TM) do not necessarily need to attend full meetings of Tech Com. Staff and contractors could instead produce reports for the committee, so the committee could be left to discuss strategy. MM felt that the project manager role would help with this, ensuring that work is done between meetings. TM echoed this, saying that someone with time to keep an eye on the big picture would be helpful.

Technical and detail

Maintenance

Bugzilla

How-to guide for Bugzilla is drafted on the office wiki. Include a brief summary of how bugs are prioritised.

ACTION: KB to finish drafting and circulate to tech@ by Friday 10th January.

Redirecting uk.wikimedia.org

Bug to redirect uk.wikimedia.org is open, however there is currently no one working on it. EE has been chasing it. HB asked whether it was a workload issue or if the Foundation might be opposed to setting up a redirect. KB opined that it was most likely a workload issue.

FTP service

Though it was decided at the November meeting to purchase Rackspace, this had not yet been carried out. It was decided that RN would contact Fae to discuss the purchase.

ACTION: RN to contact Fae to discuss buying Rackspace

Voice project

Voice project is a request for time so will be discussed on wiki rather than put on the shoulders of the contractors.

ACTION: KB to move Andy Mabbett's bug on Bugzilla to the UK wiki and email tech@ with link

Virtual Learning Environment

CM summarised status on the VLE. Aim is to have content finished by end of March – in addition get quiz module stable – and then roll it out. MM asked whether CM feels there is capacity to do this. CM explained that quizzes can be done in the three month time scale and that we will be getting consultancy from a specialist to move things along and shape long-term development of Moodle. Consultancy expected to cost about £350. TM supported getting consultant's advice.

There is an [open bug](#) about updating Moodle.

ACTION: CM to email Doug to arrange consultancy

QRpedia

It was decided that while Tech Com had previously been concerned with technical aspects of QRpedia, the future use of QRpedia is a matter under the remit of the GLAM committee.

DECISION: QRpedia discussions deferred to GLAM Com

CiviCRM

No new actions

Usage of non-EU systems

ACTION: RN to start discussion on wiki about the proposed policy and alert tech@ about the discussion

Mediwiki

HB updated the committee, saying that OpenID has been de-prioritised by the Foundation for 2014

ACTION: HB to ask WMF ops about how the work is progressing

Europeana

Europeana looking at new funding source. They will go to Grants Advisory Committee to ask for money. No action needed from Tech Com.

Toolserver

DECISION: Toolserver can be omitted from future agendas

Email use policy

After a short discussion it was decided that creation of this policy is perhaps not a matter for this committee. Instead it will be referred to Jon Davies.

ACTION: KB to refer policy to Jon Davies

Blog planet

At the last Tech Com meeting it was decided to set up a 'blog planet' to aggregate blog posts relating to Wikimedia UK and those which might interest the community. Since then it has successfully been set up. The committee thanked HB and EE for their roles in getting the planet working. There are 11 blogs on the aggregator, and more are being sought.

Project manager role

ACTION: KB to meet with James Knight for advice. Will then go to tech@ with draft job description for more input.

AOB

KC raised the issue of user rights. A decision from c.2009 states that adminship requires a full board decision to be granted. It was decided that it is not a Tech Com issue and can be put to Jon Davies to decide whether to put to the board.

ACTION: RN to email Jon Davies

HB raised the issue of how to attract attention to bugs. Should a message be sent to tech@ when new bugs are filed? That would allow people to keep track of what is going on. Public bugs would be included in the summary,

while those marked as not public would be omitted. HB suggested one email per week including subject line of new bugs on a trial basis.

ACTION: TM to look at bug 35

Future meetings need to be better planned. Jon Davies will be asked to decide on a member of staff to ensure administrative tasks are taken care of, at least until the project manager is in post.

EE explained that a second CPU is needed for community server. It will effectively double cost of the server.

Relates to bug 154. Discussion deferred to tech@

ACTION: EE to raise on tech mailing list

Date of next meeting was discussed. CM proposed four weeks from now with the same arrangement and the date was agreed. 2pm on Tuesday 4th February. Agenda to close on 31st Jan.

ACTION: RN to let tech@ know about the date of the next meeting

ACTION: RN to circulate reminder to look at agenda on 31st Jan

Meeting ended at 15.50

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Apologies and introductions

Attendees

In office

- Carol Campbell (CC)

- Jonathan Cardy (JC)
- Katie Chan (KC)
- Michael Maggs (MM)
- Charles Matthews (CM)
- Richard Nevell (RN) (minutes)

Remotely

- Harry Burt (HB)
- Emmanuel Englehart (EE)
- Mike Peel (MP)
- Joseph Seddon (JS)
- Doug Taylor (DT)

Apologies

Tom Morton sent his apologies. He had been intending to join to meeting, but last minute events had changed his plans. Roger Bamkin had previously let it be known that he is unable to make committee meetings which take place during work hours.

Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous were approved without objection.

14:10 People at the WMUK office left the telecon due to a fire alarm. Discussion continued in their absence.

IT privacy policy

The various privacy policies were discussed. It was noted that there are now too many of them (there are currently four), and the page at [Privacy policy](#) should be turned into a disambig page.

The document was thought of as being IT guidelines, rather than a policy. Falls into the category of additional documentation/implementation notes/guidelines adding detail to the policy, rather than being a policy in itself.

Looks like good ideas, doesn't need recommending/approval?

People in the office rejoined the meeting at 14:24. KC and JC joined the meeting.

Discussion of need for a committee chair

MM asked the committee on their opinions on whether a chair was needed to keep activity levels up between meetings, or whether a project manager would be sufficient. JS opined that a member of staff could lead the sessions. JC and MP made the point that staff could do the secretarial work, but that a chair in the meetings (important especially for phone calls to keep conversations manageable) would not necessarily be in a good position to complete the operation tasks, and could continue to be chosen from attendees at the start of each meeting. HB thinks it would be easy to find a chair specifically for meetings, but that the follow up might take more time.

MM made the point that chairing is more about leadership, vision, and pushing projects along than the administrative side. He felt that it should be a volunteer rather than trustee or staff member. DT disagreed as volunteers do not have an obligation, it is a hobby rather than a job and availability may vary. CC felt that the admin tasks could be carried out by staff, but that the committee's current structure needed to be considered as there are items on the agenda which are piling up. JS felt there was a need from over-riding vision. JC and RN in favour of volunteer chair. CC moved to suggest to Jon Davies that more of RN's time would be spent in admin tasks surrounding Tech Com until a project manager is in post. Action was unanimously agreed.

ACTION: CC to suggest to Jon Davies that more of RN's time would be spent in admin tasks surrounding Tech Com until a project manager is in post

The general consensus was that a floating chair, swapping between meeting would be preferred, with staff support in between meetings.

Policy and impact

At the previous meeting it was agreed that the committee's primary role should be fielding project proposals and advising the board on what tech projects to support. CM felt that the existing infrastructure for getting people involved with making proposals was not adequate. Key questions were what would the criteria for projects be and how should they be approved. JS offered to make the [application template](#) a bit more user friendly. MP suggested merging the process with the grant system. MM preferred to keep them separate as the grants system relates largely to fully-worked out and costed proposals made for support within an already-defined funding structure. A separate tech projects board should be much broader, to include ideas that are not necessarily fully thought through or funded yet, but which might be worth pursuing. He thought that the board would be sympathetic to innovative ideas backed by the committee if real impact could be expected.

MP left the meeting at 14:59

Hosting

Database server has been procured and Moodle has been moved over. cf [bug 183](#)

CM made the point that when matters are discussed on the list it is not always clear who will carry out the action.

Use of Bugzilla

Previous items taken on by KB will be transferred to RN. Actions carried forward to next meeting.

ACTION: RN to take over KB's actions

Contractors were strongly in favour of using Bugzilla to report everything - regardless of severity. Everyone was encouraged to use Bugzilla. CM volunteered to transfer items over to Bugzilla as and when they appear on the mailing list. DT was keen to ensure that the list was still used for urgent items. It was agreed to use both the list and Bugzilla.

ACTION: CM to ensure actions on the list are transferred to Bugzilla as and when they crop up.

Tech wiki

The issue of whether to continue to use the tech wiki was considered. DT has found Bugzilla hard to navigate, and the search function not particularly helpful. RN agreed with this point. DT felt that having pages on-wiki would help navigation, perhaps with an index of bugs. It might be an option to use the UK wiki for this purpose.

ACTION: The tech wiki will be retired

Suggested that RN systematically go through Bugzilla to see how many are open and index them on the UK wiki, conferring with EE and HB over what items should be migrated to UK wiki.

ACTION: RN to email EE and HB to get this started

EE offered to install the Mediawiki Bugzilla extension

ACTION: EE installing the extension https://bugzilla.wikimedia.org.uk/show_bug.cgi?id=193

Programme Manager post

KB met with James Knight for consultation about the job. JS has drafted a [job description](#) for consideration by the committee. JS pointed out that it will be difficult to fill the post if advertised at below industry rates. DT cautious about asking the Chief Executive to directly manage too many people. Opinions on the specifics of the descriptions were asked for. HB was broadly supportive of the description. DT felt the reporting and management structure was a serious consideration. He felt that the developer qualifications were very covered in the description, but that project management was not sufficiently emphasised. CM agreed with this point. CC suggested that if a good candidate does not come forward, it should be referred back to the board to ask for more money to ensure the right person is in post. JS suggested approaching WMF and WMDE for additional funding. KC said this would not be in line with the Foundation's grants process. DT suggested putting the job description live and seeing how the applicants fare. In the meantime, the job description will continue to be worked on by JS with help from JS. Deadline for the end of March.

ACTION: JS and DT to continue refining the draft and once complete to pass onto Jon Davies.

Virtual Learning Environment

External consultancy has taken place. For information: a key recommendation was that the hardware would need to be revised: a server with 4GB of RAM is now being considered. The office is dealing with the matter and will keep Tech Com informed.

Wikisoba

CM's [proposal](#) to develop a 'lite' Moodle version. DT felt that this type of new technology was the kind of project Tech Com should be supporting. CC and MM agreed.

Accessibility

ACTION: CC will meet with Jon Davies to discuss how to proceed

FTP service

No appreciable movement since the last meeting.

ACTION: JC to ask Fae to respond regarding the project

WikiVIP

The issue was making uploading voice clips easier. HB has developed a prototype.

OpenID

WMF is no longer prioritising OpenID. HB suggests asking WMF to help with OpenID.

ACTION: HB will email WMF about OpenID

EE asked whether having separate log ins is a problem? CM pointed out that having a single log in would help with the VLE once it is running.

Categorising pages on the UK wiki

CM opined that the current category tree is unsatisfactory. It was agreed to let CM categorise as he saw fit.

ACTION: CM to establish a working category tree

AOB

Cyber squatting issue regarding QRpedia. MM will refer the matter to the board to discuss whether WMUK should consider trademarking QRpedia.

MP had previously made the point that he was not in favour of the current meeting format: namely partly in person and partly remote. He felt that remote participants might find it more difficult to take a full and active role in discussions. RN asked the four remote participants how the meeting went. HB felt he was able to contribute while remote, though in person was easier. DT pointed out that in person is easier for chairing and makes discussions easier, but that remote participate is the only way some people can participate. He is happy with the current format as is JS.

EE wants regular progress meetings for contractors to discuss with the office as the Tech Com meetings do not necessarily address all issues which contractors deal with, for example CiviCRM.

ACTION: MM to talk to Jon Davies about how to line manage the developers

Timing of meeting during working hours discussed: better for staff than volunteers. CM felt the issue was whether volunteers are picking up actions and completing them.

ACTION: RN to conduct a straw poll to ascertain the preferred method of connecting to calls

Date of next meeting

DECISION: The next meeting will be held at 14:30 to 16:30 on 4th March

The meeting closed at 16:07

Document history

Requested by the board