WEBSITE REDEVELOPMENT

The CEC is asked to:-
  
  i) receive an update on the website redevelopment project

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This paper outlines the progress of the website redevelopment project since the presentation and paper at the last meeting. It outlines the choice of the supplier and gives an update on some of the workshops which have taken place to develop a plan for the new website and database. Gravit-e Centric Ltd, the chosen supplier, has now visited us to scope out the project as we start work on building our membership website.

2. Introduction

2.1 The website redevelopment project combines the need to redevelop our website and the requirement for a new volunteering database. A requirement for a ‘membership website’ was presented at the January 2017 Central Executive Committee and a number of supplier options were discussed. This paper outlines the progress since this meeting.

3. Choice of supplier

3.1 At the January Central Executive Committee, representatives discussed the various options regarding the supplier. Many people spoke in favour of extending our relationship with Gravit-e Centric Ltd, who successfully delivered the OU Students Shop platform. This company has a good knowledge of our organisation and there are a number of technical advantages and financial savings to be made by moving to a single supplier. It was also agreed during the meeting that our vision could not be supported by remaining on Open University infrastructure. Therefore, after the meeting we informed Gravit-e of our intention to use their services for this project.
4. **Board of Trustees meeting**

4.1 We provided a short update paper to the Board of Trustees in February. We outlined the project so far, the vision for the membership website and explained how we would manage some of the risks with moving to an external provider. We outlined which existing agreed budgets would be used and the Board was happy to give its support to the project and approved the use of the budgets.

5. **Staff and student workshops**

5.1 We understand this is a great opportunity to start afresh with our website and recognise the need to gather feedback and ideas from both students and the staff teams.

5.2 Vice President Communications Rachel Hughes, the Project Sponsor, opened a forum thread to start the discussion with our elected officers, gathering feedback on the current site and ideas for the future. One idea that came out of this discussion was to mirror the new team structure on our website to provide clear ownership of content for both the teams and the representatives.

5.3 This idea was taken forward into a full-day workshop in Milton Keynes which was attended by all Heads of the staff teams and two student delegates. Many thanks to Stephanie Stubbins and Sarah Couling for their time and input. Aims and objectives were developed for the websites and then a draft site map was developed, based on the team-based idea. The site map was then tested by another student, not involved in the discussions and revised further. Thank you to Alison Kingan for stepping in to do this testing.

5.4 Each section of the site was then discussed further with each staff team to develop ideas build draft section plans for ‘Your Association’ (general information and governance), ‘Community’, ‘Student Voice’, ‘Support’, ‘Shop’, ‘Volunteering’ and ‘Media’ (Digital Communications). Each section will feature new content, features and news, events and volunteering role relevant to each section. For the Student Voice discussion we invited Natalie Read, the new OU Student Engagement Manager. We discussed ways in which the Student Ideas platform could be accessed from our site and explored ways in which the Student Engagement website could work in conjunction with our new website in the future.

5.5 We will continue to involve students as much as possible in the project. During Student Voice Week, Learning Experience Reporters were invited to discuss the project and give their thoughts on how we should communicate Student Voice online – looking at other student unions for inspiration. At the March Officers’ Team Meeting, a session was run to open a discussion about documents online, developing categories and deciding how long we would like to archive those documents. We will communicate more collaborative opportunities in due course.

5.6 Finally, we have also started a piece of work with Stone King – our legal advisors – to ensure the website contains the correct terms and conditions, privacy policy and cookie policy. As both the shop and the website will share the same platform and user accounts, they have also recommended a data
sharing agreement between OUSA Services Ltd and the OU Students Association, which users would have to agree upon sign-up.

6. **Gravit-e workshop**

6.1 On Thursday, 23 March, Gravit-e visited our office in Milton Keynes to gather a detailed brief on the project. We discussed the overall structure of the website, the way news, events and volunteering roles will be displayed, the design concept, document handling, the sign-up process and integration with the shop platform.

6.2 On the subject of risk management – mentioned at the last Central Executive Committee, our site will be backed up on a regular basis by a third party to ensure we will retain our content should an unforeseen event occur. We also plan to take internal backups of the data we collect to safeguard our mailing lists.

6.3 Gravit-e will develop a project plan and timelines as we look towards launching version 1.0 of the new website during 2017. Please feel free to contact Paul Severn or Beth Metcalf if you need more information about the project.

Paul Severn  
Digital Communications Officer