Minutes of the meeting convened on April 27th 2007 in GC22 at the William Gates Building.

Present:

Prof. P. Robinson  Prof. L.C. Paulson  Dr R.J. Gibbens
Dr M.A. Johnson  Dr I. Lewin  Dr I. Lewis
Dr S.W. Moore  Dr G. Titmus  Ms L.M. Gough
Mr D. Cottingham

1. Apologies for absence.
There were no apologies received.

2. Strategy.
The Group considered a paper prepared by MAJ (attached).
(i) Additional computer room
The Group was invited to consider the use of the machine room (SE18) vacated by Intel on the second floor of the WGB. It was noted that serviced space was required that that four research groups have indicated an interest in using the room. Andrew Moore (SRG) would like 7 racks; Markus Kuhn (Security) would like one rack; Simon Moore (CAG) would like one rack; and Brian Jones (DTG) would like one rack.
It was agreed that space should be allocated on a rack by rack basis and that there should be a named permanent member of staff with responsibility for the space. Supervisors decide what is to happen with space when users leave the Computer Laboratory and if a research group wants to maintain the space for ongoing projects.
It was noted that cataloguing the racks would not be an excessive burden: equipment is bar-coded and dated.
It was agreed that the allocation further space would be decided by the ITSG and that a service charge should be considered. Provision for such a charge would need to be factored into equipment costs on grant proposals. Users would be allocated “U”s within a rack. The costing of the project would be discussed at the next meeting. IL will forward the group a paper on “core unit” pricing.
It was also noted that there is some noise from the existing equipment based in GE18 and that soundproofing needs to be factored in to the costs of refurbishing the room. The Group also encouraged MAJ to install network provision.

(ii) Building access control
Replacement of the building access control system is highly desirable. The group was invited to endorse the recommendations from MAJ. It was noted that it is highly likely that the EMBS will upgrade the building access control. It was noted that the operation may be disruptive and may absorb some computer officer time. PR agreed to liaise with the Head of Department regarding the possibility of some residual cost to the department. The new system will be integrated with Computer Laboratory databases and uses University cards. It was agreed that the work should occur over the Summer Term in time for the new intake of students.

(iii) New telephone system
The University is about to replace its main telephone system serving the Colleges and University: though Colleges will be asked to contribute towards the cost of the new system, a University sinking fund will cover the costs to departments. The Computer Laboratory is expected to migrate to the new system at some point in 2008 and may opt for a UPS or power over Ethernet systems to handsets. A survey will need to be conducted at some point in 2008 for which the Computing Service will provide a template.
It was agreed that a subgroup should be given the task of deciding which phones would be required by the different user classes. (MAJ, PR, LMG or MAL). The group also agreed to conduct a trial as soon as possible.
(iv) Personnel
The group was invited to support the proposal that a permanent post be established for a computer officer to assist with administration of IT support and to provide IT support to administrators. It was noted that the number of Computer Officers has not grown since the move to the WGB. It was agreed that PR should approach the Head of Department for a new need.

It was noted that the video conferencing room is used infrequently and is equipped with old equipment. It was agreed that the room should remain, as its acoustic qualities are excellent for telephone interviews, but that the old (Windows 95) equipment be discarded, and that services offered on a modern PC using Skype and a Polycom IP video conferencing system. ISDN and multi-way connections would be available by relaying through the Janet video conferencing service.

It was commented that the website was outstanding. It was noted that a key would be useful; links need to be more consistent and pervasive. It was also noted that content is devolved to authors and that there is no web editor. It was noted that there was a lack of cohesiveness in some of the research group web pages.
It was agreed that an “editor in chief” should define and document the stable keys and links in a “guidelines for authors” document, and check the cohesiveness of the website. It was noted that imposing such an editorial structure would be one useful role for a new Computer Officer (Item 2(iv)) under the guidance of MGK.
The group was asked to consider dynamic content (MGK; 23 April 2007) and whether there is a demand. It was noted that there is a demand and that there are several ways to achieve it but MAJ was not convinced that it is possible support all of them. Some complicated systems will require machines of their own.
It was agreed that a survey of users should be conducted to determine demand for a throw-way service for dynamic web processing with a low level of management and which systems are preferred. MGK will be asked to do create a questionnaire for moderation, distribute it and report back to the group with a prioritised list of things for support.

5. Review of the group’s operation.
The group was asked to review its operation and procedures. It was noted that much of the group’s original remit had been addressed since the group’s inception including setting a minimum specification of machines and publication of this on the web and addressing the load on computer officers.
It was noted that there had been little input from other groups and computer officers would like to be able to take a planning approach to departmental needs rather than a reactive approach. It was agreed that it would be useful to ask for specific feedback on future needs from each individual research group to be considered on a rolling basis.
It was noted it would be useful to produce a budget for 2008-09.
It was agreed that one third of the membership should change each year.

6. Minutes of last meeting.
The group approved the minutes from the meeting of January 15th 2007.

7. Next meeting.
The next meeting will be held 11.15 on Tuesday July 3rd 2007 in GC22.