



## Mercian Collaboration Conference Group

Minutes 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Loughborough University

**Present:** Emma Walton (Group Chair, and SG Sponsor), Claire Browne, Carole Barker, Liz Kennedy, Helen Curtis, Jo-Anne Watts, Matt Cunningham (MSDG Rep and MSDG Chair), Gaz Johnson (MCDO)

**Apologies:** Lydia Matheson

### 01 Matters arising from last meeting (14/06/18)

#### *a) Event Coordination*

As previously noted, Emma will be on medical leave for the next two months and unavailable to support the conference. She had informed the Steering Group, who were happy for the Conference Group to continue without any direct input from them, noting GJJ's representation on their behalf. On the day Dave Parkes will act as the event host for the event on behalf of the MC. It was agreed that Helen will act as brevet group chair through the conference and post conference feedback collection, as supported by GJJ.

**ACTION: Helen to coordinate delivery of MC conference with the team**

#### *b) Delegate Bookings*

45 out of 100 places had been booked, and it was agreed to lift the institutional cap. There is a good Director presence, more so than 2017 already. It was noted not all speakers have yet booked, and they need to be reminded. It was noted that a non-sponsor, non-member of the Collaboration had booked, and would be notified they had not been allocated a place. The event would be repromoted through the usual channels, with an encouragement to Directors to consider attending, as previously discussed. It was agreed that a pre-event mailshot to all delegates with final details of the event should be sent out the week before the conference.

**ACTION: Liz to contact non-sponsor/Mercian delegate to decline booking**

**ACTION: Liz to draft and mail all delegates with final joining information the week before the conference**

**Action: Jo-Anne to chase speakers to book attendance**

**ACTION: GJJ to promote the event to Directors, Mercian list and via social media**

### 02 Merchandise/marketing

#### *a. Giveaways and Promotional Materials*

Lydia was leading on this, but had run into some difficulties in obtaining samples. It was agreed that Helen and Matt would arrange for some additional materials from Loughborough if other efforts were unsuccessful.

**ACTION: Lydia, Helen and Matt to coordinate on conference merchandise and give-away promotional materials**

## b. Sponsor Funding

It was noted that dealing with requests and negotiating with sponsors, especially with respect to provisions outside of the offered packages, along with finalising payment details, had made a larger demand on time than anticipated. Accommodating the demands on those group members dealing with this aspect was a key learning outcome from this year's programme. Helen and Carol would work together on finalising the practical arrangements for sponsors, and their income for the Collaboration. It was noted that the £4k income for the conference was a major success and would help fund the MC's ongoing efforts, alongside offsetting a portion of the conference's costs.

**ACTION: Carol to obtain all logos from sponsors and provide to Lydia and Jo-Anne**

**ACTION: Carol to coordinate final arrangements with sponsors ahead of the event**

**ACTION: Helen & Carol to sort payment of income from sponsors with MC Treasurer/SCONUL**

## 03 Programme and Event Facilitation

### a. Final programme outline

It was agreed that an online-only programme would be produced, although for accessibility reasons a few print copies would be retained for use on the day via the registration desk. The inclusion of the sponsor logos, information on the SIGs and welcoming message from the MC chair were highlighted as outstanding requirements.

**ACTION: Jo-Anne & Lydia to finalise online programme and pass to GJJ when ready for the website**

**ACTION: GJJ to arrange for SIG information and Chair's welcome for the programme**

Programme timings were outlined and room assignments were agreed for all sessions, noting following feedback last year, more networking time had been included. As the afternoon sessions would be workshops, Claire will speak with the venue about assistance with re-arranging the layouts in the rooms. There are some issues with the final session, and the use of the room beforehand, as there is no break. It was agreed the workshop session chair would assist delegates to return the room to lecture theatre style ahead of plenary session. It was also agreed that speakers would be encouraged to send their presentations to us ahead of the event, for pre-loading.

**ACTION: Claire to speak to venue about assistance with layout and configuration of rooms**

**ACTION: Jo-Anne to mail speakers with session timings and room allocations**

**ACTION: Jo-Anne to collate speaker presentations ahead of the event**

### b. The day before – onsite preparations & venue considerations

Claire noted that she was booked to attend a tour of the new conference facilities, which are effectively ready, as confirmed by Diane Job at the recent Mercian Steering Group meeting. She will report back on any issues or concerns remaining to be addressed ahead of the event. It was also noted that as many as possible of the conference team should be familiar with any venue technology (e.g. microphones) should any issues arise, although tech support was being provided by the venue hosts. It was noted that GJJ, Helen, Carol and Claire would be on site the day before the event (Monday 10<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2pm onwards), meeting at the Library.



Carol and Claire noted they would go through the event toolkit list, that Carol prepared last year, and check that physical equipment that might be needed (velcro taps, blue tac, pens etc) was on hand.

**ACTION: Claire to visit new conference facilities and report back to the Group**

**ACTION: Claire to liaise with venue organisers and confirm details on room configurations**

**ACTION: Claire to investigate about session recording options**

**ACTION: All to familiarise themselves with venue technology before the conference start**

**ACTION: GJJ, Claire, Helen and Carol to sort out pre-event day issues as required**

**ACTION: Claire and Carol to sort practical toolkit items for conference**

#### c. Session Chairing & other roles and duties

As some delegates would likely arrive ahead of the opening of registration (9.30am), it was important that all the conference team were available as soon as possible at the venue (ideally by 8.30am). Sponsors too would likely arrive early, to set up their stands. It was agreed to suggest 9am for their arrival time. A/V support is included in the venue price and should be there to help with set up and deal with any problems as needed. There was some discussion on the venue's distance from the University (Birmingham) railway station and the need for some delegates to be guided to the venue. It was agreed that this would be highlighted in the mailshot to delegates, and where possible signage provided to guide people across campus. The advance team would investigate this and make signage available, if permitted by the university.

**ACTION: Claire and advance conference team to arrange for guidance signage to event location**

**ACTION: All to endeavour to be present from 8.30am on the morning of the conference**

**ACTION: Claire to confirm opening time of venue for conference organisers and sponsors**

Chairs for all sessions were agreed within the group. It was agreed that GJJ and Helen would take the lead on the day in organising the team, as well as coordinating the host (MC Chair, Dave Parkes) and keynote speaker respectively throughout the day. Session chairs would ideally need to be in place ~10 minutes ahead of their sessions, to help ensure their speakers were ready, the rooms in the right configuration and that the technology was ready.

**ACTION: All to ensure they are prepared to chair their allocated sessions**

**ACTION: Helen to outline timings for programme and session chairs in online documentation**

**ACTION: Liz to arrange session countdown flashcards**

There was the possibility that Birmingham staff, not attending the event, might be able to provide cover for the registration desk. Claire would investigate, although GJJ and Matt noted they were happy to cover this role as needed.

**ACTION: Claire to investigate desk covering duties from U.Birmingham staff.**



#### d. Keynote

Helen would liaise with the keynote, as chair. It was proposed to obtain a small gift for the keynote, although GJJ voiced opposition, given the speaker was already being paid a not inconsiderable sum. The Chair however ruled that this would go forward.

**ACTION: Helen to check with Keynote Speaker for any requirements**

**ACTION: Helen to arrange for token of appreciation for Keynote Speaker**

#### e. Plenary/Closing Session

There was a discussion on making the final 'plenary' session of worthy value to retain delegates to the end of the day, noting the less than successful format of #Mercian17's session. It was agreed to make use of the Director delegates in attendance (notably the Chair and Vice Chair) to form a panel, led by Dave Parkes. They would each briefly reflect on the day, along with inputting their own 'New to You!' experiences, before bringing the day to a close.

It was noted in the unlikely event that the keynote speaker was unable to attend, the Chair and Vice-Chair could stand in for the opening session at short notice. GJJ noted that he also had a 'spare' networking workshop he could host, in the event a substitute session was needed for one of the earlier workshops or papers. However, it was anticipated in most cases where a speaker was lost, then delegates would be directed to attend other sessions.

**ACTION: Helen to approach Directors to form plenary panel**

#### 04 Other Operation Concerns

##### a. Special interest groups: representation

It was proposed that a rolling presentation would be set up with information on SIGs. It was also agreed to include information on the SIGs within the conference programme.

**ACTION: GJJ to sort out rolling SIG presentation for conference and programme information**

##### b. Sponsors: Logos, inserts and stands

On the day, Carol would lead on supporting the sponsors and their requirements throughout the conference. Where necessary other team members would assist.

**ACTION: Lydia and Jo-Anne to ensure appropriate sponsor representation in the programme**

#### 05 Post Event Operations

##### a. Delegate Feedback

This was agreed to be sent out as a mailshot following the conference, although informal feedback from delegates would be captured via twitter and delegate conversations by the team. Helen would rework the previous feedback form, in discussion with the team. A brief overview report would be made to the Directors Board meeting (18<sup>th</sup> October) by GJJ on the event, with a formal report to appear in the Mercian Annual Report 2018 in e.January 2019.

**ACTION: Helen to coordinate delegate feedback form updating and distribution, post-conference**

**ACTION: Emma to coordinate formal feedback reporting to Directors via Annual Report**



#### b. Capturing Post-Event Committee Reflections

As before and where time allowed, the committee would hold an immediate post event short reflection before departing from the venue. A formal feedback meeting would be scheduled for later in the year, to cover delegate feedback along with the team's. This would also look at the configuration and membership of the Conference Group, recruitment and members standing down.

**ACTION: GJJ to schedule meeting for e.Nov for Conference Group**

#### c. Costs and Expenses

While exact figures for these would come out in due course, including venue costs, speaker fee and other related outgoings, the conference would likely cost in the order of £6-7k. Noting the sponsor income had offset a portion of this, it would reduce the amount the MC itself had to pay out to run the event.

### 06 AOB

#### a. Delegate Competition

As last year, an online 'best picture' encapsulating the New to You! theme on the #Mercian18 tag would be held. To permit those who don't use social media to also enter, a post-it note alternative would be offered. This would be judged ahead of the final plenary by all those team members present, and if possible the MC Chair.

**ACTION: Helen and Matt to source for prizes for competition winners**

**ACTION: Helen to provide wording on competition to go into the conference programme**

#### b. Library Tours

It was suggested offering these at the event, although given the distance from the venue to the library it would only be practical afterwards. It was agreed that offering these as a formal part of the conference risked a 'feature-creep', and as such they would be an informal option. If there was sufficient interest, Claire would arrange with her colleagues.

**ACTION: Claire to make library tours available, if enough demand post-conference**

### 07 Next meeting: Pre-event

This would be 2pm 10th Sept, University of Birmingham Library, with those committee members listed above (03.b) in attendance.