BIRKBECK
University of London

MINUTES OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE

15 February 2016

Present
Professor David Latchman (Chair), Professor Nicholas Keep, Dr Stewart Motha, Professor Philip Powell, Professor Miriam Zukas (SSHP), Mr Peter Zinkin, Mr John Lindner,

In Attendance
Mr Alan Fisher (Operational Estate Manager), Mr Keith Harrison (College Secretary and Clerk to the Governors), Mrs Svetla Mirova (Management Accountant), Mr Chris Murphy (Director of Development and Alumni), Ms Megan Reeves (Deputy Secretary, Operations), Ms Jill Entwistle (SSHP School Manager), Ms Elizabeth Whitehead (Director of Facilities and Estates Services), Mr Keith Willett (Director of Finance), Mr Ola Bankole (Sustainability Manager), Mr Van Nguyen (Deputy Director of Estates Development), Mrs Katherine Bock (Deputy Secretary, Governance), Mr Kashim Barick (Committee Support Administrator)

Apologies
Professor Hilary Fraser, Mr Daniel Peltz, Ms Roisin Lynch (Governance and Corporate Support Co-ordinator), Mr Mark Pimm (Disability Service Manager), Mr Keith Ryan (Health and Safety Officer), Mr Jeremy Tanner (Director of Commercial Services and Estates Development),

13 MINUTES
Confirmed
13.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 15 October 2015.

14 ACTIONS
Reviewed
14.1 An update of progress on actions agreed at the previous meetings (E 2015 16)

15 ESTATES STRATEGY
Received
15.1 An update on development options for Cambridge House (E 2015 17)

Cambridge House

15.2 Members heard work on Cambridge House is progressing and next stage is to procure professional support to define options for the planning consent stage. The establishment of a programme board is now required to manage the process and
provide overall direction to the project. The actual use of the site remains unconfirmed and dependent on future occupiers but a building use classification of B1 will be sought. This is a general business use classification for offices, research and development, light industry, etc.

Noted

15.3 It was noted that the site’s occupation will follow a two stage planning process;
15.3.1 Architects familiar with Camden council’s planning authority had been appointed as well as a lead consultant. A project board had also been established and the formation of the consultant team is currently in progress. Clarity around the site’s capabilities will be determined at this stage allowing the College to consider development options. Progress report on this stage is expected by May.
15.3.2 Next step would require the establishment of a working party to carry out due diligence. The working party will include a representative of the future occupiers to reflect their needs.

Approved

15.4 Committee approved £250,000 for this initial design phase as capital spend. This is on the basis that the funds are loaned to a subsidiary company of the College owning the building.

Extension Building

15.5 Following the last meetings of the Governors and the Estates Committee, work has been progressing on the possibility of a joint development with UCL, providing enhanced teaching space as well as accommodation for joint Birkbeck-UCL biological sciences research activities. UCL have confirmed that their immediate priority is teaching space and they would be reluctant to commit significant expenditure on science.

15.6 Further discussions have been scheduled for 25 February with UCL’s Vice Provost for Operations, the Estates Director and the Finance Director. The College is also in talks with the University with other potential development options in Torrington Square in relation to this opportunity.

Heating Chamber

15.7 In regards to development options for the Heating Chamber previously discussed, members heard Camden council is not willing to consider plans which effectively cut off the north end of Torrington square. A minimalist building above ground would be permitted but the bulk of the structure must be underground. The site is owned by the University and acquisition of the site would be the first hurdle.

Noted
Members heard that the College is to report to the Wolfson Foundation. The update will include progress on acquisition of the 33 Torrington Square site and repairs to the adjacent house.

999 Year Lease

Members heard the College is continuing with its talks with the University and a revised proposition had been received following submission of floor plans at the University’s request. The lease now includes curtilage immediately outside the main building i.e. the infill site adjacent to the Council Room. Members also heard costs of the lease will be negligible as it is University policy to grant peppercorn leases to Colleges/Universities for their headquarters.

PROPERTY UPDATE

Received

An update on property related developments (E 2015 18)

Noted and Approved

32 Torrington Square

Members noted the costs associated with remedial work to the façade of 32 Torrington Square and approved the budget requirement of £350K for prerequisite structural work as a condition of the existing lease on the basis that contractors will not be appointed until such time as the leases for both 32 and 33 Torrington square have been completed.

Committee heard that the procurement of 33 Torrington Square is almost complete and issues with the lease of 32 Torrington Square needs finalising. The Chair asked for the lease negotiations to be completed by the end of term.

Tavistock House

Members heard two options had been pursued to address immediate and short term space needs for the College. One option was Senate House and the other being the BMA. The College was not successful with its bid for Senate House, the space was given to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine but the bid for space at the BMA was successful. The immediate use for space at the BMA will be for the occupiers of 32 Torrington Square who were temporarily housed in 7 Bedford Square.

7 Bedford Square

Members noted the exchanging of contracts and completion of the sale of 7 Bedford Square was scheduled for Wednesday 17 February. The deal being negotiated includes leasing back to accommodate the temporary occupants until the end of June 2016. Members also noted the details of a contract for the buyer, London School of
Business and Management, to rent daytime teaching space from the College were being finalised in tandem with this work.

**Other Rental Opportunities**

16.6 There was some additional open plan space available at the BMA if needed. The School of BEI had signalled a need for staff office space but the BMA appeared to be unsuitable for its needs.

**Action**

16.7 The Chair, Executive Dean (BEI) and Director of Commercial Services & Estates Development to meet outside the Committee to discuss issues around BEI’s office space needs.

17 **ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE**

Received
An update on environmental related project/developments (E 2015 19)

Noted

17.1 Members noted that the environmental outlook remains positive and this year the College will be looking to achieve ISO 14001 certification. Also, an increase in staff engagement is planned which could see the College’s carbon emissions drop by 30% and discussions are in progress with departments on how to set up structures within their teams to assist with the College’s environmental improvement plans. LTM projects are also being considered and details together with progress will be reported at the next meeting.

17.2 Members acknowledged Bedford Square was not an efficient site and the sale of the site would be beneficial to the College’s carbon footprint which would be balanced out by the end of the academic year.

Noted

17.3 Members noted most projects had a 1 to 2 year payback period but the Russell Square project was showing a 5 year payback period. It was reported that the Russell Square project was a heating project and carbon emission factors for heating were lower than electricity, resulting in lower carbon reduction rates. An on-site boiler facility would result in greater efficiency over the long term sustainability of Russell Square as electricity has a higher carbon intensity.

17.4 Committee members who are occupiers of Russell Square expressed their frustration over the heating systems as it is not fit for purpose and needs replacing. It was reported that this project had been accounted for in the 10 year plan but suspended for now due to movement/occupancy issues in 27 Russell Square which may also impact 26 Russell Square.

**Comment [KB1]**: These two points seem at odds with each other – can Alan advise on what’s going on?
18 FACILITIES AND ESTATE SERVICES

Received

18.1 An update on facilities and estates services (E 2015 20)

18.2 Committee heard that progress is being made in various areas with a particular focus on activities to modernise the services. An Operational Maintenance manager has been appointed and also, improvements have been made to the computer systems used to monitor works. Members mentioned there has been a noticeable improvement with the service.

Noted

18.3 Members noted a key area of improvement with on-site maintenance where maintenance engineers including electricians are now available until 10pm. This has resulted in a significant reduction to calling in engineers.

18.4 Members heard further consultation and reporting will be provided in the coming year particularly in regards to reporting back on accountability of these areas.

19 LTM PROJECTS

Received

19.1 An update on long term maintenance projects (E 2015 21)

Russell Square and Clore Building Lift Installations

19.2 It was reported that the Operational Estate Manager had met with the Association of University Engineers (AUE) who advised most lift companies use sub-contractors and there appears to be management issues with these sub-contractors throughout the sector. The College is continuing payment negotiations with Jackson Lift Group and a meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday 17th February to discuss Pay Less Notices issued by the College for £38,000 as there are disagreements about notice submission dates.

Electrical Intrusive Condition Survey

19.3 Members heard that the electrical intrusive condition survey is now complete. A number of hot spots and potential areas of failure were identified which have been addressed and a safe working system now exists. Over the next three years, replacement of old busbars and distribution boards will be carried out but the final wiring circuits are not being considered. Budget costs will be revealed at the next meeting.

19.4 Members heard that the rest of the programme is progressing as expected and progress reports will be made accordingly.

Noted
27 Russell Square

19.5 Members noted that structural damage in the form of cracks have appeared on the 2nd and 3rd floors since the last meeting of the Estates Committee.

19.6 Structural engineers visited the site over the Christmas period to carry out inspections which involved the removal of floor boards to expose joist spans. A full structural report has not yet arrived in its entirety but information has been coming in as the engineers carry out their work. Problems appear to have originated from the joist spans and also, from various interferences with load bearing walls prior to Birkbeck occupying the site.

Noted

19.7 It was noted that the building has been declared safe by the structural engineers via an email with no immediate danger to the occupants. Remedial action to lighten the loads is currently underway but the full structural report will provide greater clarity as to what remedial action is required. It was further noted that the estimated costs will be between £90,000 and £140,000 but this is dependent on the engineer's final design which is still pending. Remedial work is expected to take between 8 – 10 weeks to complete during which time, the basement and ground floors can be occupied whilst work is being carried out.

19.8 Members expressed their concerns over safety issues and suggested that the remedial works are carried out over a 16 week period to factor in unforeseen delays and also, with the building empty. The Chair suggested this is a priority matter and should be addressed as soon as possible ideally during the summer of this year hence the Operational Estates Manager is to bring this project forward for 2015/16.

Action

19.9 Social Sciences, History and Philosophy school Executive Dean to issue a warning note to building's occupiers following receipt of the structural report due by 4 March.

Action

19.10 Members discussed the possibility of pursuing an argument with the University on the premise that the University should have disclosed these structural defects prior to the issuance of the 99 year lease that was granted 2 or 3 years ago. Committee suggested the College Secretary should consider an approach.

20 ESTATES PROJECTS UPDATE

Received

20.1 An update on the estates development projects (E 2015 23)

Signage for Malet Street and Gower Street
20.2 Members heard that the work in relation to signage will be placed on hold until figures and workloads are finalised. It was confirmed that the signage project was still resourced and would be concluded as soon as possible.

Noted

2015/16 Update

20.3 Members noted that the total pre tender costs will be £655,000 if all Revenue projects are approved which is circa £25,000 more than the estimate reported in October 2015.

B58 Wet Lab

20.4 Committee heard there is a significant cost increase with the wet lab due to issues highlighted in October regarding access to underground pipework. The initial estimate of £100,000 - £150,000 has increased to £300,000 due to works required to mechanical services and access needed to sub drainage pipelines. Committee recommended that a full review of the requirements of the Biological Sciences department across Electron Microscopy and the refurbishment of the wet lab would be required before approval is granted to any these projects.

Noted

Gordon Square Internal Repairs

20.5 Members noted progress reporting on this item will be at the next Estates meeting in May as part of the Operational Estates Manager’s report.

Gower Street Entry Phones

20.6 Committee heard the current entry phone system which was a joint proposal put forward by Law and SSHP costing £25,000 was installed within the last 2 – 3 years but is not fit for purpose due to interface issues.

20.7 The College’s long term strategy is to move occupants out of Gower Street and into the Torrington Square site, therefore there should not be unnecessary spending on Gower Street.

Noted

Russell Square Toilets

20.8 Members noted the Russell Square Toilets project alongside Gordon Square Internal Repairs have moved across to the long term maintenance programme.

Library

20.9 The 2015/6 project list included a proposal for a shared study space in the Library, a facility in demand by students. The Committee asked for more information to justify the considerable costs of £250K, given that the work appeared to be refurbishment, redecoration and furniture.
4th Floor Counsel Office Soundproofing

20.10 Committee heard 3 counselling offices on the 4th floor require soundproofing. Existing doors need to be replaced with acoustically soundproofed doors and similar work is required to the corridor facing wall. Pre tender cost is estimated at £20,000. Members raised concerns around the costings suggesting other options be considered.

Noted

HR Office Refurbishment

20.11 Members noted that the HR office refurbishment costs initially indicated as £15,000 increased to £25,000 and now have increased again to £35,000. This is partly due to electrical work required under the floor panels.

Actions: 9.4 – 9.11

20.12 Director of Commercial Services and Estates Development to review proposed projects and costings and confirm business cases that were submitted to ensure the proposers provide a rationale for the cost estimates in regards to what is required then refer back to the Master for Chair’s action and approval. For all future estates projects, proposers should make a statement as to why these projects are necessary and strategically relevant to the College before discussions at committee meetings.

To note

Electron Microscope

20.13 The College was about to put in a bid to the Wellcome Trust for part funding of a new Electron Microscope. The outcome will be known in mid June. Committee noted this and agreed that accommodation for it should be considered as part of the future developments of accommodation for the Biological Sciences.

Earth Sciences Clean Room

20.14 Members heard that the College would be expected to contribute significantly more towards the clean room than the £130,000 remaining in the Petrology Lab budget. The Clean Room is linked to a new project at UCL but it is unclear if they will be able to contribute to the costs of setting up the facility. In order to gain clarity around costs, the College has developed a full scheme which is currently out for competitive tender. Tender return is expected by 22nd and a final cost estimate is due by week commencing 29th February.

20.15 Members heard HEFCE will need to be informed if the College decides not to spend the remaining budget because half of it is STEM teaching capital funds.

Action
20.16 Director of Commercial Services and Estates Development and Finance Director to contact HEFCE in regards to this capital expenditure if needed.

21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING
   • Thursday 5th May 2016, at 2pm.