BIRKBECK
University of London

MINUTES OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE

25 February 2014

Present
Professor David Latchman (Chair), Professor Hilary Fraser, Professor Nicholas Keep, Mr Daniel Peltz, Professor Philip Powell, Mr Peter Zinkin, Professor Miriam Zukas

In attendance
Mrs Katharine Bock (Head of Governance and Corporate Support), Mr Alan Fisher (Operational Estates Manager), Mr Keith Harrison (College Secretary), Ms Roisin Lynch (Corporate Support Officer), Mr Tom McCartney (Health and Safety Officer), Mr David McGhie (Director of Planning and Estates), Mr Mark Pimm (Disability Service Manager), Ms Megan Reeves (Deputy Secretary), Mr Andreas Schmidt (BEI School Manager), Ms Caroline Smith (Estates Project Manager), Mr Jeremy Tanner (Conference and Space Planning Manager), Ms Elizabeth Whitehead (Facilities Manager)

By invitation
Mr Ola Bankole (Environmental Manager, for item 18), Mr Stephen McKinnell (Head of Energy Management, Bloomsbury Heat and Power Consortium, for item 19)

Apologies
Mr John Lindner, Professor Patricia Tuitt

12 MINUTES
Confirmed
12.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 31 October 2013

13 REPORT TO THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Noted
13.1 F&GPC’s receipt of the Report of the Estates Committee following its last meeting (E 2013 11)

14 ESTATES STRATEGY UPDATE
Received
14.1 A report on implementation of the Estates strategy (E 2013 12)

Noted
Toddler Lab
14.2 Progress had been made in developing the project to construct a new building to house the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development’s ‘Toddler Lab’ research centre. Negotiations were underway with the University of London on the details of the purchase of a 99 year lease for the site, which had been approved in principle by the University’s Board of Trustees. It was noted that this lease was a standard length from the University of London for buildings that were not college headquarters.

14.3 The lease would be dependent on conclusion of dialogue with the site’s neighbour, the Warburg Institute, which had expressed concern about the impact of the new development on it, especially in relation to light. Light surveys had been carried out to confirm that the planned new building would not have an adverse effect on the Warburg Institute’s building. The Institute was planning to discuss the matter at its next Advisory Council meeting in May. Negotiations had been complicated - and therefore made slower - by a separate issue between the University and the Warburg requiring formal dialogue, but College management felt that satisfactory progress was being made.

Joint feasibility study with UCL

14.4 The feasibility study to consider the potential for a new building on the site of the North Heating Chamber was underway. Outline proposals had been developed by architect Bisset Adams for a building that could potentially span between ULU and the Toddler Lab site, with an extensive basement housing science laboratories and a 500 seat lecture theatre.

14.5 A preliminary meeting had taken place to present these proposals to planning officers from the London Borough of Camden, who requested supplementary materials to review. Their initial response was expected imminently. Positive feedback would allow discussions to continue on the development of a full proposal.

14.6 The Committee confirmed that full access for disabled students to this building would be extremely important as it was to be a top quality teaching space as well as a research facility. The scheme should also provide an opportunity for the surrounding outside space to be landscaped and made more accessible.

14.7 The final report of the feasibility study would be produced by Easter 2014.

14.8 Members asked about the length of lease that would be sought for this site, and noted the significant risks involved in building such a large development on a site with a 99 year lease. The College would raise this issue with the University of London. It was noted that it was intended that the new building should be linked to Birkbeck’s existing main building, on which the University had agreed a lease of 999 years.
14.9 The Georgian house at 7 Bedford Square was currently leased to Amity University and a break clause in the contract was approaching. The College was evaluating options including selling the property or reintegrating it into College use.

15 ESTATES PROJECTS

Received

15.1 A report on progress in Estates capital projects and spending in the 2013 programme (E 2013 13)

15.2 A report on proposals for the 2014 programme (E 2013 14)

Noted

2013 programme

15.3 Overall the projects showed a net underspend of £45K, with a total estimated cost of £1,738K against a budget of £1,783K. The Committee thanked the Estates Project Manager for her careful control of the programme.

2014 programme

Approved

15.4 The following project proposals for 2014:

- Refurbishment of B62, the Glaxo Wellcome teaching room
- A package of minor works in the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy: toilet refurbishment in 25-28 and 30 Russell Square, and refurbishment of the ground floor admin office and a replacement front door card access system in 10 Gower Street.
- Work in the Clore building to further improve the ground floor and basement facilities, including a glazed roof to the external basement light well to provide better circulation space for visitors to events, provision of café seating in the basement; replacement of the heating and cooling air handling unit in the Clore lecture theatre with one of an adequate size; installation of additional sliding doors in the entrance; relocation of the front reception desk; and reorganisation of administrative office space.
- Improved signage throughout the Estate.
- Renovation of G26 in the Main Building to provide office space for activities such as counselling and careers advice.
- The creation of new corridor connections on the first and second floors of 26-27 Russell Square.
- Refurbishment of the toilet adjacent to the Master’s office.
15.5 The current estimate for this work was approximately £1.5M. These projects had been costed as accurately as was possible at this stage. The Committee agreed that once the work had gone out for tender any substantive increases in potential cost would be reported to the Chair to consider and take action if appropriate.

15.6 Members discussed accessibility planning in Estates projects and heard that the age and listed status of much of the estate added additional complications in this area, but that accessibility would be taken into account whenever refurbishments were taking place. The Disability Service Manager would report back to the Disability Committee on the ongoing work to improve the Clore building.

15.7 It was confirmed that all development proposals, for new buildings and improvement projects, would include consideration of accessibility. Current building regulations include a strengthened requirement to demonstrate accessibility, and the College was committed to ensuring appropriate accessibility in all of its new buildings.

15.7 The Disability Service Manager noted that there was a need for small rooms where one to one meetings could be held for activities such as counselling and dyslexia support. It was agreed that he would discuss this with Estates colleagues outside of the meeting to look at opportunities to use rooms in buildings other than the main building, and develop a strategic 3-4 year plan for the development of this kind of space.

15.8 Estates Committee approved the principle that standard reasonable adjustments for students with mobility issues should include accessible teaching rooms. The mechanisms were already in place to ensure that room bookings assigned accessible rooms to classes in which there were students with these needs.

15.9 Further discussions were taking place on proposals for laboratory facilities for the Departments of Biological Sciences and Earth Sciences. A further review of space on the third floor of the main building would take place before proposals were finalised.

Agreed
15.10 To authorise the Chair to consider and approve these proposals, currently estimated to cost between £180K and £240K, possibly offset by a donation that the Department of Earth Sciences is seeking.

24 hour IT facilities
Noted
15.11 There had been security and usage problems with the fourth floor 24 hour IT facility. A survey of use had been conducted over the last three months of 2013 which confirmed that overall use was low, normally considerably less than 10 people. Of
the 144 people making overnight logins during that time, just 25 were current enrolled Birkbeck students. The most frequent users were present overnight almost every day of the period surveyed and the room had become a focal point for arguments and disputes between the users.

15.12 The College was committed to providing student services, but the survey showed that demand for 24 hour IT facilities was very limited and that the problems presented by use of the facilities by people who should not be there had become significant.

Endorsed

15.13 The discontinuation of the overnight IT facility.

Recommended

15.14 Further work on policies to ensure that swipe card and ITS access was removed after students’ study was completed. However, Birkbeck email accounts would be maintained in order to retain links with alumni.

Action

15.15 (KH and KB) Discuss with ITS how to take forward the development of a policy on removing students’ swipe card and ITS access after they have finished studying.

16 LONG TERM MAINTENANCE

Received

16.1 A report on the Long Term Maintenance programme for 2013-14 and the priorities for long term maintenance over the next 5-10 years (E 2013 15).

Noted

16.2 At the last meeting work for 2013-14 costed at £465K was approved. At the mid year budget review the balance of capital and recurrent spending had been reviewed and £213K of this spending reclassified as capital spend. One project, the rebalancing of the Main Building heating system at £108K was being postponed until the 2014-15 year. This was because it would require access to the whole building and so it would be best to carry it out over the Christmas closure period.

16.3 The Committee considered the works identified by the Condition Survey that had been classified as most urgent for the 2014-15 financial year. They commended the Operational Estates Manager and the Director of Planning and Estates on their efforts to isolate the necessary work that would need to be done in the Malet Street Extension building in the short and medium term, bearing in mind that serious consideration was being given to rebuilding this part of the estate in the long term.
16.4 Due to the age of the Extension building some items, such as new heating circuits, radiators and electrical work, would be unavoidable. While acknowledging this, the Operational Estates Manager and the Director of Planning and Estates had put together a plan of works to build the resilience of the system for the medium term.

16.5 Renewal of the waste stack servicing the Extension Building was also becoming an essential piece of work. Members noted the reputational risk to the College if significant problems with this equipment arose. However, it might be possible to treat this work as two projects with differing levels of urgency, and achieve the necessary results by replacing only the waste stack rather than the toilets it services as well.

**Action**

16.5 *(Estates team)* Produce a further report assessing the urgency of the need to replace the waste stack compared with the need to also replace the toilets that it services.

16.6 The report included a proposal to replace the main building revolving door, which broke down frequently requiring spare parts that took an unacceptably long time to arrive. Members heard that since the paper was written the supplier had begun to give a more satisfactory response and the door was in operation again. However, given the significant and sustained problems that had been experienced with the door since it had been installed, it was possible that further problems could be experienced in future.

**Approved**

16.7 The replacement of the door in principle if further concerns arose. Accessibility to users and prompt local availability of spare parts should be a significant factor in the procurement process for any replacement.

**Noted**

16.8 A break point in the College’s lease arrangements with Amity University for 7 Bedford Square was approaching, and a decision on the College’s plan for the space had not yet been made.

**Confirmed**

16.9 Postponement of work in 7 Bedford Square until a decision on the future of the building had been made.

**Approved**

16.10 The proposed Long Term Maintenance plan for 2014-15, costed at £866K, subject to further evaluation of work needed on the extension building waste stack and toilets which could reduce the cost.
UNIVERSITY SQUARE STRATFORD

Received

17.1 A proposal to revise space sharing arrangements at University Square Stratford (E 2013 16)

Noted

17.2 The College’s current USS space comprised of: 17 classrooms, a student IT workstation room, the Weston Learning Centre, the dance studio/rehearsal space, and 6 offices. Current evening teaching required between 5 and 7 classrooms with the occasional peak of 10. The intention when this space holding was first confirmed was for the College to extend its commercial space business model to Stratford: renting out un-used space in the daytime between 9am and 5pm. However, the Conference and Space Planning Manager had reviewed the rental opportunities and confirmed that while they did exist they were not at level the College had in Bloomsbury.

17.3 It was therefore proposed that the College retain 15 of the 17 classrooms on a time share basis, with UEL usage in the daytime and Birkbeck usage in the evening. This would retain the majority of Birkbeck’s classrooms for use in the evening, more than the current demand. The keynote Weston Learning Centre facility would remain Birkbeck’s as would the IT workstation room. The dance/rehearsal space, which was currently already heavily used by UEL and the Theatre Royal would transfer to UEL as would one office space. Current arrangements for jointly operating and managing the building would remain as they are now.

17.4 This proposal would generate a capital receipt of some £3.5M and a reduction in annual recurrent charges of £250K.

17.5 Members noted the potential long term consequences of a decision that would mean that UEL owned more than 80% of the building: there would be a risk that both institutions came to consider USS to be a UEL building, and that the agreement might be interpreted as a retreat from Stratford, which was not the intention.

17.6 Members heard that was a policy in place that there was no UEL or Birkbeck badging in place in common areas such as the lobby, although the electronic signage in the building was used to brand classrooms according to the institution using them. To increase Birkbeck’s profile and show the College’s commitment to the continued use of the building, it was recommended that the front desks should have both Birkbeck and UEL signage on them.

Action

17.7 (KH) Discuss the issue of signage in common areas at the next meeting with UEL.
17.8 It was confirmed that the College intended to ensure that Birkbeck still had room to expand its activities in Stratford, and that Birkbeck’s presence and profile within the building would not be materially impacted. Courses in Stratford would continue to be promoted widely, and a senior member of staff, the PVM for Academic Partnerships, would continue to be based at Stratford for part of the week.

17.9 There were concerns that the decision not to retain a specialist dance studio could have an impact on the identification of dance and theatre as a potential growth area for the School of Arts. Arrangements were being proposed for Birkbeck to use the dance studio when needed and alternative arrangements would be explored if this was not possible.

**Endorsed**

17.10 The proposals revised space sharing arrangements for University Square Stratford for consideration by Finance and General Purposes Committee.

18 ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

**Received**

18.1 A report on energy and environmental management initiatives (E 2013 17)

**Noted**

18.2 Work to revise Birkbeck’s Carbon Management Plan had commenced, and Carbon Credentials Energy Services had been appointed as consultants to conduct this review. The project to create a Carbon Energy Information Reporting Portal was also underway. These initiatives would allow the college to gather accurate data for analysis and reporting, therefore guiding the deployment of resources and targeting of interventions.

18.3 Members noted the importance of taking action as a result of the data collected. It was confirmed that the termly energy and environmental management reports to the Estates Committee would include a section on data and action taken. The portal would provide monthly statistics enabling measurement of the success of these actions. The information would be provided building by building, so staff and students could be encouraged to take action to bring their local energy consumption figures down.

18.4 It was reported that the International Organisation for Standardisation responsible for developing and publishing international standards were currently revising the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System (EMS) standards to increase their impact. The new standards were set for rollout by 2015. It was therefore suggested that the
College delay trying for ISO 14001 accreditation, until the new standards were in place, and that in the meantime work should be carried out to identify how the College could meet the new targets.

18.5 It seemed that sustainability and environmental management was likely to become an increasingly significant part of the HE landscape. HEFCE had started a consultation process aimed at agreeing a Sustainable Development framework which would consolidate and improve on HEFCE’s previous policy positions, including requirements for Carbon Management Plans. This framework would be tied to capital resource allocation. The requirements for the HESA return on environment, energy, emissions and waste had significantly expanded, with institutions now expected to report on 204 questions, up from 65 the previous year.

19 BLOOMSBURY COMBINED HEAT AND POWER CONSORTIUM

Noted

19.1 The Combined Heat and Power (CHP) system was currently operated under a long term contract held by Cofely District Energy (CDE) which was due to expire in 2020. The existing system had come to the end of its life and planning was underway for its replacement and upgrade. Options under consideration included early termination of the contract with CDE to allow the partners to move forward with the renewal, upgrading and expansion of the CHP plant and infrastructure.

19.2 In 2013, the CHP consortium, Birkbeck, SOAS, Institute of Education (IoE), Senate House and UCL, commissioned an engineering feasibility study from Parsons Brinckerhoff to identify options for the renewal of the CHP infrastructure. The estimated full cost for renewal, upgrading and expansion of the plant and infrastructure was reported to be in the region of £15M, spread across the consortium members.

19.3 Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) were preparing a business case for the future financing, delivery, ownership and operation of the system as well as a cost benefit analysis and lifecycle costs. This business case would be circulated to the institutions’ Estates Committees.

19.4 Members raised concerns over UCL’s planned role in the scheme after the merger with IoE. Before proceeding Birkbeck would need to seek assurances that the IoE buildings would remain in the scheme.

19.5 Members noted the significant financial expenditure that was being discussed and urged that all potential options should be considered, including renegotiating the contract with CDE and going out to tender with other companies as well as operating the consortium internally. The Governor member of Estates Committee agreed to review and advise on PWC’s business case once it became available.
19.6 The potential joint building project with UCL could have a significant impact on the CHP plans. The joint project was a strategic priority for Birkbeck so any involvement with the CHP would have to take this into account. The Committee heard that representatives of the CHP steering group and the Birkbeck/UCL Heating Chamber Feasibility team had met and had agreed that the planning of both projects would be coordinated together.

19.7 The CHP plans were being coordinated through the meetings of the Bloomsbury Directors of Estates, and the Directors of Finance were also aware of them. It was agreed that they would also be discussed by the institutions’ vice-chancellors and heads of administration.

**Action**

19.8 *(KB)* Put the future plans for the Bloomsbury Combined Heat and Power Consortium on the agenda for the Bloomsbury Colleges Heads of Colleges and Heads of Administration meetings.

20 **SHARED FACILITIES MANAGEMENT**

Noted

20.1 As reported at the last meeting, the College had joined a project to develop a shared Facilities Management service. The project was coordinated by the University of London and also involved Birkbeck and SOAS. No final decision about whether the College would take part in the service had yet been made.

20.2 Both financial and other issues, such as improved terms and conditions for staff, were being taken into account by Birkbeck in exploring its options. There was also a need to consider the impact of ongoing employee relations and reputational and political issues, following the high profile disputes recently experienced by the University in relation to its contracted out facilities management staff.

21 **OCCUPANCY OF LIBRARY STUDY SPACES**

Noted

21.1 The new unoccupied space finder in the Library was in operation. It provided two significant benefits: showing library users live data to allow them to find study space and providing occupancy data for use by the Library team.

22 **OPERATIONAL ESTATES BUDGET**

Received

22.1 A report on budget allocations and expenditure for the operational estates and facilities budget 2013-14 *(E 2013 18)*

Noted
22.2 The Committee commended the Conference and Space Planning Manager on the £300K increase in income from room bookings, and on the agreement being finalised with UCL to provide them with substantial amounts of daytime teaching space for the next five years.

23 DATES OF MEETINGS
Noted
23.1 The date of the Summer term meeting:
   • Wednesday 28 May 2014 at 2pm