MINUTES OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE

28 May 2014

Present
Professor David Latchman (Chair), Professor Philip Dewe, Professor Hilary Fraser, Professor Nicholas Keep, Mr John Lindner, Mr Daniel Peltz, Professor Philip Powell, 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 (Governance and Corporate Support Coordinator), Ms Svetla Mirova (Management Accountant), Mr Mark Pimm (Disability Service Manager), Ms Megan Reeves (Deputy Secretary), Ms Caroline Smith (Estates Project Manager), Mr Jeremy Tanner (Conference and Space Planning Manager), Ms Elizabeth Whitehead (Facilities Manager), Mr Keith Willett (Director of Finance)

Apologies
Mr Andreas Schmidt, Professor Patricia Tuitt, Mr Peter Zinkin

24 MINUTES
Confirmed
12.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 25 February.

25 REPORT TO THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Noted
25.1 F&GPC’s receipt of the Report of the Estates Committee following its last meeting (E 2013 19)

26 ACTION SHEET
Received
26.1 An update on progress on actions agreed at the last meeting (E 2013 20)

Noted
Card access to facilities
26.2 A meeting had been held with representatives from the School Managers, ITS, Registry and Business Systems to discuss the access rights that should be maintained by various categories of students. It was noted that one issue was that student cards
had no expiry date and there was currently no procedure for students to return their cards at the end of their course. The Academic Registrar was producing a paper for Strategic Planning Committee in consultation with the relevant departments.

**Joint signage at Stratford**

26.3 The addition of joint signage in common areas had been raised and agreed with UEL. The revised operations agreement would have provision for joint signage.

### 27 ESTATES STRATEGY UPDATE

**Received**

27.1 A report on implementation of the Estates strategy *(E 2013 21)*

**Noted**

**Toddler Lab**

27.2 Progress was reported in developing the project to construct a new building to house the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development’s ‘Toddler Lab’ research centre. The University of London Trustees had given their assent to the principle of the scheme subject to the Warburg Institute’s acceptance of the development. The Warburg had asked for the Institute’s vehicle ramp to be retained or rebuilt to maintain an equivalent level of access to the courtyard.

27.3 In preparation for the lease negotiations with the University of London, Birkbeck had commissioned independent valuation advice on the site from its advisors, BNP Paribas. It would be important to ensure that the University valuers were aware of all the compromises that Birkbeck was making to ensure that the Warburg Institute accepted the development.

27.4 The project brief had developed significantly to include new design requirements and options. A revised cost plan had been commissioned, and the scheme would be reviewed in light of this information. Members noted the need to take likely building cost inflation into account, and it was confirmed that this had been included in the figures.

27.5 There was a possibility that the project could be exempt from VAT. College management were discussing this matter with the College’s tax consultants at KPMG.

27.6 The revised scope of the project, taking into account budget, space and VAT issues, would be taken back for discussion with the Psychology department.

**Joint Feasibility study with UCL**

27.7 Further progress had been made in the feasibility study to consider the potential for a new building on the site of the Torrington Square North Heating Chamber. Three
design options had been identified and discussions on them were taking place with the academic teams involved.

27.8 Members noted the need to ensure the appropriate involvement of UCL’s planning team, and to ensure that the business parameters were agreed with UCL before moving forward.

27.9 The next steps would be to develop a plan that met the academic requirements of all involved before starting to work with the Camden planning office and then, if necessary, consulting with office holders and politicians, noting the significant public benefit of the scheme.

27.10 The Committee asked about the length of lease that the College would hold on the land and heard that the University’s policy was to grant 99 year leases, except for buildings designated as College headquarters which had longer leases. Members noted the risks involved in undertaking a major building project on land with such a short lease, and heard that the College was considering other areas to negotiate on, including the value of the lease and options at the end of the lease term.

University of London Estates Strategy
27.11 The University was embarking on a master planning exercise of its own with a view to making better use of the Senate House complex and upgrading the public spaces in the campus. The Committee noted potential competition from the University as a conference facilities provider and heard that the College was consolidating its customer base to ensure it did not lose business to the University.

27.12 The strategy included short and long term objectives. While the University had not published specific timescales, discussions were proceeding in terms of five and ten year timescales.

27.13 The strategy included improved landscaping and paving. From Birkbeck’s perspective, it was important to ensure that any public space developments included ramps, seating and other provisions for disabled and older people, as well as lighting during the evenings when Birkbeck students were making their way to and from their classes. It was agreed that these issues would be raised at a future meeting of the University Trustees.

Action
27.14 (Mark Pimm) Consult with counterparts at the other Bloomsbury colleges on the access issues that should be considered when landscaping the campus and communicate these to the University Estates Director.

Senate House North Block
27.16 SOAS’s Senate House North Block Development project was now in progress. It was expected that the build would include 35 classrooms to which Birkbeck would have access. Under the agreement made with SOAS, Birkbeck would use this space in the evenings, with digital signage displaying Birkbeck’s branding at this time. Discussions were underway on the possibility of installing equipment that would allow for the use of Birkbeck’s attendance monitoring and lecture capture systems.

27.17 The estimated completion date was given as September 2015, but there had been some delay and it was expected that Birkbeck would start using the building in the academic year 2016-17.

27.18 Negotiations were underway to ensure that Birkbeck students had access to social spaces in the evening. The student member noted that social space was particularly important to the younger students that made up an increasing part of the College’s student body.

7 Bedford Square
27.19 The College had considered and rejected an offer from Amity University to purchase the property at 7 Bedford Square. The College would now give Amity notice of its intention to exercise the break clause in the lease and would also proceed with internal discussions on how to use the space.

Bloomsbury Combined Heat and Power (CHP) consortium
27.20 Members heard that Birkbeck was a member of the Bloomsbury CHP along with SOAS, the Institute of Education, UCL and Senate House. The CHP was operated under a long term contract held by Cofely District Energy (CDE) which was due to expire in 2020. The infrastructure had reached the end of its life and there was a risk of failure, especially of the electrical systems. It was confirmed that Birkbeck drew heat but not electricity from the CHP.

27.21 The CHP Board, made up of representatives of the member institutions, had discussed future options for the scheme but these had not so far been conclusive. The Board had considered and rejected a proposal to terminate the contract with CDE early. Concerns were noted over the quality of the reports on the infrastructure and future options that had been commissioned.

27.22 It would be necessary to assess the feasibility and cost effectiveness of all options from the College’s perspective before proceeding with any decisions about the CHP. Birkbeck had received and would act on advice from independent Governor Peter Zinkin.

Action
27.23 (KH) Attend the next meeting of the CHP Board and raise Birkbeck’s concerns.

Facilities Management cost sharing group
27.24 The College had participated in a project exploring the potential to set up a Cost Sharing Group for the delivery of Facilities Management services, with the University and SOAS.

27.25 Having assessed the cost savings, which showed little potential financial benefit to Birkbeck; and having noted that the project was unlikely to lead to better terms and conditions for the staff that would have been involved, College management took the decision not to join the group. Instead consideration would be given to alternative models of outsourcing facilities services, with the objective of generating long term benefits.

27.26 The Committee and College management affirmed the need to weigh up potential future partnerships with the College’s duty of care to its staff.

28 ESTATES PROJECTS
Received
28.1 An update on progress in Estates capital projects and spending in the 2014 programme (E 2013 22)

Noted
28.2 The 2014 works programme was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Indicative cost £000</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>314/315 Earth Sciences Petrology lab and Prep room</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Additional £200k for equipment in the School budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Glaxo Wellcome room refurbishment</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSHP</td>
<td>Toilets, 30 Russell Square</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSHP</td>
<td>Toilets, 25-28 R Square</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSHP</td>
<td>Politics, 10 Gower Street</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEI/Estates &amp; Facilities</td>
<td>New Reception and glazed area basement infill at Clore Building</td>
<td>445</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEI</td>
<td>Knowledge Lab phase 2 (research space in Main Building)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Indicative cost awaiting detailed estimates and authorisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates &amp; Facilities</td>
<td>Replacement of air and heating system for Clore Lecture Theatre</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/SSHP</td>
<td>External refurbishments, 39-47 Gordon Square, and 25-28 Russell Square</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/ whole College</td>
<td>Signage &amp; digital signage strategy</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates &amp; Facilities</td>
<td>G26, Student Centre facilities</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Estates &amp; Facilities</td>
<td>26-27 Russell Square links</td>
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<td>Estates &amp; Facilities</td>
<td>Master’s suite refurbishment</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,575</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inclusive of VAT & Fees

28.3 The Committee heard that the Estates team would be meeting with the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences to discuss what items in the Petrology Lab and Prep Room project would be covered by the additional £200K for equipment from the School budget. The final allocation of costs would be approved by the Master as Chair of the Estates Committee.

28.4 Discussions were commencing with Biological Sciences regarding the refurbishment of other laboratories in the Main Building Third Floor which potentially were available for new research laboratory and associated office space. This would come forward for authorisation and implementation in the next cycle of projects.

28.5 The first phase of the project to relocate the Knowledge Lab research group from Emerald Street to the Main Building was completed on time and on budget. Phase 2 of the work involved enhancing public spaces and creating additional research space.

28.6 Members discussed the planned refurbishment in the Clore building, and heard that, although the Clore Foundation had made a very generous donation to the College for the initial development of the building, they had no ongoing duty to contribute to refurbishment costs.

28.7 The Clore reception and lift would be closed over the summer, the quietest time of year, to allow for work in this area to take place. There would be an alternative access route and it was confirmed that staff and students would be notified in advance of this change.

28.8 The signage project aimed to develop a signage strategy and improve signage in all buildings. The Committee heard that a scoping exercise was underway to survey existing signage and that consultation was taking place with the Schools. Members noted that it was important that the reception desk attendants were consulted as part of this process. This initiative would also be discussed at Disability Committee.

**Action**

28.9 *(MP)* Invite members of the Estates team to the next meeting of the Disability Committee to discuss issues around signage.
28.10 The Estates team were exploring the potential for refurbishing some larger offices for multiple occupancy in 26 Russell Square for the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy, and were currently waiting for quotes for the work. If feasible, the project proposal would go to the Chair for approval.

28.11 Members discussed the discontinuation of the overnight 24 hour IT facilities. As reported at the last meeting, this decision had been taken due to the limited demand for these facilities from enrolled students, and the significant problems presented by the use of the facilities by people who should not be there. It was confirmed that the issue had been discussed with the Executive Dean of the School of BEI who had confirmed that the level of usage by students from the Department of Computer Sciences and Information Systems did not warrant the retention of overnight facilities.

29 LONG TERM MAINTENANCE
Received

Noted
29.2 The approved budget for the LTM works in the current year was £475K. The 2013-14 work was all expected to be completed by July 2014.

29.3 The Committee considered the works identified by the Condition Survey that had been classified as most urgent for the 2014-15 financial year. It was noted that essential repair work had been undertaken on the electrical switch room and rising busbar. While the risk of imminent failure had been offset, the equipment was obsolete and their replacement was a high priority.

29.4 The Committee reviewed its decision not to replace the toilet facilities in the extension building. Serious consideration was being given to rebuilding this part of the estate in the long term, which made it important to avoid unnecessary spending on the building. However, the Committee heard that the current poor state of the facilities were the subject of frequent student complaints. The extension building was a high traffic area and it was a standard expectation that they would require replacement within the lifespan of the building.

Approved
29.5 A proposal for refurbishment of the extension building toilets.

29.6 Estates Committee heard that there had been a marked improvement in the performance of the revolving door in the main building, which had been of serious concern. The College had purchased essential spares which were held on site. It was
therefore proposed that the door should be retained as long as its performance remained satisfactory. This matter would be kept under review. Members asked that the estates team explore the possibility of changing the sequencing of the door to improve ease of use.

29.7 The student representative noted that students frequently expressed a wish for drinking water fountains around the campus.

**Action**

29.8 *(AF)* Discuss the issue of drinking fountains further with the Student Union.

30 **ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

Received

30.1 A report on energy and environmental management initiatives.

Noted

30.2 A new Carbon Management Plan had been drafted and was being consulted on. The Committee would receive the plan for consideration at its October meeting.

4.2 The Carbon and Energy Information Reporting portal was now operational and available to staff. It would allow for the review of performance against targets in the Carbon Management Plan and reporting on individual building performance in terms of emissions and energy efficiency. This data could then be tracked year on year. The Committee noted that this information would be useful as a tool to support decision making.

40 **OPERATIONAL ESTATES BUDGET**

Received

40.1 A report on budget allocations and expenditure for the operational estates and facilities budget *(E 2013 25)*

Noted

40.2 No overspend on the reported figures was anticipated.

41 **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Received

41.1 A paper on updated Key Performance Indicators to be forwarded to F&GPC *(E 2013 26)*

Noted

41.2 The objective to continue to provide consolidated accommodation for the five schools would remain on the list of key performance indicators. There was a need to provide appropriate facilities for research and teaching, using investment in capital to
ensure a good student experience. A new objective had been added to ensure cost effective long term maintenance, balanced with new developments.

41.3 It was suggested that a new objective on Birkbeck Stratford should be introduced, focusing on how the College intended to use the building going forward. Members suggested other areas which it might be useful to monitor, including improvement of disability access to buildings, and the use of the cafes in Birkbeck buildings.

41.4 Members suggested that more quantitative indicators be added in some areas; this could include data already collected elsewhere, such as room usage surveys and NSS scores about the College’s physical infrastructure.

41.5 An updated version of the KPI report would be circulated before it went to Finance and General Purposes Committee.

42 STUDENT SOCIAL SPACE

Noted

42.1 It was agreed that looking at how to add more social space should be part of the new vision for the College’s estate.

Action

42.2 (JT and JL) Discuss future plans for social space across the College’s estate.

43 GENDER NEUTRAL TOILETS

Noted

43.1 The College had been asked whether it was possible to install gender neutral toilets. It agreed to refer this matter to the Equality and Disability Committees for further discussion. Any proposal on this matter would need to take into account the existing toilet facilities and the need to provide a combination of facilities meeting the needs of all students.

44 DATES OF MEETINGS

Noted

44.1 The date of the 2014-15 meetings:
- Wednesday 29 October at 2pm
- Monday 23 February at 2pm
- Wednesday 6 May at 2pm