MINUTES OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE

6 May 2015

Present
Professor David Latchman (Chair), Ms Jill Entwistle (SSHP School Manager, for Professor Miriam Zukas), Professor Hilary Fraser, Professor Nicholas Keep, Mr John Lindner, Dr Stewart Motha, Mr Daniel Peltz, Professor Philip Powell, Mr Peter Zinkin

In Attendance
Mr Ola Bankole (Environmental Manager, for Item 26), Mrs Katharine Bock (Deputy College Secretary: Governance), Mr Alan Fisher (Operational Estate Manager), Mr Keith Harrison (College Secretary), Mr Mick Lorkins (Head of Capital Projects), Ms Roisin Lynch (Governance and Corporate Support Coordinator), Ms Svetla Mirova (Management Accountant), Mr Chris Murphy (Head of Development and Alumni), Mr Mark Pimm (Disability Service Manager), Ms Megan Reeves (Deputy College Secretary: Operations), Mr Jeremy Tanner (Director of Commercial Services and Estates Development), Ms Liz Whitehead (Facilities Manager), Mr Keith Willett (Director of Finance)

Apologies
Professor Matthew Innes, Mr Andreas Schmidt, Professor Miriam Zukas

22 MINUTES
Confirmed
22.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 23 February 2015.

23 REPORT TO THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Noted
23.1 F&GPC’s receipt of the Report of the Estates Committee following its last meeting (E 2014 19)

24 ACTIONS
Received
24.1 An update on progress on actions agreed at the previous meetings (E 2014 20)

Senate House
24.2 The College Secretary had met with SOAS and reiterated that the original application for use of Senate House North block involved collaboration between Birkbeck and SOAS. The College would continue to communicate with SOAS on Birkbeck’s involvement with arrangements for long term use of the space.
Library

24.3 Further discussion has taken place with the Students' Union to agree the timing of the Library enabling room and Network Hub location enhancement projects, to prevent undue disruption in the Library while students are studying for exams.

Student Space

24.4 The Students' Union were discussing a proposal for student social space with the College Secretary. The Master will meet with representatives of the Students' Union to discuss Estates Strategy.

25 ESTATES PROJECTS UPDATE

Received

25.1 An update on progress in Estates development projects (E 2014 21)

Signage

25.2 The Russell Square signage project has been completed. The way signage is procured has been reviewed and there is now a tested process by which to deliver signage across the College.

Recommended for approval by F&GPC

25.3 The transfer of the £40k underspend towards the creation of a new £100k budget for all signage.

Student Talk Pods

25.4 In order to meet the increased demand for one-to-one meetings for student advice consultations, two new prefabricated and relocatable Meeting Pods would be trialled in the basement of the Malet Street building. If successful, 4 additional pods would be installed. This would meet Student Services’ requirement for the next three years. If the trial is successful use of the pods might be expanded to include student study spaces within the Library. The Schools will be invited to consider whether they might use the pods. The committee heard that the pods offered a more flexible solution than committing to structural interventions.

Library Office Refurbishment

25.5 Members heard that the refurbishment of the Library Office will enable a series of moves aimed at co-locating the Library and Media services teams. These moves will benefit those involved and also create a small amount of extra capacity in Egmont house to help meet any future growth requirements. The budget of £38K includes refurbishment works for the Library and costs associated with moving all the staff involved.

25-28 Russell Square Lift
25.6 Following a feasibility study on providing a platform lift for the entrance of 26 Russell Square to improve accessibility, the School of Social Sciences History and Philosophy and the Estates Department have concluded that the estimated costs did not represent good value, given the limited access that would be achievable. The project would be deferred to a broader discussion and decision in the near future about making the whole building accessible. Progress in this area would be reported to the Disability Committee.

**Recommended for approval by F&GPC**

25.7 A revenue project budget of £500K for 2015/16. This was a reduction of £200K from the £700K allocation in 2014/15, balanced by the proposal to increase the Long Term Maintenance budget for 2015/16.

**Received**

25.8 An update on progress in Estates maintenance projects 2014-15 (**E2014 22**)

**Library Lift Repair**

**Approved**

25.9 A proposal by the Operational Estate Manager that £60k be allocated for major urgent overhaul work on the Library glass passenger lift. The need for this urgent project had arisen since the maintenance schedule was agreed, but could be undertaken using an allocation set aside for main building electrical works which had been deferred while a full electrical survey took place.

**Clore Building and 30 Russell Square Lifts**

25.10 Members heard that the lift installations at the Clore Building and at 30 Russell Square will be carried forward to LTM plans for 2015/16, as this work cannot start until July 2015. The lift tender went out to 5 companies, and the tender evaluation was awarded to Jacksons Lifts who had offered best value for money for both properties.

**Received**

25.11 A paper on maintenance proposals for 2015-16 (**E 2014 23**)

25.12 Members heard that Estate Management Statistics indicate that 95% of College property is considered to be in either Category A (As new condition – 18%) or Category B (Sound, operationally safe, and exhibiting only minor deterioration – 77%). A further 5% of College property is considered to be in Category C (Operational but major repair or replacement needed in the short to medium-term), and a number of works are planned in these areas. The ultimate aim is to have all properties listed under category A or B.
The Carbon Management Plan target was to save 660 tonnes of carbon, and the CMP listed projects should offer a saving of 687 tonnes of carbon. The Committee discussed the projected costs in the Carbon Management Plan. It was noted that related costs such as repainting after replacing lights would be met by the day-to-day maintenance budget. The Environmental Manager will meet with the Executive Dean of the School of Science to discuss the projected budget for energy optimisation in Crystallography in more detail.

**Recommended for approval by F&GPC**

The proposed LTM budget for 2015/16 of £721,325. This was higher than 2014/15 due to the transfer of costs for the two lift refurbishments to the 2015/16 budget.

**Noted**

The Estates department was planning to develop a 5-year LTM plan during 2015-16.

**Received**

The updated Budget for Estates development and maintenance projects (**E 2014 24**)

26 **ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE**

Received

26.1 An update from the Environmental Manager (**E 2014 25**)

26.2 Members heard that the Energy Savings Opportunities Scheme legislation (ESOS) which came into effect in December 2014 is a new mandatory energy assessment scheme with which the HE sector will have to comply. Birkbeck is already in a good position to comply with the requirements without any significant additional resource implications due to the existing utilities data portal and the ongoing carbon management scheme.

26.3 The Environmental Manager gave an update on the College’s Carbon Management Plan. Since it was originally circulated the CO2 saving had increased from 660 to 687 tonnes and the estimated cost reduced from £250,000 to £140,950, due in part to in-house staff carrying out some of the work involved. The Committee noted the good progress in CMP implementation and heard that the College should see further improvements with planned actions.

*Minute 27 is reserved to the Committee as it is commercially sensitive.*

28 **ESTATES STRATEGY AND PROPERTY ACQUISITION**

Received

28.1 An update on Estates Strategy and Property Acquisition (**E 2014 27**)
28.2 Members thanked the College Officers and Peter Zinkin for their work over the Easter holiday on the acquisition of the Maple Street property. Although the acquisition bid was unsuccessful, key lessons have been learned including on speed of response, planning and VAT issues, which would underpin the College’s approach as it identified further opportunities.

28.3 The process put in place to deal with this bid worked well and would provide a tested means of pursuing future opportunities of this kind. The work undertaken for Maple Street had provided a strong foundation for the College to develop in advance a set of generic use cases linked to strategic aims that could be tailored to a specific opportunity.

28.4 Planning permission for Maple Street was B1, office or research use, which was likely to be the position with the vast majority of suitable property on the open market. A proposition to change use to D1 (educational use), involving directly creating teaching space in the building, had not received an encouraging response from the Camden planning office. Instead, the College had developed use cases centred on decant scenarios, creating research or office accommodation in the new space that would liberate space in the main Malet Street Building for teaching, meaning that students would have immediate access to facilities such as library and IT services.

28.5 In general the College is unable to recover VAT as its “services” are considered to be VAT exempt. Detailed specialist advice had been taken on this issue and the mitigating options available. Space dedicated to research activity and facilities, where the research was funded publicly or through charities, would not attract VAT. Thus the preferred use options in relation to Maple Street focused on the creation of improved research facilities in the building, with a series of relocations to free space for teaching in Malet Street.

28.6 The property market in London is hugely competitive and Birkbeck needs to be in a position to make offers quickly. However, the Governing Body cannot delegate the ability to make a binding offer. A small group was set up consisting of a Governor with expertise in property, the Chair of the Governors, the Deputy Chair, and the Chair of the Finance Committee, who could make non-binding offers subject to Board approval.

28.7 While the Maple Street bid was ultimately unsuccessful, it had clearly established the College as a purchaser with serious intent in a competitive market. Positive discussions had since been had with Birkbeck’s agents BNP Paribas, refining our search criteria in line with the factors listed above, and this should give rise to further opportunities. Although historically BNP Paribas had proved effective and helpful, and it was agreed the College should continue to use them in the short term
while looking for an immediate opportunity, members noted that there was no need to be exclusively attached to a single agent.

28.8 Members heard that property acquisitions undertaken via the University of London are always likely to be lengthy processes and subject to bids from other Colleges, so it is important that the College continues to pursue acquisitions that do not depend on UoL.

29 DATES OF MEETINGS
Noted
29.1 The dates of meetings for the 2015-16 session:
• 15 October 2015
• 15 February 2016
• 5 May 2016