

GOLDSMITHS
University of London
COUNCIL
ESTATES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2010

- Present:** Mr James Grierson (in the Chair), Mr Michael Dick, Mr Hugh Jones, Dr Richard Noble, Ms Bindz Patel, Professor Alan Pickering, Ms Mary Stacey.
- In attendance:** Head of Capital Projects, Head of Facilities, Head of Residences, Catering and Conference Services, Chief Executive of the Students' Union, Head of Corporate Governance and Information Management (Acting Secretary).
- Apologies:** Mr Terry Rosenberg.

OPEN BUSINESS

1 MINUTES

Resolved:

that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2010 be approved.

2 STANDING ORDERS

Noted:

the revised Standing Orders in force for all Goldsmiths Committees from 1 September 2010 (10-338).

3 CONFLICT OF INTERESTS POLICY

Noted:

the College's Conflict of Interests Policy, and its potential implications for the obligations of members of the Committee (10-339).

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Noted:

the terms of reference, composition and membership of the Committee for the academic year 2010-11 (10-384).

5 INTERNAL AUDIT OF THE NEW ACADEMIC BUILDING PROJECT

(Minute 2 (6 July 2010) refers)

Noted:

- (i) that a draft report to Finance and Resources Committee and Council on the New Academic Building Project had been considered by Audit Committee on 12 October 2010, but that this was not circulated for information as substantial amendments were in process of being completed in the light of Audit Committee's discussion.
- (ii) that committees receiving the Internal Audit report or a summary of it were thus expected to have been as follows by the end of the Spring term 2010:

Consideration of full report (ie paper 10-311):

Senior Management Team (17 May 2010)

Audit Committee (22 June 2010)

Estates Committee (6 July 2010)

Draft summary report (ie paper 10-360):

Audit Committee (12 October 2010)

Final summary report (ie paper 10-360R if revisions are made):

Council (30 November 2010)

Finance and Resources Committee (15 March 2011)

- (iii) that a paper on the state of the project post-occupancy, as requested by the Committee at its 6 July 2010 meeting, would be available at the Spring term meeting of Estates Committee.

Received:

a report from the Head of Capital Projects on factual corrections to the Internal Audit report (10-361);

Resolved:

that Council be informed of the wish of the Committee to be fully involved in future discussions concerning the future of project management in the College generally.

6 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

(Minute 2 (6 July 2010) refers)

Noted:

- (i) that there was no specific process by which departments could request capital works; rather Heads of Department were expected to discuss their requirements informally with the Director of Estates and Facilities and the member of the Senior Management Team responsible for overseeing the work of their department (although development was likely to be limited in the future financial climate);
- (ii) that no draft two-year planning document concerning the capital programme was yet available for consideration by the Committee.

The Committee was concerned at the lack of transparency in the current process for allocating resources for estates improvements in response to departmental needs. Although the Director of Estates was able to articulate for the Committee the criteria which his Department used in evaluating requests received from departments (including masterplan fit, building condition survey outcomes, academic need and legal compliance), it was noted that these criteria were neither set out in a specific statement nor published; neither was there any clear process for departmental requests, integrated fully with the rest of the planning process. The Committee considered that this lack of transparency could potentially result in the limited funding available being allocated to the most vocal departments, which might not necessarily be those with greatest need on objective criteria. It should be the responsibility of the Estates Department to ensure that all needs were solicited and considered on a fair basis.

The Committee felt that criteria issued to departments should include guidance on differentiating between maintenance requests and capital projects. There should also be encouragement to departments to consider, when making proposals for investment in the College's buildings, the potential for income generation which would result from the expenditure.

Resolved:

- (i) to hold a special meeting of the Committee in the Spring term 2009 to consider the proposals of the Senior Management Team concerning the forward capital programme; *[Secretary's note: this meeting was subsequently scheduled for 5pm on 9 February 2011]*
- (ii) to consider at this meeting a draft statement of the criteria to be used for evaluating capital projects, to be circulated to departments to guide requests, based on the criteria currently used operationally by the Estates Department to evaluate bids;
- (iii) to consider at the May or July meeting, taking into account the outcomes of the review of the capital programme, a plan of Estates Committee business for the academic year 2011-12.

7 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

Resolved:

to approve a draft report of the Committee to Council on its business for the academic year 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010, subject to minor amendments discussed at the meeting (10-385).

Noting that the Space Management Task Group would report in the current academic year, the Committee looked forward to being involved in the design of a future mechanism for the allocation of space, following consideration of the Task Group's recommendations.

8 CAPITAL PROJECTS AND MINOR WORKS

Received:

- (i) a report from the Head of Capital projects on progress achieved against capital and minor works projects since the last meeting (10-386);
- (ii) a report on Disability-related adjustments, in response to the request at the Committee's meeting on 6 July 2010 (Minute 6 refers) (10-387).

The Committee noted the following updates on paper 10-386 (capital and minor works projects):

- (i) Signage installations were almost complete on building exteriors.
- (ii) A refurbishment of catering outlets had recently taken place.
- (iii) For budgetary reasons, external bracing had been chosen for the 21-31 St James' houses.

In relation to disability access, the Committee noted that the Deptford Town Hall and Richard Hoggart buildings needed to be given highest priority as they were public buildings, despite being relatively difficult to adapt. The terms under which the College had taken over Deptford Town Hall required that it should remain a public building. It was noted that in Deptford Town Hall a stair unit would be cheaper to instal than a lift, but in use would have complex staff training and duty rota implications, making weekend and evening access difficult to arrange.

Resolved:

to review the guidance and recommendations published by the Equality Challenge Unit concerning the most appropriate way forward in situations of this kind, based on good practice in other institutions.

9 CARBON MANAGEMENT

Recommended:

that the draft Carbon Management Plan be approved for submission to HEFCE (10-388).

It was noted that HEFCE's requirements were for the time being unchanged, although the approach and role, in relation to carbon management, of the body which would replace it was not clear.

10 FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Received:

- (i) a report from the Head of Facilities on the Soft Services Review (10-389);
- (ii) a report from the Head of Facilities concerning the Review of Maintenance and Administration (Hard Services Review) (10-390).

It was noted that a working group of six Porters and the Head of Facilities had been set up to consider key issues in the Soft Services review. Modified working practices had already started to be introduced, and it seemed reasonable to anticipate further substantive progress during the Spring term. Health and Safety Committee had recently considered aspects relevant to them.

The Committee expressed general dissatisfaction at the slowness of negotiations with Trades Unions. One member commented that the present arrangements for holiday pay of porters, enhanced by overtime, were unreasonable, and unfair to other categories of staff who did not benefit. It was noted however that this was a longstanding arrangement and not central to the issues currently under discussion.

Members of the Committee raised no objections to the proposals set out in paper 10-390 (Hard Services Review). It was noted that these proposals would not constitute any barrier to the introduction of shared services and outsourcing, should the introduction of these emerge as desirable in future.

11 PARTNERSHIP OPTIONS FOR STUDENT RESIDENCES

(Minute 3, 6 July 2010, refers)

Received:

- (i) a statement from the President of the Students' Union (10-391);
- (ii) a paper from the Director of Estates and Facilities and the Head of Residences, Catering and Conference Services (10-340).

The Committee noted that the Students' Union's advice on the demand for low cost halls seemed at odds with the experience of Residences, Catering and Conference Services, which was that in practice the College's most expensive accommodation was the first to become fully booked. It was recognised however that any assessment of student demand was inherently unstable given the uncertainty of future student funding. A major planning challenge faced by higher education institutions generally, which would increase in the years ahead, was the difficulty of responding to substantial swings in student demand for accommodation which occurred too abruptly for the capital programme to respond with sufficient speed. In the areas where Goldsmiths students were likely to seek accommodation, private sector rented options were in short supply.

The Committee noted that outsourcing halls of residence provision was a possible solution to the problem of lack of predictability in demand, recognising the importance of retaining sufficient controls over price and quality to mitigate any risks of negative student experience. The Committee noted from paper 10-340, which summarised possible options, the accounting rules which made an off balance sheet solution (ie involving a third party provider) appropriate. It was noted that timing could be a critical factor in future, in order to enable the College to take advantage of appropriate opportunities in this area.

12 FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted:

that meetings of the Estates Committee in 2010-11 would be held as follows:

Tuesday, 8 March 2011, at 10.30am

Tuesday, 17 May 2011, at 2.30pm

Tuesday, 5 July 2011, at 2.30pm

(Special meeting added subsequently: see item 6 above.)