UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SPACE MANAGEMENT GROUP MEETING

NOTE OF MEETING HELD ON 27 JUNE 2022

Present: K Leydecker (Convener), C Collins, G Gordon, A Koester, R Moore, V Nikora (vice E Pavlovskaia), G Paton, J Pearson, L Philip, T Slaven, G Smith, K Smith, H Sveinsdottir, J Timms, D White, G Wilkins and H Crabb (Clerk)

Apologies: D Dyker, B Henderson, D McCausland, M Mills, E Pavlovskaia, D Smith

1. CHAIR’S INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed the Group to its first meeting since May 2021.

* 1. Annual Review of Terms of Reference

The Group noted and endorsed the current Terms of Reference, subject to the following amendments:

* Inclusion of a Dean for Research and a Dean for Education; and
* Inclusion of details of the quorum:
  + 50% of membership; and
  + further consideration to be given to whether individual roles should also be specified.

**Action: TS**

* 1. General Discussion: Purpose of Group

The Group was advised that the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan and outcomes from the School/Directorate planning cycle would underpin the development of a new 10-year Capital Programme. It was agreed that the data emerging from the drafting process would be helpful to the Group in supporting it to take decisions (and understanding the wider impact of these decisions) in ensuring the future strategic use of space across campus.

The Group was advised that the Space Management Group had originally been convened to drive forward a culture change and enhanced communication around the University’s estate. It was agreed that the Group was well-placed to provide ‘added value’ to the forthcoming strategic discussions about the future use of space which will be underpinned by the principle of cross-campus collective ownership.

2. SPACE DATA

2.1 Space Matrix

The Group received and noted the analysis of various components of space management practices (including CAD Drawings, Learning Spaces, Records, Space Audits, Space Charging, Space Design, Space Modelling and Space Policy), based on a matrix developed to gauge ‘excellence’ within the HE sector. The Group agreed that the matrix provided a helpful baseline and set the context for the progress, resources and improvements which would be required in future. The Group was advised that the matrix could be adapted to reflect more accurately the systems and processes in place at Aberdeen in future iterations.

The Group was advised that the exercise to develop a comprehensive suite of floor plans had been completed and noted that the outcomes would be published online to support future ‘real-time’ updates being made to the information. The Group recognised that the collation of detailed space data was at an early stage and was advised that a funding bid to introduce a Facilities Management software system (which would support the retention and manipulation of such information) had been submitted.

The Group was advised that a manual audit of classroom usage was undertaken on an annual basis by the Timetabling team to inform School-level discussions on space but noted that it would be helpful for this type of information to be made more widely available as part of a broader Space Audit process.

The following sections were identified as priority areas where a target would be set to achieve a higher score in the 2022/23 review of the matrix:

* Space Audit;
* Records Management; and
* Space Modelling.

The Group anticipated receiving progress updates on the work undertaken in relation to these priority areas at future meetings.

**Action: DW/GG**

It was agreed that it would be beneficial for the Group to develop a shared understanding of space charging processes, including the impact of TRAC data on budget-setting, existing costs/calculations and the financial information currently held in relation to space. It was agreed that space charging would be included on the next agenda as a separate item for discussion.

**Action: Clerk (working with Finance team)**

2.2 Space Utilisation

The Group received and considered a suite of data on space utilisation (derived from TRAC return data provided by Schools in Session 2021/22) which identified the types of office space occupied across the University based on an analysis of staff roles (academic, administrative and support staff). The Group was advised that a separate analysis of (i) space occupied by Directorates, and (ii) teaching space to deliver a calculation of space occupied per student, would be undertaken.

Concerns were raised about the validity of the TRAC data (and the reporting process) and it was noted that the information gathered did not directly map onto the type of data that would be required for effective space management purposes. The importance of (i) Schools/Directorates fully understanding the true cost of space to the University and (ii) ensuring that any potential shortages of teaching space were identified and addressed at an early stage, was highlighted.

In noting the ambition within the Directorate of Estates & Facilities to develop core data which would support a greater understanding of the current position and inform the future use of space on campus, the Group agreed that the initial data was a helpful baseline.

It was agreed that in enhancing the space data held within the University, further consideration would be given to (i) the integration of existing data held across Schools/Directorates, and (ii) the type of data which would be helpful for the Group to consider in future. Group members were invited to submit further reflections on space data to the Clerk.

**Action: All**

3. CAPEX PROGRAMME AND USE OF SPACE

The Interim Director of Estates & Facilities provided an update on the development of the 1-year and 10-year Capex programmes. The Group was advised that a high-level modelling exercise of the space required to support the institutional strategic ambition to grow the student population had been undertaken and costed at c.£25M. The Group noted that the projects which had been identified through this process fell into 2 categories: (i) projects to improve the condition and fabric of historic buildings (which would not provide new teaching/office space), and (ii) capital projects e.g. King’s Quarter, Science Teaching Hub (which would provide additional space). The importance of integrating the outcome of discussions around future student population growth and investment to improve Staff:Student ratios with effective space management planning was highlighted.

The Group was advised that consideration had been given to how and where office accommodation could be provided for newly appointed members of Academic staff and that a renovation of the Crombie building had been proposed for this purpose (subject to Aberdeen City Council planning regulations). The challenges this solution would present for staff who were not co-located with School colleagues were noted. The Group anticipated receiving further updates on the Crombie proposal.

**Action: GW**

4. TEACHING SPACE NEEDS & UTILISATION

4.1 The Group received and noted a discussion paper on the impact of changes in relation to (i) accommodating an increased student population, (ii) pedagogic approaches and the impact on space utilisation, and (iii) the impact of capital projects on spaces on the teaching estate.

The Group recognised that the planned student population growth (particularly the focus on international students) would impact on the use of teaching space in relation to the development of larger cohorts and associated changes to teaching delivery e.g. online and hybrid learning.

The Group noted that based on HESA 2019 data, there had been low space utilisation rates (41%), with occupancy calculated at 67% and frequency of use at 62%. The Group was advised that the type of room with the highest utilisation, frequency and occupation rates were flat teaching rooms and lecture theatres/classrooms with capacity of 30-49. Laboratory spaces had the lowest rates.

The Group was advised that the completion of the Science Teaching Hub and anticipated completion of the King’s Quarter project would impact on the availability of teaching space. The Group also noted that the impact of the King’s development would include a temporary reduction in teaching spaces, relocation of office spaces and the loss of Elphinstone as an exam venue.

The growing demand for larger computing spaces for assessment and teaching, alongside a lack of student study space and provision of out-of-hours campus facilities for students, were also highlighted.

The Group was advised that late changes to patterns of course delivery had a significant impact upon timetabling and space allocation processes. The importance of ensuring that Schools were aware of these challenges was highlighted. The Group agreed that the introduction of an institutional Timetabling Policy would be helpful, drawing on practice elsewhere in the sector, and members were invited to submit ideas for topics for inclusion to the Clerk.

**Action: All (ideas), JP (policy development)**

5. AOB

Members were encouraged to (i) communicate the outcomes of the discussions to colleagues in Schools/Directorates, (ii) share ideas/learning between colleagues and the Group, and (iii) support colleagues in enhancing their understanding of the interdependencies arising from space management and space utilisation.

**Action: All**

6. REPORT FROM SPACE MANAGEMENT PANEL

The Group received and noted (i) a summary of the key decisions taken by the Space Management Panel between 10 May 2022 and 17 June 2022, (ii) the revisions which had been made to the Panel’s Terms of Reference (as endorsed by Estates Committee) during the period when the Space Management Group was not meeting regularly, and (iii) the ongoing discussions in relation to space matters being taken forward with Heads of School in line with the Guiding Principles of Space Management.

7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SPACE MANAGEMENT

The Group received and noted the Guiding Principles of Space Management which had been provided as background information to support preparation for the meeting.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The cycle of meetings for Session 2022/23 will be arranged on a quarterly basis and dates will be advised to Group members in due course.