UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SPACE MANAGEMENT GROUP MEETING

NOTE OF MEETING HELD ON 4 OCTOBER 2022

Present: K Leydecker (Convener), C Collins, M Cowie (vice G Paton), G Gordon, B Henderson, A Lambert, C MacDonald, D McCausland, R Moore, E Pavlovskaia, J Pearson, L Philip, K Smith, H Sveinsdottir, J Timms, G Wilkins and H Crabb (Clerk)

Apologies: D Dyker, P Gormley, K Kiezebrink, V Mabonso Nzolo, M Mills, G Nixon, G Paton, T Slaven, G Smith, D White, M White

In Attendance: M Rose and M Tomaszewska (for agenda item 3)

1. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 June 2022 were approved.

2. **TABLE OF ACTIONS**

The Group received the Table of Actions arising from the previous meeting and noted the actions were either complete or included as separate items on the agenda for discussion.

1. **SPACE COSTS**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Planning & Budgeting) delivered a presentation outlining (i) the Resource Allocation Model (the budget allocation of central costs to Disciplines within Schools), and (ii) the allocation of the total cost of the Estates Directorate (£25M in 2022/23), which is based on meters squared (M2) of space occupied.

The Group was advised that in calculating the cost charged to individual areas, a weighting was applied to the space occupied in line with the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) data. This applies a higher cost weighting to areas which are more costly to run e.g. facilities that are serviced on a 24/7 basis. The Group noted that other factors in the calculation included (i) the pro-rata allocation of School Office space, (ii) Central Teaching space allocation (based on student FTEs at snapshot 3), and (iii) unallocated space (based on a percentage of direct space occupied).

A discussion took place around different mechanisms which could be implemented to incentivise the more efficient use of teaching space e.g. including a charge around rooms booked (but not used), financial incentives for Schools to surrender unoccupied space on an annual basis etc.

The Group was advised that Schools (via School Administration Managers) had an opportunity to review the rooms allocated to their areas on an annual basis via the TRAC return process and noted that the teaching lab spaces within the Science Teaching Hub had been included in the 2022/23 RAM (at the cost weighting of 1.0). The Group also noted that some Schools could be reluctant to relinquish space due to a concern that it may not become available again in future should space needs change e.g. increased student numbers.

The challenges associated with estate planning for short-, medium- and longer-term future growth and investment across the University was noted and the importance of ensuring proactive estate/space planning in moving forward was highlighted.

The Group noted the recent appointment of a new Chief Financial Officer and was advised that a review of the RAM would be undertaken to ensure that the model remained optimal for driving the efficient use of the estate.

The Group anticipated receiving a copy of the presentation slides via circulation. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for the presentation to be delivered to all Heads of School and this will be arranged as part of the regular cycle of Senior Vice-Principal/Heads of School meetings.

**Action: Clerk**

1. **SPACE MANAGER UPDATE**

4.1 Space Matrix

The Group was advised that work was ongoing to adapt the Space Matrix to reflect more accurately the systems and processes in place at Aberdeen. The Group anticipated receiving a revised version at the next meeting.

**Action: GW**

4.2 Space Data

The Group was advised that the suite of data on space utilisation/office occupancy was being refined and enhanced in liaison with colleagues from the Directorates of Planning & Governance and People. The Group noted that future iterations would include information from other data sources in addition to the TRAC return. The Group anticipated receiving further updates at future meetings.

**Action: GW**

The Group received a demonstration of the Power BI reporting tool which calculated the occupancy percentage/utilisation of teaching spaces in buildings across campus. It was suggested that it would be helpful if future versions of the dashboard could provide more granular information e.g. daily room usage on an hourly basis. The Group was advised that work would continue to develop the dashboard and it was suggested that consulting with key individuals in Schools, including School Directors of Education and SAMs, could further enhance the development process.

The Group noted that some teaching was being timetabled on a Wednesday afternoon which had traditionally been kept clear to accommodate students participating in sports activities. The importance of close liaison with staff and students to gather relevant data in relation to participation in sports was highlighted to support informed decision-making. The challenges in balancing the competing priorities of optimising effective use of available teaching space, alleviating timetable pressures and supporting sport development (including high-performance sport) were recognised.

4.3 Crombie Building

The Group was advised that work was ongoing to explore the feasibility of using the Crombie building as office space for new members of staff. The Group noted that structural challenges and significant refurbishment work would be required. The Group was also advised that discussions were ongoing with Heads of School to identify solutions which would temporarily reduce the immediate pressure on office space pending the outcomes of the discussions on Crombie.

1. **TIMETABLING UPDATE**

The Group was advised that although work to develop an institutional Timetabling Policy had initially commenced in 2010, it had not been completed. The Group noted the draft Teaching Timetable & Room Booking Policy which had been provided by way of background information.

The Group was advised that the Timetabling team published Teaching Timetable Guidelines to support Schools on an annual basis and noted the exemplar from 2019/20 which had been circulated for information.

The Group was advised that teaching timetables were predominantly built around academic staff preferences and the challenges associated with this process, including timetable clashes and lack of availability of teaching space, were noted. It was suggested that a future approach to timetabling could revert back to the previous system whereby constraints on staff availability according to an agreed Constraints Policy were taken into account when allocating teaching times/locations.

The Group agreed to recommend to the Vice-Principal for Education that an institutional Timetabling Policy should be developed, taking account of (i) examples of best practice from elsewhere in the sector and (ii) the priorities outlined within the Aberdeen 2040 strategy. The Group anticipated receiving a draft as part of the wider consultation process in due course.

**Action: JP**

1. **SCIENCE TEACHING HUB – POST-OCCUPANCY ARRANGEMENTS**

6.1 Vacant Space – Meston/Zoology Buildings

The Group was advised that the transfer of some science teaching activities previously conducted in the Meston and Zoology Buildings had transferred to the Science Teaching Hub (STH) which had resulted in several large spaces, primarily established for lab-based teaching activities and now requiring significant refurbishing works, becoming vacant. The Group noted that no offices had relocated to the STH, nor were any such moves planned in future.

The Group considered the potential uses for the lab spaces formerly used by Chemistry in the Meston Building, noting that discussions were underway with the School of Engineering in relation to the future temporary occupancy of Room M155 and the submission of a proposal for consideration by the Space Panel in relation to longer-term occupancy of Room M165. The Group noted the challenges and associated costs of re-purposing/refurbishing the three vacant lab spaces (particularly the vacant lab Room M156) as a result of asbestos.

The Group noted that the need for a large-scale computing facility had been identified by several Schools and was advised that the IT equipment in the Computing Labs (G9 and G11) in the Zoology Building had reached the end of its lifecycle and was being decommissioned. The challenges associated with supply chain issues and lengthy delivery timescales for new IT equipment were noted.

The importance of starting to plan for future computer lab facilities, particularly in relation to flexible spaces which could accommodate (i) large lecture-style delivery, (ii) smaller group activities, and (iii) high-spec and sufficiently powerful computing equipment, was highlighted.

**Action: GW**

The Group noted that information about the facilities available in teaching spaces was available online, however, it was agreed that this information would be enhanced to include additional details e.g. photographs, room capacities, equipment, accessibility etc.

**Action: JP**

6.2 Post-Occupancy/Vacated Space Arrangements

The Group considered broader arrangements for considering the post-occupancy use of space upon the conclusion of future capital projects. The Group was advised that Project Boards overseeing construction/capital projects have responsibility for implementing post-occupancy space arrangements as a new building is transitioned into use. However, consideration of the use of space which is vacated following the completion of such projects does not fall within the remit of the Board which oversaw the construction process as it would not be appropriate for members to influence the arrangements for space in areas which they will be vacating and for which they will not have any responsibility following the transfer of activities to the new building.

The Group agreed to recommend the following to Estates Committee:

* The Terms of Reference for the Space Management Group are amended to include responsibility for (i) considering options for the future use of space which is vacated upon the conclusion of capital projects, and (ii) making recommendations on the use of the resulting vacant space to the Estates Committee; and
* The Project Management Office is invited to support the development of detailed post-occupancy procedures (including the consideration of vacated space) for inclusion in the institutional capital project management methodology.

**Action: Clerk**

The Group anticipated that the implementation of these recommendations would ensure that (i) vacated space arising from the completion of capital projects could be optimised by considering its future use at an early stage, (ii) post-occupancy considerations are formally considered by Project Boards upon the conclusion of capital projects, and (iii) potential solutions are subject to robust and transparent testing.

1. **SPACE PANEL UPDATE**

The Group noted that no decisions had been taken by the Space Panel since its report to the previous meeting.

1. **AOB**

All Group members were encouraged to identify topics for inclusion on future agendas in consultation with colleagues in their constituency groups. The important role the Group would play in the consultation process to develop the Estate Masterplan was highlighted.

**Action: All**

1. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Space Management Group will be held on Wednesday 11 January 2023 at 1.35pm – 2.55pm via Microsoft Teams.