



**KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**13 March 2015**

**Minute**

**Present:** Professor A Smyth (Convener)  
Ms D Davidson  
Vice-Principal Professor J Haywood  
Ms A Lamb  
Dr G McDougall  
Mr G McLachlan  
Vice-Principal Professor S Rigby  
Mr D Sekhar

**In attendance:** Ms J Craiglee  
Ms J Rennie  
Mrs T Slaven  
Assistant Principal, Professor A Trew  
Mr S Lewis  
Dr K J Novosel, Head of Court Services

**Apologies:** Assistant Principal Professor J Bradshaw  
Mr H Edmiston  
Mr P McNaull  
Dr C Elliott

**1 Minute**

**Paper A**

The Minute of the meeting held on 23 January 2015 was approved as a correct record.

The Committee welcomed Mr Gavin McLachlan, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University to his first meeting of the Committee and Professor Jeff Haywood in his new capacity of Vice-Principal, Digital Education (Senate appointed member).

**2 Matters Arising**

**Verbal**

It was confirmed that the IT Infrastructure Review had been considered and been supported, in principle, by the Policy and Resources Committee and by Court. Information on the current planning round would be presented to the next meeting of the Central Management Group and it was the intention to include consideration of funding to take forward the implications of the Review within the capital element.

The Committee further noted that it had been the intention to initiate a phase 2 of the IT Infrastructure to review in respect of learning and teaching space requirements. Following discussions with colleagues, a process was now underway to consider taking this forward as part of an annual programme and establishing a joint fund between IS and Estates to ensure that current facilities were maintained to an appropriate level.

### **3 Membership**

**Verbal**

The Committee noted that due to other work commitments, Dr Lowrey had resigned from the Committee with immediate effect. There were therefore now currently three vacancies on the Committee. It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Nominations Committee would be taking this forward in respect of the two Court appointed members and that Senate was already considering the best way to identify a member to replace Dr Lowrey. The Committee further noted that as from 1 August 2015 there would be a further vacancy for a Court appointed member and for a new Convener to be appointed by Court as Professor Smyth was standing down as a Court member on 31 July 2015.

The Committee noted the current position with concern and hoped that new members would be appointed as expediently as possible.

## **SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**

### **4 First Impressions**

**Verbal**

Mr McLachlan delivered a presentation on his first impressions since joining the University six weeks ago on 2 February 2015. The Committee noted the identified strengths in particular Library and Collection facilities, leadership in distance learning and the internationally recognised expertise of EDINA and the Digital Curation Centre and areas for improvement in particular around better and more efficient decision making, more robust IT security processes, a service portfolio management approach, and issues around sustainability including staffing approach and IS alignment with the overall University strategy.

A number of opportunities to take forward the work of IS had also been identified. Four key areas had emerged in respect of utilisation of the internationally recognised IT research undertaken within the University, strengthening links with IT expertise in Colleges and Schools, aligning with the evolving estates strategy, and building on the links to the Support Groups.

The Committee welcomed and noted this informative presentation. There was discussion around how best to ensure that Court was informed of IT/IM issues and the role of this Committee in this

process and improving the decision making process to assist in taking forward innovations while maintaining good governance practice. There was also discussion on the challenges around funding and the balance between maintaining services and introducing new ways of working.

## **5 Strategic IS spend and IT financial management**

**Verbal**

It was noted that this presentation expanded on issues around the impact of new projects and University growth on IS financial sustainability and set out a new approach for consideration.

There were numerous examples of new services and innovations being introduced across the University which resulted in significant recurring annual capital costs as well as continuing maintenance costs and staffing costs. The cost of these new activities as well as the costs to manage the increasing demands on current services was often not fully reflected in IS budget allocations: there being an assumption that these increased costs could be absorbed by efficiencies etc. from within current resources. There was a view that for every £1m capital investment there was an on-going annually required commitment of between £100k and £200k.

In order to better understand IS expenditure it was proposed to analyse spend into the categories of: Run – to maintain current services; Grow – University growth (staff and student numbers) and increased demands on services; and Transform – new services and innovations. In order to further consider funding requirements in each of these areas it was suggested that the 'Run' costs for core services should be non-discretionary and provided each year on a recurrent basis subject to any efficiency saving required and to reflect growth and new transformation activity from the previous year. Only funds associated with growth and transformation, discretionary funds, should be subject to and of interest to Court and its Committees.

It was currently estimated that between 85 % and 90% of IS spend was on 'Run' activities and the desire was to shift to a profile closer to 18% Transform, 21% Grow and 61% Run within the next three years. It was confirmed that this could only be achieved if, in addition to review and realignment of current staffing and other resources, there was also an increase to the overall IS budget. In respect of the review element, IS staff and resources should be better aligned to the University's core mission around learning, teaching and research: Commodity IS versus Value-added Learning, Teaching and Research IS. Therefore the aim would be to move as much resources as possible from Commodity IS to Value-added IS activity.

In order to take this forward, a process was underway to benchmark current IS spend to ascertain both any shortfalls and also to determine how funds could be utilised more effectively through

increased efficiency in operation etc. There may be opportunities, for instance, to amalgamate/consolidate services currently provided at various levels across the University thus freeing resources and there were clear indications of the desire of Colleges to work with IS.

The Committee welcomed this approach and looked forward to receiving further information on progressing Strategic IS spend.

## **6 e-Infrastructure design and research IT Services Strategy**

**Verbal**

Mr McLachlan delivered a presentation on enhancing and transforming research through the application of IT: the e-infrastructure required to be service based and provide support throughout the entire research cycle. The appropriate application of IT can assist in improving the effectiveness of research and in particular be of assistance with internal across disciplinary research and international collaborative research. IT services can support research across the entire research cycle from innovation and development, funding bids and initiation through to the actual research and the final outcomes including knowledge exchange.

In order to take this forward the Committee noted the various identified e-infrastructure domains which would be explored further and the proposal to work with colleagues within IS and across the University to create and agree a detailed plan. The plan would be presented as soon as possible to the Research Policy Group and then presented to this Committee for consideration and approval.

The Committee welcomed the proposed approach and noted the need to ensure a joined up strategy while recognising that as well the provision of core facilities there still may be a requirement for tailored applications in some areas leading to duplication. There was also discussion on prioritisation, the need to ensure the maintenance of core services and the balance around student and learning and teaching service provision.

## **7 Collections and Library Management Systems**

**Paper B**

The Committee noted progress to date take forward the replacement of the existing collections and library management systems including the establishment of a Project Board to oversee the programme and a user group. It was noted that the programme consisted of two integrated elements and that both would go live on 29 June 2015. The Library Committee would continue to monitor the programme and as appropriate provide information to the Knowledge Strategy Committee. It was further noted that the programme was being funded from within the Information Services' budget.

The Committee welcomed the intention to develop a roadmap/continuous improvement plan following the launch of these new

systems and that following a competition the name chosen for the new Library search service is DiscoverEd.

## **ROUTINE ITEMS**

### **8 UCAC Report**

**Paper C**

The Committee noted the report.

**ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING** (Please note these items are not normally discussed).

### **9 Ongoing Activities Update**

**Paper D**

The Committee noted the on-going activities update and agreed that it wished to be routinely updated on the development of the new Student Systems Roadmap.

### **10 Guidelines for approval of IT/Library spends in excess of £200k**

**Paper E**

The Committee was supportive of this approach but requested that the guidelines be amended to include approval of expenditure other than IT and library spend given the wider remit of the Committee. It was further noted that the University's Delegated Authorisation Schedule (DAS) was currently being reviewed and that these guidelines may therefore require to be amended to reflect revisions to the DAS.

There was also discussion around the research asset register and its visibility to the Committee. It was confirmed that this was held by finance.

### **11 Equipment Service Contract**

**Paper F**

The Committee agreed to delegate authority to Vice-Principal Professor Yellowlees to take forward, approve and sign the contractual documentation in respect of this equipment maintenance contract to the level of the cost including VAT as set out in the paper.

### **12 Future dates for Knowledge Strategy Committee**

The next meeting of the Knowledge Strategy Committee will be held on 5 June 2015 at 10.00 am in Meeting Room 1.09 in the Main Library. The presentation to this meeting will be on digital education.