



KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE

24 January 2020

Web Version

Minute

Present: Doreen Davidson, Court appointee (Convener)
Sue Currie, Court appointee
Colm Harmon, Senate appointee
Siân Bayne, Senate appointee
Melissa Highton, Senate appointee
Tina Harrison, Senate appointee
Alan Murray, Senate appointee
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University
Stephanie Vallancey, Student representative

In attendance: Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning
Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & Planning
Catherine Elliott, CMVM representative
Simon Kelley, CSE representative
Melissa Terras, CAHSS representative
Ashley Shannon, Director of Operations, Corporate Services Group (for Hugh Edmiston)
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
Mark Parsons, Professor of High Performance Computing (for Item 4)
Tony Weir, Director, IT Infrastructure (for Item 5)

Apologies: Elizabeth Bomberg, Court appointee
Claire Phillips, Court appointee
Hugh Edmiston, Vice-Principal & Director of Corporate Services

1 Minutes

Papers A1-A2

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October and e-meeting concluded on 23 December 2019 were approved.

2 Matters Arising

Verbal

The Chief Information Officer provided a verbal update on the Core Systems Programme, now retitled as 'People & Money', with a progress report to be provided to the next meeting.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3 Information Services Plan

Verbal

The Chief Information Officer presented the emerging key components for the Information Services Group's (ISG) annual planning round submission. The submission is being developed around the four Strategy 2030 areas: people; research; teaching and learning; and, social and civic responsibility. A key element within the people strand is to expand workplace experiences within ISG for students. 300 students a year are currently benefiting, with the near term intention to grow to 500 students and a long-term aspiration of 1,000 students. Within the teaching and learning strand, the successful 'makerspace' in the Library could be a model for other parts of the University to establish makerspaces, with a paper to be submitted to the Committee on this topic.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- How to adopt the online/distance learning technologies for the hybrid online/in person approach to be pioneered by the Edinburgh Futures Institute – a course in teaching online courses has been developed and a course in teaching hybrid online/in person courses could be developed in partnership with the Edinburgh Futures Institute;
- Managing the tension between maintaining sufficient recurrent funding for core services and funding digital transformation projects – this will be done in close consultation with the Colleges to ensure that the appropriate balance is met;
- The potential for very different makerspaces in engineering or medicine is exciting – student demand for such provision is likely strong but will need to be considered against other high student demand areas, e.g. refurbishment of audiovisual facilities;
- Avoiding any disconnect between ISG, Colleges and Edinburgh Futures Institute colleagues on Distance Learning at Scale activities – the consolidation of virtual learning environments (see Item 9) has helped bring staff across the University together. ISG are working to connect staff specialising in online learning across the University and this will continue.

4 World Class Data Infrastructure IT Procurement

Paper B

Following an overview presentation at the previous meeting, the planned procurement of Information Technology equipment for the City Region Deal's World Class Data Infrastructure hub was reviewed. The inclusion of an information security component was welcomed and plans to mitigate software costs by using open source software where possible discussed. It was noted that the contract allowance for additional expenditure by the EPCC (formerly the Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre) and Information Services Group is not budgeted for at present. In EPCC's case, additional expenditure would only be undertaken if funded by external grants and for Information Services Group, additional expenditure would be subject to usual planning round decisions but the importance of including this provision in the contract was agreed. Consideration of data ethics was raised, to be overseen on a project by project basis by the City Deal Executive Governance Group and by the AI & Data Ethics Board chaired by Vice-Principal Professor Richard Kenway as appropriate. Provision for long term costs after the end of the 10 year funding period

was queried, with the funding provided including a replacement cycle to cover a 15 year period and the intention to move towards self-funding over the period.

Environmental sustainability in relation to high performance computing systems more generally was discussed, noting that the largest system is the ARCHER2 system, which is a UK national resource hosted in Edinburgh and should be considered on a national level. The University uses a green electricity tariff and for the next generation of high performance computing systems is considering novel approaches to cooling and heat reclamation. An initial study is underway and funding to develop this applied for.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Policy & Resources Committee and Court that the University procure the IT equipment using an open procedure through the Official Journal of the European Union. The Committee further agreed to recommend to Court that, following the successful conclusion of the procurement process, contract signature (for an initial period of 5 years) is delegated to the Principal and subsequent to contract signature, authority is delegated to Professor Mark Parsons under the governance of City Deal Executive Governance Group to issue Purchase Orders against the IT Building Block price list.

5 Information Security Update

Paper C

An update on current and planned work being undertaken to address the ongoing information security threat facing the University was considered.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL

6 Data-Driven Innovation: Regional Internet of Things Sensor Network

Paper D

Following approval of the first phase data platform appliance at the previous meeting, the purchase of the second phase sensor network as part of the City Region Deal's World Class Data Infrastructure Internet of Things service was considered. Ethical and data security considerations in the establishment of a sensor network were raised, with projects to be reviewed by School-level Ethics Committees and the AI & Data Ethics Board as appropriate and an intention to set an exemplar in data security for the sensor network. The Committee approved the investment and delegated signing authority for the purchase to the Vice-Principal & Chief Information Officer.

7 IT Committee: Revised Terms of Reference

Paper E

Following review by a working group, revised terms of reference for the IT Committee were submitted for approval. The intention to bolster the IT Committee's ability to govern the acquisition and implementation of IT systems with the aim of avoiding proliferation of systems in different parts of the University was welcomed. Adding pre-approval checks to procurement processes as a further safeguard was also suggested. Subject to minor textual amendments in consultation with the Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning, the revised terms of reference were approved.

8 IT and Library Spends in Excess of £500k

Paper F

Planned IT and Library expenditure between £500k and £2m was reviewed. Reducing printer usage as the next stage of the sustainable IT programme was discussed, with the intention to consolidate the number of printing devices. A future discussion on potential costs of the Plan S open access scheme for research intensive universities was requested. The two planned expenditures for printer leasing and science journal subscriptions were approved as set out in the paper.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

9 Virtual Learning Environment Programme Closure Report

Paper G

A closure report on the four year programme to consolidate the number of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platforms used within the College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine was reviewed. The Committee congratulated all those involved in the programme for the success achieved and discussed how to embed findings in institutional memory. It was suggested that ensuring that the main VLE now in use, 'Learn', is sufficiently flexible to incorporate novel uses by teaching staff is key to avoiding the creation of new VLEs within Schools without the support of the Information Services Group.

10 University Collections Facility Rainwater Ingress Report

Paper H

A report outlining damage caused by rainwater ingress to one unit within the University Collections Facility in summer 2019 and the response taken in line with the Library & University Collections Disaster Response and Recovery plan was considered. A commercial disaster response specialist that had not provided suitable services in the timeframe has had their contract cancelled and partner institutions such as the National Museum of Scotland that had provided important assistance were thanked. Planned next steps include expanding the Edinburgh network of reciprocal inter-institutional support and re-tendering for a new commercial support partner. The Committee thanked all staff involved for their prompt action in responding to the situation and significant efforts in subsequent restoration work.

11 Information Services Group Capital Expenditure

Paper I

The updated forecast for years 2019/20 to 2025/26 was noted.

12 Committee Reports

• IT Committee

Paper J1

The report was noted, with a request for a finalised version of the sustainable IT policy to be circulated to the Committee.

• Library Committee

Paper J2

The report was noted.

- **University Collections Advisory Committee**

Paper J3

The report was noted and the additional donation of letters and the library of Charles Lyell by his descendants welcomed.

- **Digital Research Services Steering Group**

Paper J4

The report was noted.

- **Business Intelligence (BI)/Management Information (MI)
Governance Board Report**

Japer J5

The report was noted.

14 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

15 Date of Next Meeting

Friday, 20 March 2020, 10.00-12.00