



KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE

20 October 2020 (Videoconference)

Web Version

Minute

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

In attendance: Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
Dave Berry, Enterprise Architect
Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & Planning
Catherine Elliott, CMVM representative
Simon Kelley, CSE representative
Sue MacGregor, Director of Academic Services
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal (Interim) Corporate Services
Mark Ritchie, Deputy Director of Applications & Head of Project Services (for Item 7)
Zoe Stephens, Head of Organisational Development and Change, Estates (for Item 7)
Arthur Trew, Assistant Principal Computational Science (for Item 8)
Tony Weir, Director, IT Infrastructure (for Items 9-11)

Apologies: Siân Bayne, Senate appointee
Sarah McAllister, Court appointee
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
Melissa Terras, CAHSS representative
Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning

1 Minute

Paper A

The Minute of the meeting held on 22 May 2020 was approved.

In her absence, Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning, was thanked for her service and advice to the committee and wished well in her new role at the University of Aberdeen.

2 Matters Arising

Verbal

There were no matters arising.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3 Digital Strategy Presentation

Verbal

A presentation on the development of a new digital strategy to link to Strategy 2030 and the University's adaptation and renewal work in response to the pandemic was received. The associated vision and principles will be progressed and a period of consultation undertaken prior to the completion of a first draft, which is expected in December. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Ensuring that any College-level digital strategies under development are complementary and do not pull in different directions – the development of the University-level digital strategy will closely involve IT Committee and Knowledge Strategy and their University-wide memberships for this reason;
- Recognising that while the move to remote learning and working from March has led to a step change in the levels of digital engagement across the University, embedding a digital culture beyond the present circumstances may still take time and need encouragement and commitment at all levels;
- IT security should be built into all elements of the strategy; and,
- The consultative approach was welcomed – with a deliberate effort to be made to consult with colleagues beyond a core of digital enthusiasts.

4 Chief Information Officer Update

Verbal

The Chief Information reported on key activities and events since the last meeting, including: preparations for the new semester – with the University's Centre for Research Collection being the first research library in the UK to re-open in early July following UK-wide restrictions and the Main Library launching a click and collect service for the first time; pressures on staff within Information Services Group given the tremendous increase in demand for digital services, with thanks noted to staff in Estates for their work to create a safe environment for those returning to campus; responding to increased demand on digital systems, adding capacity where required; concerns that some software suppliers may seek to increase prices given current circumstances; putting additional security measures in place given the worldwide growth in cybercrime seen during the pandemic, including significant cyberattacks on a number of other UK universities; and, anticipating supply chain delays given the pandemic through advance bulk ordering of key equipment. On behalf of the Committee, the Convener thanked all staff in Information Services Group for their work in assisting all areas of the University in preparing for the new semester and delivering a hybrid teaching model.

5 Adaptation & Renewal Update

Paper B

Information Services support provided as part of the adaptation and renewal programme being undertaken by the four workstreams of: Research; Student; Estate & Digital Infrastructure; and, Reshaping, was reviewed. Additional services that have been established in recent months include a cloud based phone service for areas such as the IT helpdesk, admissions and a Covid hotline; an online conference facility; a social media platform for prospective students and student ambassadors (Unibuddy); the provision of 3,000 ethernet cables to students in halls of residence in advance of upgrade of the network; and, a Virtual Private Network for students in

countries subject to local firewalls to allow them to access remote learning. The impact on ongoing projects that predated the pandemic was queried, with around half of such projects suspended to allow staff and financial resource to be redeployed.

6 Student Study Spaces Update

Paper C

An update on the project to reconfigure student study spaces given public health requirements was considered. The introduction of a two metre physical distancing rule without mitigation would reduce study space capacity to 25% of pre-Covid levels. In response, a phased roll out of additional study space areas has been ongoing since mid-September, with 1,374 new spaces added by early October and a further 348 expected by the end of the month. The project includes the provision of a seat booking app developed by the University and ongoing management of study spaces, including analysing student demand and responding to feedback, e.g. considering the appropriate mixture of shorter and longer time slots for booking. Members discussed health and safety measures, with students encouraged by staff monitors to clean spaces after each use and professional cleaning undertaken twice a day; and assessing priority cases for use of study spaces – with information already available on students from widening participation backgrounds and the ability for students with other circumstances (e.g. commuter students) to either self-identify or raise this with their personal tutor.

7 Space and Facilities Management

Paper D

An introductory paper on the project to replace the Computer Aided Facilities Management system for the University's estate was reviewed ahead of an outline business case planned for January 2021. It was noted that the existing system has been in place for around 20 years and no longer supports the requirements of the Estates Department and cannot be upgraded incrementally. The following points were raised in discussion:

- The current lack of integration with timetabling should be addressed in any new system;
- Estates Committee have been kept apprised of the project and the need to replace the current system; and,
- Where the project sits within the overall strategy of updating University systems and the new People & Money system in particular – the project has been planned within a phased strategy of upgrading University systems, with the People & Money system progressing first, to be closely followed by the new space and facilities management system.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

8 DiRAC3 High Performance Computer purchase

Paper E

The proposed purchase of a High Performance Computing (HPC) facility, the Extreme Scaling DiRAC3 service for UK Particle Physics Theory researchers was reviewed. It was noted that the purchase would be fully funded by the UK Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), at a cost of £7.7M in capital expenditure for the HPC and £200k for data storage (both inclusive of VAT) for the first stage of

the new facility. A second stage may follow during financial year 2021-22. Noting that the service support costs would be met by a separate grant from the STFC, the purchase was strongly supported and recommended for approval by Court.

9 Enterprise IT Infrastructure Investment

Paper F

A proposed investment in Enterprise Infrastructure, the consolidated platform for central on-premises IT services aside from high performance research computing, was reviewed. It was confirmed following a query that staffing costs for the services are included in the annual running costs set out in the paper. It was agreed to recommend Option B for approval by Court: Replacement of Enterprise Infrastructure, with a minor error in the paper to be corrected in the version submitted to Court.

10 Network Replacement Programme Update

Paper G

An update on the deployment of the new University data network was considered. Members discussed the intention of the replacement programme to extend to University halls of residence, which currently operate on a separate network, and whether the installation date for halls of residence of January/February 2021 can be brought forward given present circumstances. The potential for accelerated installation is being explored as a priority but time is also required to assess pilots of new technologies planned for the network including a pilot underway in one hall of residence. The risk of network disruption during the installation was also raised, noting that the work of greatest risk has already been completed and risks at this stage are more logistical than technical in nature. Temporary outages as equipment is installed will be local in scale and advertised in advance.

11 Introduction of Use of Operational Data Policy

Paper H

A proposed Use of Operational Data Policy to formalise different use cases and provide clarity for access requests for operational data (e.g. system generated logs used for fault resolution, service capacity planning, estate capacity management) was reviewed. The importance of robust processes to ensure that staff using operational data who join, leave or change roles have appropriate access rights granted and withdrawn as required was raised. It was agreed to recommend the draft Policy for approval by the University Executive.

Secretary's Note: a colleague unable to attend the meeting commented in advance that an appointed oversight body (akin to a Research Ethics Committee) to review proposals to use operational data should be established. The Chief Information Security Officer advised that potential use of operational data for research purposes will follow existing College/School ethical approval process. The final version subsequently agreed by the University Executive includes the addition of ethical review where personal data is involved.

12 Information Security Policy Refresh **Paper I**

Proposed minor updates to the Information Security Policy including a clarification that the Policy applies when working remotely were reviewed and recommended for approval by the University Executive.

13 IT and Library Expenditure in Excess of £500k **Paper J**

Two planned expenditures within the Committee's delegated authority approval level of £500k to £2m were reviewed and approved.

14 Senate Committees Update: Virtual Classroom Policy **Paper K**

A new Virtual Classroom Policy to clarify rights and responsibilities when delivering and recording teaching and learning using digital communication and collaboration technologies was noted, following approval by the Senate Education Committee prior to the start of the new semester. The Policy will return to the Senate Education Committee with an amendment regarding Zoom videoconferencing services.

15 Unibuddy and Large Online Events – Enterprise Governance **Paper L**

A report on the IT Committee Approval Sub-Group's scrutiny of two enterprise systems requests: for the Unibuddy platform for prospective students; and, a potential digital and online events platform, was noted.

16 Guidance on Recommended Student Technology **Paper M**

Guidance on recommended technology for students to use to ensure the best possible learning experience in line with the move to hybrid teaching was welcomed, with the guidance to be kept under review and updated over time.

17 Information Security Update **Paper N**

The regular update on Information Security risk management activity across the University was noted. The rollout of the LastPass password manager system was welcomed and an update on completion rates for the mandatory information security course for staff requested for the next meeting, with further communication to encourage greater awareness supported.

18 People & Money Update **Paper O**

An update on the People and Money system implementation was noted, with the 'go-live' date for the HR element to move from 28 October to 11 November.

19 Information Services Group Capital Envelope **Paper P**

The updated forecast for capital expenditure to 2025/26 was noted, with the principal change since the last update a delay in expenditure on the network replacement programme as a result of building closures in Spring/early Summer 2020 given the pandemic.

20 Committee Reports

- **IT Committee**

Paper Q1

The report was noted.

- **Library Committee**

Paper Q2

The report was noted and a minor revision to the Committee's Terms of Reference regarding deputising arrangements for College representatives approved as set out in the paper.

21 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

22 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 26 January 2021, 10.00-12.00