

# The Council, 19 October 2020

## Report of the Estates Committee

**Date:** 13 July 2020

**Chair:** Mr A Belton

**Secretary:** Ms K Sullivan

### 1. Estates and Facilities Management - Covid-19 Updates

- 1.1 The Estates Committee noted an update on the key risks relating to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Estates & Facilities Management (EFM) and capital projects underway. The Committee noted key challenges and potential risks in terms of legionella management in empty or underutilised buildings, risks to maintenance arrangements in the context of potential budget constraints and the ability of EFM to continue with the planned preventative maintenance (PPM) approach, should there be a reduction in budget funding. This included potential risks to the overall condition of the estate over time should budget reductions result in a change in approach to maintenance arrangements. The Committee also noted key risks relating to how a safe return to campus will be managed, specifically in terms of changes to cleaning practices and challenges relating to staffing arrangements for cleaning staff. It was highlighted that, assuming a full return to campus of staff and students, there was a risk in terms of EFM's ability to ensure sufficient staff capacity to meet the cleaning standards set out in Government guidance if, at the same time, the department was required to deliver financial savings.
- 1.2 The Committee was assured that all statutory and regulatory maintenance and health and safety checks on buildings has continued and noted that buildings will be re-energised and made fit for purpose before staff and students return. The Committee was also assured that University Executive Board (UEB) has been clear that the University must and will maintain a statutory and regulatory compliant estate, this includes meeting essential and Covid-19 related cleaning requirements. Work was ongoing at the time to better understand the extent of all these requirements and, while all departments have been asked to identify potential savings, the University remains committed to ensuring that funds are reprioritised where appropriate to ensure that obligations are met and that all necessary steps are taken to ensure a safe return to campus. The Committee highlighted the importance of learning from other Universities and of ensuring that records are kept of the precautions taken to prepare for a safe return to campus. It was noted that, the Covid-19 Management Group, continues to consider, amongst other matters, key risks relating to EFM. UEB has considered the specific challenges relating to cleaning and the Committee will receive an update on key risks to the EFM agenda at the next meeting.

### 2. Estates Strategy Development

- 2.1 Prior to the Global Covid-19 Pandemic, the Committee commissioned the development of an overall roadmap and timescales for developing the Estates Strategy and, in conjunction with UEB, to develop the 'Big Questions' the Estates Strategy (and enabling / faculty level strategies) should aim to answer. It is currently felt that, in the context of the uncertainty around the future impact of Covid-19 on the University's finances and operations, that development of the 2021/26 Estate Strategy would be premature at this time however, some immediate actions are being developed. These include progressing work on the Science Estate Development Framework (SEDF), work to consider

opportunities for longer-term change to ways of working and opportunities to consider the future size and shape of the institution. Since the time of the meeting, it has been agreed to develop an interim document covering a maximum of 2 years. The Committee considered the following updates:

2.1.1 **Space Management and ways of working** – The Committee received an update on the work of the Space Management and Efficiency Working Group which was established in June 2020 to consider the impact and opportunities presented by the changes in working patterns instigated by Covid-19 lockdown and the University's capital pause in order to review the University's principles for space management and approach to flexible and remote working. The group has been working on options to maximise the efficient and effective use of space to support delivery of the University's mission and strategy in a post-Covid-19 operating environment – including spaces that can potentially be released by agile working.

2.1.2 **Social Sciences Building** – Due to the unforeseen circumstances with the development of the Social Sciences Building, as referred to in section 3.1.3 of this report, there is an opportunity to rethink its occupancy, use and design. EFM colleagues are working with the Faculty and the Project Executive Group (PEG) to reconsider the design of the space within the building to provide an agile environment. These proposals will aim to maximise the use of space within the building, reduce future capital expenditure and manage any future growth without the need to increase footprint. A key element of the redesign will be to reconsider the extent of academic cellular offices.

2.2 The Committee welcomes the direction of travel in terms of thinking about more agile ways of working but it also recognises the challenges this could bring, particularly in terms of a move away from academic cellular offices, which will be a significant cultural change for the organisation. It will be important for leadership to be seen to adopt these new ways of working and for there to be a consistent approach. The Committee was assured that managers are committed to progressing this way of thinking and that the Space Management & Efficiency Working Group, which includes senior leadership from HR, IT Services, EFM and the Faculties, is undertaking significant engagement across the University.

### **3. Capital Programme Update / Capital Prioritisation Review**

3.1 The Committee considered an update on the progress of key schemes and capital prioritisation plans. The Committee noted the following updates:

3.1.1 **General Update** - Alignment to the Capital Prioritisation Pause List had, at the time of reporting, seen the number of live projects reduce from 133 to 68 with 15 projects currently ongoing on site and there has been a reduction in the number of project managers (PMs), achieved by releasing external/sub-contracted PMs. It was highlighted that, in terms of capacity, the project management team will be in a position to accept new projects from November 2020. It was highlighted that it took the majority of contractors between eight and ten weeks to remobilise following the initial Covid-19 National lockdown and this, combined with requirements on the University and contractors to comply with Government guidance on social distancing, has resulted in delays on some major projects. As previously reported, where possible to do so, the University has continued to make space available to contractors for welfare facilities and this has enabled some contractors to continue working safely on site. The Committee noted that capital programme reporting is being developed to more clearly set out key milestones and identify slippage.

- 3.1.2 **Engineering Heartspace Lessons Learned** – The Committee noted that The project has won the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Yorkshire & Humberside region Social Impact Award and had, at the time of reporting, been shortlisted in the education category of the RIBA regional awards. The Committee also noted that the building has been very well received by staff and students however, the project has faced significant challenges and, in light of this, the Committee considered an update with a focus on lessons learned. While recognising that the majority of the challenges faced were outside of the control of the University, the Committee noted a key learning point about ensuring that contingency funds are appropriately aligned to the complexity and scale of projects. The Committee has commissioned a thematic review of lessons learned across key projects to be considered at the next meeting.
- 3.1.3 **Social Sciences Building** - The Committee noted an update on findings relating to the construction process for the Social Sciences Building and movements in structural columns, which went beyond the final specification tolerances. Following the notification of movement within the concrete frame (March 2020), significant work has been ongoing to review the safety of the structure and investigate the reason for the failure. Since the time of the meeting, the conclusion is that the piling design undertaken by BAM's sub-contractor, failed to interpret the site investigations correctly. Agreement has now been reached between their parties, their insurers, loss adjusters and legal representatives that the whole of the concrete structure will be removed and the building will recommence construction in November 2020. The legal and technical position is clear; there will be no additional costs to the University however, the remedial work is expected to delay the project by up to 12 to 15 months.

#### **4. October 2020 Meeting**

- 4.1 Due to availability of members, it has not been possible to go ahead with the Estates Committee meeting planned for 19 October 2020. Following consultation with the Chair and the University Secretary's Office, it has been agreed to stand down this meeting, rather than rearrange it, and instead to progress any relevant business by email pending the next meeting in February 2021. There are no decisions or recommendations that the Committee needed to make and no areas where Council would expect any form of assurances at the moment. Council has received in the meeting papers the Capital reports which, although focusing on the financial aspects, do provide updates about our capital plans. Should any urgent matters arise that should be brought to the Estates Committee's attention before February, the University Secretary's Office will look to set up an ad-hoc meeting for these to be considered.