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UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SPACE MANAGEMENT GROUP MEETING

NOTE OF MEETING HELD ON 1 JUNE 2023

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Present: K Leydecker (Convener), M Beers, C Collins, M Cowie (vice G Paton), S Duncan, G Gordon, B Henderson, K Kiezebrink, D McCausland, R Moore, G Nixon, E Pavlovskaia, J Pearson, L Philip, H Sveinsdottir, G Wilkins and H Crabb (Clerk)

Apologies: D Dyker, C MacDonald, M Mills, G Paton, T Slaven, K Smith, J Timms and V Mabonso Nzolo

In Attendance: R Lynch

1.   **MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 March 2023 were approved subject to an amendment in 6.1 to read:

- The Group anticipated that the collation of this data would encourage the efficient use of space, particularly in relation to seeking efficiencies in space occupancy, which would have a corresponding impact on sustainability considerations.

2.   **TABLE OF ACTIONS**

2.1   Table of Actions
The Committee received the Table of Actions arising from the previous meeting and noted the following:

Teaching Timetable & Room Booking Policy
The Group was advised that work was ongoing to develop the Policy and anticipated receiving further updates.   **Action: JP**

Research Spaces
The Group was advised that discussions would take place with the current and incoming Vice-Principal (Research) and Heads of School to discuss the identification of requirements around research spaces.   **Action: GN**

3.   **ROOM OCCUPANCY DATA**

The Group received a presentation from Gregg Wilkins, Space Manager, and Jennie Pearson, Deputy Academic Registrar, outlining the analysis of data which had been undertaken on timetabled room occupancy (based on teaching bookings for 2022 within the central system during the periods Monday-Friday, 9am – 5pm).

The Group welcomed the development of the Power BI Dashboard and noted the analysis which had been undertaken on timetabled occupancy rates for teaching spaces, including flat floor spaces, lecture theatres, computer rooms and laboratories. It was suggested that the summary data collated on lecture theatres would benefit from a more granular approach prior to further dissemination.

The Group was advised that the data had been analysed based on an assumption of (i) 222 timetabled teaching spaces available across the University, (ii) 10,590,800 available seats throughout the Academic Year, and (iii) 4,884 teaching hours over a 22-week period. The Group noted that 2,265,893 seats had been occupied (21.4% of the available space), with 1,626 hours of teaching time booked (33.75% of available time) which had resulted in the equivalent of 3,192 weeks when rooms had been vacant (66.25% of capacity).

In reviewing the data, the Group noted that rooms had been booked based on factors beyond room capacity/type e.g. accessibility requirements, timetable clashes (staff teaching and course clashes), type of teaching delivery (block teaching requirements) etc. The Group also noted that

the data only included centrally-held information, and did not incorporate bookings for activities in School-managed spaces.

The Group was advised that a project was underway to capture information about the usage of PC laboratories and noted that the outcomes of this activity would provide additional data for consideration.

The following key points were raised in discussion:
- It will be important to capture a comprehensive overview of room usage across the estate to enhance the data held on centrally timetabled teaching space;
- The analysis of the data will provide a baseline set of information which will be helpful in undertaking external benchmarking exercises;
- The initial data analysis indicated that the University is not making the most efficient use of its available space and it will be important to identify underlying causes e.g. rooms may be too large/small, are there sufficient flexible/multifunctional spaces available, are classes being timetabled appropriately so that the maximum use can be gained from the space (particularly scheduling of longer classes, curriculum stipulations, block teaching), etc.;
- Teaching rooms are booked based on the number of enrolled students – however, attendance at some sessions is difficult to predict and can be very low which results in inefficient space usage;
- Details are not held in central systems on teaching activities which take place in School-managed spaces but are not specifically designated as teaching spaces – the data analysis would be enhanced if this information could be included in future;
- In some Schools, a transition period is underway as teaching delivery is moving to interactive teaching sessions being delivered in-person with a reduction in the number of in-person large-scale lectures (and a corresponding increase in the need for flexible smaller teaching spaces and a reduction in the need for traditional lecture theatre spaces);
- The annual timetable build process commences with rolling forward the previous year's schedule – it was recognised that this can lead to existing inefficiencies being perpetuated;
- The significant costs associated with teaching being concentrated into certain parts of the day/week rather than using the full week was highlighted;
- The importance of Schools and Directorates working together flexibly and in partnership to share available space was encouraged; and
- A manual exercise to cross-check all physical rooms on campus against the data held in floor plans would be beneficial (recognising the resource implications of this activity).

The importance of ensuring that the data collated for analysis was as accurate and complete as possible was recognised. It was agreed that all Group members would be provided with access to the PowerBI Dashboard to enable them to contribute to its further refinement and enhancement, including (i) suggestions for improvement, and (ii) provision of additional data.

Action: All

The Group anticipated that the completion of the data analysis process would underpin the University-wide discussions on the development of the Estates Masterplan, particularly in relation to identifying the size/types of physical space required to accommodate current and anticipated styles/patterns of teaching delivery. The Group also anticipated that the analysis would inform how the use of the estate could be optimised which would contribute to the achievement of institutional financial sustainability, net zero and student/staff experience ambitions.

It was agreed that a communication would be issued from the Group to all Schools and Directorates to (i) raise awareness of the initial findings of the room occupancy analysis, (ii) test the validity of the initial findings, and (iii) highlight that additional information about the usage of locally managed spaces will be sought.

Action: KL/MB

In welcoming the work which had been undertaken to date, the Group recognised the efforts which had been made to gather and analyse a significant volume of information drawn from several disparate sources.

4. **SPACE PANEL UPDATE**

The Group noted the decisions taken by the Space Panel since its report to the previous meeting.

5. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The cycle of meetings of Space Management Group for Session 2023/24 will be announced in due course.