



## **Estates Committee**

**Wednesday 12 March 2025**

### **Minute – Website Version**

**Note:** This is an edited version of the full Estates Committee minutes. The majority of papers for Estates Committee are closed but where possible minute text has been provided. This may not be the full minute for each item.

**Present:** Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member of Court (Convener)  
David Argyle, Vice Principal and Head of College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine  
Nirmal Borkhataria, Director of Finance  
Leigh Chalmers, Vice-Principal and University Secretary  
Sue Currie, External Member  
Iain Gordon, Vice-Principal and Head of College of Science & Engineering  
Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability  
Kim Graham, Provost  
Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students  
Dora Herndon, EUSA President  
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services  
Theresa Merrick, Director of Communications and Marketing  
Mark Parsons, EPCC Director and Dean of Research Computing  
Alistair Smith, Co-opted Member of Court  
Rona Smith, Director of Strategic Planning & Insight  
Carina Svensen, Director of Accommodation, Catering and Events  
Richard Terry, External Member of the Committee  
Damien Toner, Director of Estates

**In Attendance:** Tommy Angus, Director of Estates Operations  
Stephen Barnes, College of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences, Head of Operations and Planning  
Anne-Marie Coriat, College Registrar, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine  
Christian Davis, Finance Business Partner  
Ruth Elliott, Students' Association Vice-President Community  
Jane Johnston, Director of Estate Development  
Hannah King, Policy and Governance Manager  
Chloe Kippen, Director of Philanthropy and College Advancement  
Julia Laidlaw, Head of Estates Planning  
Peter Mathieson, The Principal and Vice-Chancellor  
Jennifer Milne, Deputy CIO  
Anne Payne, College Registrar, College of Science and Engineering  
Zoe Stephens, Director of Estates Business Services  
Tony Weir, Director of Information Technology Infrastructure  
Helen Wood, Head of University Space

**Apologies:** Chris Cox, Vice-Principal Philanthropy and Advancement and Executive

Director of Development and Alumni  
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University  
Sarah Prescott, Vice Principal, Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences  
Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management and IS Planning  
Terry Fox, Director of Specialist Services, Finance  
Grant Ferguson, Director of Estates Net Zero and Carbon Leadership  
Heather Lawrence, College Registrar, College of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences

## **1. Welcome & Introduction**

The Convener welcomed:

- Stephen Barnes, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) Head of Operations and Planning
- Christian Davis, Finance Business Partner
- Chloe Kippen, Director of Philanthropy and College Advancement

Apologies were noted by the Committee.

As the Principal and the Head of College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine were not expected to be in attendance at the beginning of the meeting, it was agreed to consider agenda items 11 and 12 prior to agenda items 7-10.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

It was advised that declarations of interest had been added as a standing agenda item as a result of feedback received during the Estates Committee Effectiveness and Performance – Self-Assessment.

There were no declarations of interest raised.

## **3. Minute - Wednesday 4 December 2024**

Estates Committee approved the minute from 4 December 2025 subject to adding Heather Lawrence, College Registrar, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to the list of those in attendance.

## **4. Matters Arising**

Estates Committee noted the following update from Policy and Resources Committee – 3 February 2025 and University Court – 24 February 2025:

BioQuarter - Scottish Power Energy Network (SPEN) Upgrade - Noted that all category C projects would be reviewed, and approved the University's contribution to SPEN work such that this was included in the category C review.

## **5. Estates Committee Action Log**

Estates Committee noted the action log and that the Director of Estates and the Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University would review the status and timings of actions, with a view to closing items.

Action: Director of Estates and Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University

## **6. Key Decision Forward Plan**

A forward plan was presented listing the reports that were expected to be presented to Estates Committee in the coming year and the decisions that would be required by Estates Committee.

Estates Committee noted the Key Decisions Forward Plan.

## **7. Director of Finance Update Report**

The Committee was provided with an update on the 2025-30 planning round, the activities that the Senior Leadership Team were undertaking in addressing the financial challenges and the impact on the University's capital budget.

In relation to the Physical Estate Capital Plan, it was advised that a review had been undertaken of uncommitted projects from the current Capital Plan, in order to preserve cashflow in the short term. A new Capital Plan was being developed and there would likely be a change in emphasis of the Plan to focus on areas such as the condition of the estate.

The committee had several contributing papers on the agenda concerning estates usage and benchmarking, small works and the condition of the estate and requirement for backlog maintenance. These factors and new projects looking at, for example, estate disposals would inform the strategic direction for the estate to be consistent with the planned operational efficiencies of the University.

In relation to the Digital Estate, there was a general shift to providing more services as Software as a Service which is funded from revenue expenditure rather than capital.

Estates Committee noted the update.

## **8. Estates Annual Capital Plan 2024 to 2029**

An update to the Capital Plan for the five-year period 2024 to 2029 was presented. It set out the movements in the Capital Plan compared with the Capital Plan presented at Estates Committee in December 2024, the forecast expenditure for 2024-25 and the request for funding sought at this Estates Committee. The financial impact of construction inflation on the plan was also detailed

The scope of the new capital plan was discussed and the intention to bring a report on Estates Strategy priorities to the May Estates Committee was noted.

Estates Committee reviewed the Capital Plan, had a robust discussion on its contents, noted that the Capital Plan in its entirety was not currently considered affordable and that a review of uncommitted expenditure had been undertaken and would now be discussed by Estates Committee.

Estates Committee further noted:

- The University's forward planning forecast expenditure over the five year period 2024 to 2029. This was based on the Capital Plan which had been approved to July 2027, in February 2022, and the subsequent approved revisions to the plan made in relation to acquisition of Tynecastle Student Accommodation and in December 2023 in relation to the additional funding required for the Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI).
- The forecast expenditure for 2024-25.

The funding request at this meeting for Estates Projects, the majority which was to be University funded and some which was funded by the working capital of UoE Estates Services Company

## **9. Capital Plan Category C Uncommitted Projects**

Estates Committee was asked to discuss the potential 12-month postponement of some Category C estates projects in the current Capital Plan. Projects were classified as Category C if they were underway with some or all funding approved through University governance. A risk analysis of the postponement of uncommitted projects was presented for discussion and decision.

Estates Committee agreed to refer the outcome of its discussion to Policy and Resources Committee and subsequently University Court for further consideration.

Action: Director of Estates

## **10. Digital Estate Capital Plan 2024 to 2029**

An update was provided on the Digital Estates 5-year capital envelope 2024-29. The headline figure for 2024/25 for projected capital expenditure was detailed. This has been adjusted for Optimism Bias, which varied depending on the project category, and remained significantly below the funding envelope.

Over the course of the 1+5 year period (2024/25 – 2029/30) the total capital expenditure forecast was detailed, after funding was allocated for City Deal assets (Internet of Things – Sensor Network). Given the financial challenges facing the University, the future years of the plan would be reviewed in the coming months to identify future cost efficiency/avoidance.

An Estates Committee Digital Seminar was scheduled for 22 April 2025. At the seminar feedback would be sought to assist with shaping the review of the Digital Estates Plan. The seminar would be presented with a reconciliation of what parts of the Digital Plan were currently affordable within the limits of the Information Service Group budget targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Gaps and priorities would also be discussed. Work on the review of the 5-year Digital Capital Plan was ongoing.

Estates Committee noted the update on Digital Estates capital expenditure projected for 2024/25 and forecast to 2029/30.

## **11. Estates Committee Effectiveness and Performance - Self-Assessment**

The outcome of the self-assessment exercise of Estates Committee performance, undertaken during January and February 2025, was presented.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- That it would be preferable to hold an additional meeting than lengthening the meeting time; and
- The commentary and proposed action in relation to paper length was welcomed.

Estates Committee noted:

- the overview of responses received as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- the actions that have been proposed to improve the performance of Estates Committee as detailed in the report;
- that the outcome would be reported to Policy and Resources Committee; and
- that the self-assessment exercise would be repeated in three years' time.

## **12. Physical Estate - Project Boards Update**

Estates Committee noted the governance arrangements for physical estate Project Boards as detailed in the report together with current Project Board membership as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee agreed the following recommendations for future actions as detailed with the report:

- that the Project Board membership, agreed at the outset of the project, was reviewed periodically to ensure that the correct expertise was included in the board and there was no duplication of resource;

- that staff taking on Project Owner, Project Sponsor and Lead User roles for the first time or infrequently should undergo “senior responsible officer” training at the outset of the project. The Estates Department would investigate the appropriate training options and make further recommendation that this should be adopted; and
- that the projects' User Groups should be formalised for all projects and that the Lead User should report back to the Project Board. A file note would be prepared for each of the User Group meetings by either the Lead User or Project Management Team where appropriate.

In addition, as a result of discussion during Estates Committee it was agreed:

- to consider adding to the remit of the group, that the Board should provide support and would escalate issues when required;
- to review which Project Boards currently include student representation;
- to consider how Boards ensure awareness across campus wide estates activities e.g., maintenance
- to consider at what point support was provided to the Project Board in relation to community engagement

It was noted that there were limited details in the sections on sustainability and equality and diversity, and that clarity over these aspects should be included in relation to the remit of the individual project boards and that the individual boards should have specific training to provide support in these areas.

It was further noted that the procedure note on Project Boards would be updated to reflect the discussion at the meeting.

Action: Director of Estates

## **13. Estate Operational Performance Information**

### **13.1 Higher Education Estates Management Report 2024 (EMR) - Data Insights**

An update was provided on key estates focused metrics reported as part of the Estates Management Report (EMR) 2024.

The EMR was a data collection initiative which began within the sector through the Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE) and was jointly funded by the UK funding councils. Collection of the data moved to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in 2009/2010. The record was established to provide the higher education sector with standardised, reliable, and useful property information to help managers understand current performance, promote sharing of best practice and drive improvements.

Estates Committee noted the report and the data contained within it.

## **13.2 Condition of the Physical Estate Update**

An update was detailed on the increasing risk associated with the deteriorating condition of the physical estate. The requirement for action to address a prioritised list of issues was highlighted.

Estates Committee noted the update and the requirement for action to address a prioritised list of issues. It was further noted that, if possible and depending on funding requirements being established, a report would be presented to Estates Committee in May 2025 seeking funding to address the issues.

Action: Director of Estates

## **14. Small Works Programme and Statutory Compliance Budget Allocation**

Proposals for funding for the 2025/26 Small Works Programme and Statutory Compliance (SWPSC) programme were detailed.

Estates Committee noted:

- the overview of the proposed allocation of funds across the Small Works and Statutory Compliance programme;
- that the normal small works programme has been reduced to deal only with projects that were either of a condition nature, health and safety related, compliance related, part of a larger funded project or would return direct and measurable income with relatively low investment;
- that all projects deemed as discretionary had been removed from the 2025/26 programme; and
- that the request for funding included the preparatory works in connection with the installation of the Ion Microprobe which was reported to Estates Committee in March 2024.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- That deferring non-discretionary projects would impact on the transition to new ways of working; and
- That although it was not covered under this paper, if possible, it would be preferable to defer Capital Equipment expenditure and continue with some non-discretionary works.

Estates Committee agreed to recommend to Policy and Resources Committee and subsequently University Court approval of the Small Works and Statutory Compliance Programme 2025/26 allocation.

Action: Director of Estates

## **15. Replacement of Switchgear**

Estates Committee was provided with an overview of the risk related to the potential failure of existing high voltage infrastructure.

Estates Committee approved UoEESCo progressing with the replacement of the assets in UoEESCo ownership.

Estates Committee agreed to:

- Recommend to Policy and Resources Committee and subsequently Exceptions Committee approval of Capital Funding to undertake works to replace the University owned high voltage infrastructure assets; and
- Recommend to Policy and Resources Committee approval of a loan facility from the University to UoEESCo to progress with the works.

Action: Director of Estates

## **16. Estates Capital Projects Update**

An overview was provided of the Estates major projects above £1m, which were currently committed, and in the construction stage on site or which have been completed since the last meeting.

Since the last meeting of Estates Committee two new capital projects (above £1m) had been awarded and commenced on site and had also been incorporated in the new tracker. These were:

- Strathclyde Rowing Facility; and
- Mary Sommerville Data Centre Expansion.

Estates Committee noted:

- the overview of the projects contained in the paper and in Appendix 1 to the report, which was now in an updated format;
- the forecasted Estates Capital plan expenditure range for 2024/;
- that the legal agreement to deliver the first phase of McLeod Street (Tynecastle High School) student accommodation 12 months early had been concluded;
- the project update in relation to Teviot Row House indicating that additional funding was likely to be required;
- the positive update that the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Programme of works would be delivered within the approved funding allowances; and
- the market commentary within the report in relation to inflation.

During discussion, it was highlighted that the Teviot Row House project update did not include student experience as one of the project benefits. It was therefore agreed to review the RAG report to ensure that student experience was included.

Action: Director of Estate Development

## **17. Digital Estate Status Update**

Estates Committee were presented with a summary of the progress on the substantive Digital Estate projects. The paper included updates on the current state of the Digital Estate from the Programme Leads and Owners.



Estates Committee noted the Digital Estate status update and the project RAG report as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

## **18. Estates Committee Exception Group and Estates Tender Review Panel Approvals**

A paper was presented which detailed the decisions taken by Estates Committee Exception Group (ECEG) since the last Estates Committee meeting on 4 December 2024. The paper also presented a list of contract awards (greater than £250,000) over the period 27 November 2024 to 4 March 2025 that had been approved via the Estates Tender Review Panel (ETRP).

Estates Committee noted the following decisions taken by ECEG:

### **Mary Somerville Data Centre (MSDC) Migration and Heat Rejection Works - Main Contractor Construction Services**

- Whilst ECEG usually consider papers by electronic correspondence it was agreed that on this occasion a virtual meeting should be arranged to allow for discussion of the financial context generally, why the University might prioritise this project and the risks of not proceeding with the project.
- The meeting took place on 29 January 2025 and ECEG approved the award of the contract for construction services in respect of the MSDC Migration Project to FES Support Services Limited.

### **Building Fabric Maintenance and Small Works (up to £150k) MTC Framework Agreement - Appointment of Contractors**

- ECEG approved the appointment of the following contractors to the framework agreement, EC0996 Building Fabric Maintenance and Small Works (up to £150k) MTC Framework Agreement for a period of four years in total, based on the results of the competitive tendering exercise carried out.
  - Lot 1a – the three highest ranked suppliers will participate in the framework call-off process.
    - 1st ranked – Bell Group Limited
    - 2nd ranked – Firstcall Trades Services
    - 3rd ranked – CBES Limited
  - Lot 1b - the fourth and fifth ranked suppliers will take up the role of a reserved supplier.
    - 4th ranked – Ashwood Scotland Ltd
    - 5th ranked – EC Specialist Contractors Limited

### **Proposed Disposal of David Horn House and Kitchener House**

- ECEG approved progressing with the strategic disposal, through the open market sale, of the following residential developments:
  - David Horn House, 40 – 46 Craigmillar Park, Edinburgh, comprising of 39 rooms with 48 beds; and
  - Kitchener House, 6 Gordon Terrace, Edinburgh, comprising of 53 rooms with 60 beds.

Estates Committee further noted the contract awards approved by Estates Tender Review Panel over the period 27 November 2024 to 4 March 2025 as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

## **19. Capital Projects Group Report**

Estates Committee noted the update on the activities of the Capital Projects Group and that the Group's Terms of Reference were available on the University website.

## **20. Knowledge Strategy Committee Report**

Estates Committee noted the key points from the Knowledge Strategy Committee meeting held on 30 January 2025.

## **21. Development and Alumni Capital Project Update**

A summary was provided to Estates Committee of the progress with fundraising approaches for current priority capital projects. The progress against stretching multi-year targets for gift income towards the University's capital plans, that were discussed and noted at the December 2016 Estates Committee.

Estates Committee noted the update.

## **22. Strategic Acquisitions, Disposals, Leases and Estate Management**

A paper was presented which provided an update on the strategic acquisitions, disposals, leases and estate management issues.

Estates Committee retrospectively approved, the lease of land from North Lanarkshire Council (NLC), for construction of a boat store at Strathclyde Park, for use by the University rowing team.

In respect of Telecoms apparatus, the UK government had enacted the Electronic Communications Code at the end of 2017. The Code regulated the relationship between electronic communications network operators, infrastructure providers and site providers throughout the UK and provided a statutory framework for establishing agreements to place, operate and maintain electronic communications apparatus on land and property. The premise of the Code was that rents could be imposed that were significantly lower than would result from an unrestricted commercial negotiation.

In relation to Telecoms leases, Estates Committee:

- approved a new 10-year lease to EE and H3G for telecom's apparatus on the rooftop of Charteris Building. The full terms were outlined in the report to Estates Committee and authority was delegated to the Director of Estates to agree other terms and conditions;
- noted that another Electronic Communications Code Lease Renewal Notice has been received in respect of telecom's apparatus on the rooftop of Charteris Building and that further notices are likely to follow in the coming months/years; and
- noted that the University has received an approach to re-instate telecom's apparatus on the Lister Building under the terms of the Electronic Communications Code.

Estates Committee noted that a notice of early termination of lease has been received by the University from Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) in respect of the lease of accommodation in the Roslin Institute Building.

Estates Committee noted the updates on Strategic Acquisitions and Disposals.

In relation to the disposal of David Horn House and Kitchener House it was agreed that the Director of Accommodation, Catering and Events would discuss the properties further with the EUSA President, as they were of interest to the Student Co-operative.

Action: Director of Accommodation, Catering and Events

Estates Committee noted that since December 2024 Estates Committee: 1 lease rent review, 4 new Licences to Occupy and one Building Fixing Agreement had been agreed for land and property owned by the University. In addition, 3 new leases, 4 lease renewals and 2 desk licences had been completed within the Data Driven Innovation Hubs, all of which were approved under sub-delegation arrangements.

Estates Committee noted the Estates Management issues detailed in the report.

## **23. Queen's Medical Research Institute (QMRI) Collaboration Works - Main Contractor Construction Services**

The outcome of the procurement exercise to appoint a main contractor for construction services for the Queen's Medical Research Institute (QMRI) Collaboration co-location project was detailed. The project had been discussed earlier in the meeting as part of the review of uncommitted capital plan category C projects. As the project had been assessed as having an amber risk rating it was recommended to proceed. The tender expiry date from Robertson Construction was 14 March 2025.

Estates Committee approved the award of the contract for construction services in respect of the QMRI Collaboration Co-location works, to Robertson Construction.

**24. Date of next meeting**

Estates Committee noted the date of the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 14 May 2025 at 9.30am.