UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MANAGEMENT TEAM

Minutes of a meeting held on
Tuesday 6 December 2011

Present:

Dave Hall (Chair)
Paul Goffin
Anne Hall
Susan Lapworth
Martyn Riddleston (vice James Hunt)
Richard Taylor

Geoff Green
Dawn Kemp
Alun Reynolds
Nigel Siesage
Mary Visser

In attendance Andrew Petersen (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from James Hunt

UNRESERVED (ONLY) BUSINESS

11/M30 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on 8 November 2011. The Group approved the minutes as a correct record.

11/M31 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M27 the Group noted
a) that the funding available through the Leadership Foundation to support change management in HE institutions appeared to be restricted to collaborative projects, which could prevent recognition and support for individual institutional initiatives, such as those underway at Leicester.
b) that the Directors of Administrations’ report on dual reporting within Colleges would be sent to the Chair shortly.
c) that the Division of Finance had produced a draft Total Cost report analysing all on non-academic expenditure within the institution with a view to capturing the movement of these costs over time. The report would be considered at a future meeting.

The Chair reminded members that, in line with M27 any issues experienced with the implementation of the new Ordinances should be fed back to Alun Reynolds to inform a review of progress in the New Year.

Arising from M28 the Chair reported that the letter to all Professional Services staff would be circulated before Christmas, and that Staff Development were proceeding with arrangements for the Brown Bag lunches. The Group also noted that work was underway to consider the nature and timing of data requests to academic departments, with a view to constructing a central unified timetable and streamlining where possible.
The Group agreed:

a) That the Registrar should contact the Leadership Foundation to discuss allocating funding to support initiatives in individual institutions, rather than solely collaborative projects;

b) That it would be helpful to establish a standard methodology with which to conduct a regular series of TCO analyses over the coming years, in order to develop a holistic view of cost movements over time;

c) That once individual divisions had agreed a proposed schedule of data requests Departments and Colleges should be consulted to ensure an effective dialogue;

d) That the discussions regarding measurement of service performance and enhancement would be followed up at the Away Day on 13 December.

11/M32  CHAIR’S BUSINESS

The Chair reported that the Professional Services Management Team Away day due to be held on 13 December would focus upon developing a shared understanding of the role of systems-thinking in achieving service improvement. The Away Day would be led by a leadership coach, Hank Williams, and would specifically address experience with systems-thinking interventions to date, and how these techniques should be applied more widely across the institution.

The Chair also reported that he would be hosting a series of workshops for Professional Services managers to engage them with the principles of a unified administration. Ideas for discussion topics would be identified at the PSMT Away Day on 13 December.

The Group agreed:

a) That issues identified through the Registrar’s workshops should inform the development of a systematic programme of training for managers to address issues surrounding leadership, performance management and ‘value added’ activities.

11/M33  UNIFIED ADMINISTRATION COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The Group noted a report from Dr John Parnham outlining progress with current unified administration live projects.

The Group considered a report from Geoff Green regarding the united administration communications plan. The Group discussed the report in detail and noted in particular that academic leaders needed to be kept engaged with the movement towards the achievement of a unified administration through regular briefings with Heads of Colleges and Departments.

The Group also noted that a Professional Services Conference would be held in April 2012, focusing on engaging staff from grades 4 to 7 with the concept of a unified administration and the role of individuals in achieving this. These larger initiatives would be supported by smaller scale events such as the Registrar visiting departments to talk to front line staff in Divisions and Colleges.

The Group agreed:

a) That the Heads of College should be informed of when the Registrar’s letter to all Professional Services staff would be circulated, to ensure academic awareness of the process;

b) That Alun Reynolds should liaise with the organisers of Professional Services Conference to ensure that the proposed schedule was in line with the wider aims of a unified administration;
c) That, to support the Registrar’s ‘days in departments’, members should also designate time to spend with front line Professional Services staff in their Division or College;

d) That any helpful ‘stories from the front line’ identified by members should be sent directly to Helen Pennack for publication on the Professional Services website.

11/M34 TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair reported that, with regard to the Group’s remit to establish and promote a systematic approach to service improvement across the institution, any topics for discussion at future meetings should be sent to him directly, at least one week before the relevant meeting.

The Group discussed the role that service improvement plans would play within the University planning round. Following the distribution of the Registrar’s letter to all Professional Services staff there would be a two month period in which staff would have the opportunity to discuss service improvement with their teams and managers. This would feed into the development of service improvement plans which would be considered at a PSMT Away Day in March 2012, in order to facilitate a shared view of service improvement activities across the institution, and their impact on individual Divisions and Colleges. Members would then be able to make any subsequent amendments to their planning submissions in light of both these discussions and sharing experience gained through previous systems-thinking interventions.

The Group agreed:

a) That case studies of service improvement would help to inform discussions;

b) That a template for service improvement plans would be helpful, however this should be sufficiently broad to recognise the wide range of service improvement activities which may take place across the institution.

11/M35 DISTANCE LEARNING ARCHITECTURE PROGRAMME

The Group considered a report on progress with the Distance Learning Architecture Programme. The Group noted in particular that the Professor of Learning Innovation was developing a detailed plan to support the proposed merger of the Beyond Distance Research Alliance and the Course Design and Development Unit, under the title of the Institute of Learning Innovation.

The Group noted that the materials management work focussing on the production of printed teaching materials within the School of Management was proceeding very well. Furthermore, the work underway within HR regarding atypical workers was nearing completion, although certain issues relating to quality assurance would need to be referred to the Academic Policy Committee.

11/M36 SUNRISE AND ADMISSIONS

The Group received a report on progress with the systems-thinking intervention into admissions processes, piloted in the School of Management. As a result of work undertaken application turnaround times had reduced significantly. The Group noted that the next stage would be to map the complete process from enquiry to registration in order to define the job roles and expertise required at each stage. This would then be compared with current practice to establish how best to migrate resources in order to bring them into line with the new procedures.
The Group received a report regarding progress with the SUNRISE project. Current work was focussing on developing a student portal for use from the point of enquiry and throughout the student journey. Background work was also underway to optimise both the student records system and the regulatory framework to address the specific requirements of distance learning study.

The Group noted also that several other systems-thinking interventions were underway in the divisions of Finance, Estates and Facilities Management and IT Services.

The Group agreed:

a) That it was essential to identify the full implications of the proposed changes to the admissions process, in terms of resources, roles and responsibilities, and agree how these implications would be managed before engaging the wider University community with the proposals;

b) That updates on other systems-thinking interventions currently underway in the Divisions of Corporate Services would be requested for future meetings.

IT STRATEGY

The Group received a report from Mary Visser regarding the development of the University IT Strategy. One major theme within the strategy was the reduction of the direct costs of supporting workplace computing. Furthermore, IT Services were working with the Colleges of Science and Engineering and Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology to conduct an audit of current IT support activity within the Colleges, and identify how resources could be most effectively deployed to support IT across the institution.

The Group agreed:

a) That the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Committee would need to retain oversight of any major IT issues which might have institutional implications.

REPORTS FROM DIVISIONS

Corporate Affairs and Planning
Richard Taylor reported that undergraduate application rates were down by 10% compared to a national average of 15%, and that there was a strong correlation between institutional league table placement and student recruitment. Overall projections were to be produced on the basis of present performance and these would be used to inform any decision regarding amending University recruitment policy.

Estates and Facilities Management
Paul Goffin reported that a new Building Survey Designer had been appointed, however a Senior Project Manager would be leaving the institution in March. In addition, the Division had also undertaken a consultation with the campus trade unions regarding the systems-thinking intervention into maintenance processes.

Finance
Martyn Riddleston reported that an acting Assistant Director of Finance would be appointed for 6 months to allow time to consider potential reorganisation within the Division.
Human Resources
Alun Reynolds reported that a unified procedure for calculating leave allocations for part-time staff had been developed. It was also noted that the division was seeking to recruit a new business partner following recent staffing changes.

IT Services
Mary Visser reported that the organisation of the Division was under consideration following recent staffing movements.

Student and Academic Services
Susan Lapworth reported that the provisional HESES figures indicated that the University was -3.7% on its contract. Additionally, the recent HEFCE Assurance Audit visit had been broadly positive, however had highlighted the need to accelerate the rate of integration of departmentally held assessment data into the central records system.

College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology
Nigel Siesage reported that the College Management Board was shortly due to consider a proposal for the reorganisation of support staff within the College. Additionally, the College were currently seeking to recruit for two Departmental Manager positions in the Departments of Cardiovascular Sciences and Medical and Social Care Education.

College of Social Science
Anne Hall reported that the College had recently appointed new Departmental Managers for the Department of Politics and International Relations and the School of Management.

11/M39 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Group noted the dates of the meetings to be held in 2012:

Fri 20 January
Fri 17 February
Thurs 29 March
Thurs 26 April
Weds 23 May
Thurs 21 June
Thurs 19 July

All meetings would be held at 12.30 unless otherwise indicated.

DURATION OF MEETING: 1 hour 30 minutes