University of Cambridge

Information Strategy and Services Syndicate

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 July 2009**.**

Members present: Professor Littlewood (in the Chair), Mr. Du Quesnay, Professor Howe, Mr Matheson, Professor Nolan, Mr Richardson, Dr Walker, Dr Wallach, and Mr. Warbrick.

In attendance: The Director of Finance; The Directors of MISD and UCS; The University Librarian; Mr. Wilson.

Apologies for absence were received from: Professor Young, Dr Carpenter, Professor Minson, Mr Norman, Ms Tyson, Sir David Wallace, and the Registrary.

There were no declarations of interest relating to matters on the agenda.

The Chairman welcomed Professor Howe to her first meeting.

102.   Minutes

The Minutes of the eighth meeting of the ISSS held on 21 May 2009 were received and approved after correction to the list of those attending and including the rearranged time of the 20 May 2010 meeting.

103.   Matters arising and review of action points

Action points arising from the last meeting were noted, including the annual cycle of business (ISSS 127).

104.   Business Committee minutes

The Minutes of the Business Committee for the meetings held on 11 and 29 June 2009 were received (ISSS 128 – 129).

105.   Syndicate Strategic Planning

Syndics were invited to consider outline plans for MISD, UCS, the UL, CARET and an updated spending profile from the TDF (circulated as ISSS 130-134).

During an extensive discussion the following general points were made:

- The aim of reviewing outline plans at this stage was to improve the acceptability of final versions submitted in December and to help Services to identify common features for joint solution.
- The Planning Guidance was for a bleak financial prospect, but Directors stated that their operational plans were contained within the Allocation envelope. The main issue was therefore the priority for new developments, their cost and funding. The ISSS might take the view that applying the cap rigidly would not be strategically advantageous, but it was clear there would have to be choices.
- There was as yet no means of identifying for all the systems the common data requirements which were shared by groups of institutions. Until this was done, ostensibly the same management information produced in response to different requests was likely to vary. The aim should be to satisfy information needs in a coherent and consistent manner.
- Some new business processes using one System might be relevant to another System; ID management in particular was required to facilitate many other processes.
- Benchmarking operational spend and structures against sector and industry standards remained a goal for the ISSS but although it would be difficult to capture the full range of IS activity across all budgets it would be useful to compare IT spend in Cambridge with other

institutions. A more comprehensive approach to data collection would be a project in its own right. On the whole, managers should be aware of, and dealing with, the issues benchmarking would reveal.

- Plans should state both the advantages of new developments and the consequences of not pursuing them. Prioritising might be helped by classifying projects under such headings as efficiency, investment, compliance, risk management, new activity, strategic advantage.
- Establishing the project office remained an objective, but the purpose had shifted from just project oversight to include support for the ISSS in planning, research and co-ordination.

After some specific comments on individual elements of the plans and on areas of overlap which should be resolved, the Syndicate endorsed the papers for further development and asked the Business Committee to review a consolidated list of the major developments.

Action: Service Directors; Secretary

106. Allocations from the Technology Development Fund

With reference to paper ISSS 134, the Syndicate approved allocations from the Technology Development Fund as follows:

2008-09	Business Continuity	Up to £100k (projected spend was now less)
	Search	£4k
	Environmental Monitoring	£44k
2009-10	Environmental Monitoring	£44k

Project Office funding had already been approved from 2009-10 onwards.

Action: Secretary

107. Effectiveness of ISSS and programme of work 2009-10

(1) The Chairman report that he had received a copy of the draft Internal Audit report and after consulting Professor Young had provided feedback to the auditors. The findings were unexceptional and focused mainly on the need for the Syndicate to be more strategic. The Report would be seen by the Syndicate after review by the Audit Committee, but on a personal basis the Chairman could provide a copy on request to Syndics.

(2) Syndics were invited to send the Chairman (or Secretary) observations on the effectiveness of ISSS and on the Annual Report [see also M 117] for inclusion in a draft for the next meeting ("ISSS" also embracing its sub-groups);

(3) Syndics were invited to suggest topics for their programme of work for 2009-10 (in addition to the regular items in ISSS 127). The programme would include prioritisation of the projects identified in the planning round. It would be helpful if the Business Committee could consider a standard format for the presentation of development proposals.

Action: Syndics; Business Committee

108. Service Reports

The Syndicate received Service Reports as follows:

(1) MISD (including operational reports for CUFS; CamSIS; CHRIS - ISSS 135);

(2) Computing Service (ISSS 136); the Syndicate meeting in October would receive a report on the evaluation of Microsoft "Live" and Google "Apps".

(3) The Telephone Replacement Project (ISSS 137) was all but complete on budget and on time. 14 of 22 RPEs had been switched off. Recurrent savings of about £1m were expected, half operational and half from BT. In anticipation of an imminent successful conclusion, the Syndicate congratulated the Director and the project team.

The Syndicate agreed that Service operational reports in future be "by exception", with Directors drawing the attention of the Syndicate to significant issues, not the rolling routine.

Action: Service Directors

109.   **CamSIS: overview of rollout to Departments and Colleges in 2008-09**

The Syndicate received the report by the Director of MISD circulated as ISSS 138.

110.   **CUFS 2010 Project**

The Syndicate received a report by the Director of MISD circulated as ISSS 139.

The Director of Finance reported that community unpreparedness for a major upgrade had led Oracle to extend support of version 11 for a further two years. This enabled the University to upgrade to version 11.5.10 and to set back the upgrade to version 12.0. The longer time to prepare gave a much better opportunity to evaluate how the University could best benefit from the new release. The delay was therefore positive and reduced the risk of too rapid a move.

The Director of Finance said version 12.0 would bring benefits locally but would still require expert operators; improved functionality was not expected to lead to central staff reductions.

The Syndicate agreed that the upgrade to version 11.5.10 was not a major project in Project Governance Guidelines terms, but to the extent that it did need oversight, that would be provided by the new Financial Systems Committee which had a reporting line to the ISSS. Membership of the FSC was not yet finally settled and a report would be made to the ISSS in due course.

Action: Director of Finance for FSC membership

111.   **CHRIS Project closure**

The Syndicate approved the recommendation of the CHRIS Project Board, set out in ISSS 140, that following closure of the CHRIS Project the Project Board be wound up.

The Syndicate noted that the HR Committee had established an HR Systems Committee which would oversee the balance between central and distributed demands on the system. The Syndicate hoped that Project Boards when recommending closure would in future be more explicit about whether the delivered product met initial expectations, whether it satisfied all needs and if there were any outstanding issues. The Chairman should raise those issues in his reply to the Chairman of the CHRIS Project Board.

Syndics congratulated the Board on the conclusion of an efficient and well run project.

Action: Chairman to reply to Chairman of the Project Board

112.   **Oracle database campus licence**

The Director of MISD reported that the University's discussions with Oracle were only a facet of a worldwide attempt by Oracle to renegotiate some licence agreements. Core product licences were unaffected.

The survey results were being analysed and it was too early to assess whether any additional costs would have to be met. Any additional costs arising from use in departments would be charged to those departments.

113.   UCS System Backup Policy

A recent internal audit on backup policies across the University had highlighted that the UCS should have a formal System Backup Policy, approved by the ISSS.

The Syndicate was invited to approve the UCS's System Backup Policy circulated as ISSS 141, and did so, subject to the specific system references being replaced by generic terms.

Action: Director, UCS

114.   Facility Charging (UCS)

The Syndicate was asked to approve a change in policy set out in ISSS 142 whereby Schools and other institutions would be charged the concessionary rate from 2010-11 for the use of UCS training room facilities for both academic and non-academic teaching purposes.

Syndics had a number of concerns about increasing the scope of internal recharges:

(a) It could help achieve central savings targets simply by transferring costs to other institutions. Alternatively, the transfer of central funding to meet the costs would enable institutions to take strategic decisions about the services they wished to "purchase".
(b) Even very modest extra costs could make some activity unsustainable. There were problems with resourcing Doctorate Training Centres, for example, but funding for studentships depended on their existence.
(c) It was not entirely clear in this case why the charge had been assessed on a marginal, not full cost, basis.

On balance, the Syndicate approved the proposal noting that it removed an anomaly and the financial effect should be modest.

Action: Director, UCS

115.   Disciplinary Procedure: appointment of Panel Chair

The Syndicate were required to appoint annually a Syndic as Panel Convenor in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure set out at
http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/committee/isss/rules/discproc.html

Dr Wallach had offered to stand for appointment and as the sole candidate was duly appointed for the twelve months to 31 July 2010.

Action: Secretary

116.   Information Strategy Working Group

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2009 were received as ISSS 143. The Syndicate noted the discussion about Business Continuity and Sir David's Wallace's concerns, reported by the Chairman, that Heads of Department would value some good practice guidance on managing critical systems. The ISSS and its ISWG could contribute to the development of this guidance but that was only one part of business continuity and disaster recovery which were the responsibility of the centre's Emergency Response Team; they were understood to be preparing a template.

117. **Syndicate Annual Report**

A draft Annual Report had been circulated as ISSS 144; Syndics were invited to submit to the Secretary comments and additions in good time for the next meeting.

Action: Syndics

118. **ISSS Membership**

The Syndicate were informed that, subject to interpretation of the Ordinances, elections were due to be held in the Michaelmas Term for elected members under the rules set out at http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2006-07/weekly/6079/19.html.

Action: Secretary

119. **Meeting dates**

Noted: the schedule of meetings in 2009 and in 2009-10.

BC$^+$	16 July 2009*	3.00pm	Room G1 King's College

$^+$ *Chaired by Professor Littlewood*

BC	5 October 2009	11.00am	PVC's Meeting Room, Old Schools
ISSS	15 October 2009	2.15 pm	Syndicate Room
BC	21 October 2009	11.00am	PVC's Meeting Room
BC	9 November 2009	11.00am	PVC's Meeting Room
ISSS	19 November 2009	2.15 pm	Syndicate Room
BC	30 November 2009	2.00pm	PVC's Meeting Room
BC	11 January 2010	11.00am	PVC's Meeting Room
ISSS	21 January 2010	2.15 pm	Syndicate Room
BC	1 February 2010	2.00pm	PVC's Meeting Room
BC	8 March 2010	11.00am	PVC's Meeting Room
ISSS	18 March 2010	2.15 pm	Syndicate Room
BC	29 March 2010	2.00pm	PVC's Meeting Room
BC	10 May 2010	11.00am	PVC's Meeting Room
ISSS	20 May 2010	**10.15am**	Syndicate Room
BC	27 May 2010	2.00pm	PVC's Meeting Room
BC	28 June 2010	11.00am	PVC's Meeting Room
ISSS	8 July 2010	2.15 pm	Syndicate Room
BC	19 July 2010	2.00pm	PVC's Meeting Room

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