



**The 37th Meeting of the Department of Computer Science and Technology
Buildings and Environment Committee**

**14.00 – 15.00, Thursday, 26 March 2026
Room SC04**

Minutes

In attendance:

Dr Ian Lewis, Chair

Celia Burns, Secretary

Thomas Bytheway

Professor Andrew Caines

Dr Tobias Grosser

Dr Markus Kuhn

Martin McDonnell

Malcolm Scott

Caroline Stewart

Jane Webster

1. Committee Membership

The Committee welcomed Jane Webster, who joined the Committee in her role as Estates Business Partner, allocated to the School of Technology.

2. Conflicts of Interest

Committee members were asked to make any declarations of interest at the relevant agenda item.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Sarah Bainsfair, Piete Brooks and Diana Gauvrit.

4. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026 were approved.

5. Reducing Energy Consumption

a) LED upgrade: leftover funds *

Due to complaints about the new lighting last year, a survey was commissioned and Estates paused any further work. There was nothing further to report.

b) Recording energy use and solar panel contributions

Ian reported that he had no update at this stage. Malcolm noted that Richard Mortier was considering starting a project to obtain or develop a mechanism for recording the relevant data, and Jane suggested contacting Stephen Graham in the Estates Sustainability Team. No actions were identified.

6. Building Matters

a) Verex security system

The Committee updated Jane on the long-running issues with the Verex card-access system, noting that it is no longer fit for purpose, the vendor has ceased trading, and the associated IT infrastructure poses a significant risk. Attempts to progress a replacement have been ongoing for around a decade, during which the Department—given its strong technical capability—had been considered a suitable pilot site for a potential University-wide upgrade.

Jane reported that John Chater, Head of IT and Digital Transformation for the School of Technology, is currently reviewing the project and awaiting quotations that separate the intruder-alarm element from the card-access system.

Ian emphasised the Department's continuing frustration, to be fed back to Estates: although this is a University-level issue, decisions have been inconsistent over time, and the delays continue to affect the Department.

b) Building management system (cooling and heating)

Cooling

Malcolm reported that there had been at least three chiller outages since the last meeting. Two of these were caused by electrical glitches that tripped the chiller, which appears to be a new failure mode and needs further investigation. At the current rate, there could be several more failures before Diana returns.

Malcolm advised that the first step would be to speak to Dakin, who replaced the controller. If the issue relates to how the controller was configured, it will be taken up with them; otherwise, it would be escalated to Estates. The Committee agreed to wait for Diana's return in around six weeks unless the chiller trips again, in which case it will be followed up sooner.

Heating

Caroline reported that Munros would be flushing the pipes accessible from the atrium and the Intel Lab, which may improve the heating. Markus noted that the southern air-handling unit on the ground floor is completely blocked and that he had detected hot water within two metres of the blockage. He stressed that the heating issues are due to maintenance problems, not building design, and are unrelated to the atrium or the Intel Lab. It was agreed that Caroline would follow up on this issue in Diana's absence.

Action: Caroline

c) Re-fit of the WGB Library

Ian has begun gathering feedback on whether the library space is needed for teaching or research. Initial responses suggest little direct impact on most research activity, though questions remain about future computing requirements. He will continue to speak to colleagues about teaching requirements.

Caroline noted that additional teaching space is likely to be required, and she and Ian will discuss this further. Thomas and Andrew highlighted pressures around practicals,

machine-room access, and Part II project space. Ian also reported a suggestion that part of the area could support PhD seating, for example for students who have run out of funding.

Malcolm reminded the Committee of the urgent need for more machine-room space, regardless of future Department growth. Ian stressed the importance of describing this explicitly as a need for on-site machine-room space rather than “data-centre space,” noting that a central data centre already exists on the West Cambridge site.

The Committee also discussed the Roger Needham Building (RNB). Caroline reported that the Head of Department is already engaged in conversations about the RNB. Jane noted that the planned Engineering move has been paused while Estates sets up a programme board, on which the HoD will sit. Ian will coordinate with the HoD so that the Committee has a clearer picture of RNB plans at future meetings.

Action: Ian and Caroline

d) Downpipe Leaks and Roof Repairs

Ian reported that the rolling programme of patching had reached its limit and that plans are now underway for a roof replacement. A new agenda item will be created for this project.

e) The Hardware Lab—Relocation of the Workshop

The Committee noted that earlier relocation options were not viable, with only the Roger Needham Building and the former library space remaining under consideration. It was agreed that any future discussions about these spaces would take account of the workshop machinery.

f) Use of the South Garden as a Quiet Place

Options considered by the Committee were opening the garden to the wider University community (which would involve meeting specific requirements and incurring associated costs), leaving the space as it is, and installing a gate on the east side to allow access solely for landscaping purposes. Ian to follow up with the Head of Department.

Action: Ian

g) Chiller

This issue was discussed under item 6b, Building Management System (Cooling and Heating), and will appear under that item in future agendas.

h) Automatic Doors

The Committee has agreed that this item will be starred on future agendas unless there is a substantive update for Diana to report.

i) Lack of discussion space on the second floor

Soft seating and a small whiteboard have now been placed in the SS corridor. Tobias reported a request for a larger whiteboard in that area but noted that space is currently blocked by the two meeting pods. Diana has ruled out placing the pods in the corridor for health and safety reasons. The alcove was discussed as another option; however, moving the pods would require disassembly and would incur a cost.

It was also noted that the pods should remain together, as they are well-used and it is practical for them to be located side by side.

Markus suggested relocating a pod to SS28, but Caroline advised that SS28 is a bookable space and not suitable for a meeting pod. Ian agreed to keep both the alcove and SS28 in mind when considering future options.

No actions were identified.

j) Teaching wall surfaces

Diana was not available at this meeting to provide a report.

k) Office temperatures

With regard to the ongoing issues with office temperatures, the Committee noted that it was not widely known that individual heaters can be requested from Stores and that, due to the 40-amp limit on busbars, heaters should only be used on the lowest setting. It was agreed that labels should be attached to heaters to remind users of this requirement.

It was further agreed that this item will be merged with item 6b, Building Management System: Cooling and Heating, on future agendas.

Action: to be assigned

l) Car parking *

Ian noted that the parking space previously ceded to the Whittle Building has now been returned to the Department and Jane reported that the “Wayfinder” project is ongoing and will include improved signage.

There was brief discussion about the car park being offline, meaning there is currently no support available for users who are unable to exit the car park. Ian asked Jane to raise this with Estates.

Action: Jane

m) Gender-neutral toilets

Diana had submitted a minor works request in October for the installation of three sets of gender-neutral toilets in the building. Caroline reported that Estates had since responded and were not willing to take the original proposal forward at this stage. Instead, they suggested enclosing each existing cubicle while leaving the handbasins in shared areas—an approach that Caroline felt would not improve the situation.

Caroline noted that if Estates could provide a quotation for the original proposal, the Department might be able to fund one or two toilet blocks. However, without any indication of cost, it is difficult to consider next steps. Jane agreed to follow this up with Estates.

Action: Jane

n) Minor refurbishments to the café area

Andrew had proposed this item. As he had to leave the meeting before this item was reached, discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

7. Student Feedback

Jamie, the Postgraduate Student Rep, was not present to report.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Other than the discussion on gender-neutral toilets under item 6m, there were no further EDI matters to report.

9. Any Other Business

Catering provision

Markus raised concerns on behalf of Kash, proprietor of Caffiend, who has been struggling to gain approval as a University-authorised catering provider. Caroline explained that the Department is required under procurement rules to use suppliers on the University catering framework, and Kash has so far been unable to meet the necessary requirements. He has, however, been granted a dispensation to continue providing catering until January 2027.

Caroline noted that she will contact the Finance Division to understand why Kash did not meet the framework criteria but emphasised that Kash is ultimately responsible for completing the process himself, as the Department cannot intervene further without creating a conflict of interest.

She also highlighted the wider challenge that the University Catering Service is unwilling to operate in this building due to low footfall—the same factor that makes the site unattractive to other caterers.

Action: Caroline

10. Date of Next Meeting

Dates for the next meetings are as follows. The meetings will take place as hybrid meetings located in SC04 from 14.00 – 15.00.

- Thursday, 14 May 2026
- Thursday, 25 June 2026

ADDENDUM

An addendum updating various items has been provided by Jane Webster, Estates Business Partner:

5a) LED Upgrade: Estates Division Building Energy Manager, Shakira Harrison; commissioned a Survey across the whole Estate to understand the current position regarding the LED Upgrade project which was Estate wide. There remain areas to be upgraded within CST which will form part of the “Long Term Maintenance Plan” for the Estate and should have been flagged by the department on the LTMP return in late March as

a priority matter. The Asset team is currently technically reviewing all of the LTMP returns to come to a first draft in late April, to allow for further discussion with departments on this before the programme is fixed and budget reserved at Estates' Technical Sub Committee later in the summer.

5b) Recording energy use and solar panel contributions. Richard Mortier and Stephen Graham have been introduced to follow this item up.

6a) Verex security system. John Chater, Head of IT and Digital Transformation for the School of Technology, has provided an update separately to the Chair of this Committee.

Rob Lindsay (Estates Division Security) is working with John Chater to change the Card Access system within CST, due to its obsolescence, ensuring that the new system will be able in time to work with a new University Card. An updated quote is expected imminently from Chubb; the works will also incorporate splitting of the currently linked security alarm system.

6b) Building management system (cooling and heating). Comms expected on Estates Division Asset Management Team shortly – these have recently been restructured to that Service Managers have particular technical areas.

Cooling: Julian Winters is the Service Manager responsible for Chillers and will be dealing with these issues.

6d) Downpipe Leaks and Roof Repairs. Andrew Kerley is managing these works on behalf of Estates and is in contact with CST directly on this.

6l) Car parking. The Car Park is managed under the existing permit system, and entry granted via the University Card. Wayleadr is a car parking management app that is used elsewhere across the Estate. The Cambridge West Wayfinder project aims to improve travel and parking information around the whole West Cambridge Site starting with new Map signage detailing the buildings but also including Parking information. It is hoped that the first phase of the new signage will be in place by July 2026. Further details can be obtained from Jo Beale in Estates Division who is the Transport Manager.

JW raised the issue of the Car Park being “off line” with the Cambridge West External Facilities Manager (Jamie Brittain.) Jamie confirmed that this is not the case and that the barriers can and do operate 24/7; unless there is some unforeseen mechanical fault. Jamie advised that any problems can be reported to him/his team directly on 07824 835212. Outside of their usual hours (7am-7pm) there are security team who will be able to assist and the number for these are on the entrance signage to the car park.

6m) Gender Neutral toilets. An Estimate of costs was provided to Diana Gauvritt by Edyta, the Building Surveyor. JW asked the building surveyor, to re-provide this information to Caroline Stewart. The Estimate is based upon Benchmark Data used by Estates' Programme Delivery Team for toilet refurbishment, not particularly for Gender Neutral requirements or personal to this site (other than sqm). JW has made enquiries to understand the process on obtaining actual quotations, through Estates, for the work required to inform better decision making on such projects in the future.