

Bursars Committee: General Purchasing Sub-Committee

Terms of reference

1. Purpose

The purpose of the General Purchasing Sub-Committee is to provide leadership and oversight of “Value for Money” and collaborative purchasing initiatives across the Colleges, working in close association with the University. The definition of ‘Value for Money’ (VfM) covers the key areas of ‘Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness’.

Within this context the Sub-Committee has been specifically requested by the Bursars’ Committee:

- a. to identify areas of purchasing that could benefit from joint initiatives and initiate co-operative purchasing ventures where feasible.
- b. to oversee collaborative purchasing activities once established.
- c. to formulate and disseminate best practice in purchasing among the Colleges.
- d. to prepare on behalf of the Colleges an annual VfM report for the Bursars’ Committee.
- e. to provide a forum in which the Colleges can, in conjunction with the University Purchasing Office, maximise opportunities for co-operation on VfM between the Colleges and the University.
- f. to consider any other matters referred to it by the Bursars’ Committee or the Bursars’ Business Committee.

The General Purchasing Sub-Committee has inherited the obligation of the Stewards’ Committee (Minute 2358 of the Bursars’ Committee - 4th July 2002) to ensure cost effective purchasing of catering supplies.¹

2. Standing

The General Purchasing Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of the Bursars’ Committee. Business is conducted on a confidential basis.

The Sub-Committee has no power to make decisions binding on, or to represent the views of, any College. An individual Bursar with responsibility for an established collaborative purchasing activity may be empowered by the individual Colleges participating in a particular collaborative purchasing arrangement to make binding decisions in circumstances where it is impractical for timing reasons to seek separate agreement from the Colleges. Such authority must be given in writing.

¹ The origin of the matter was the changes brought about in consequence of the 1922 Report of the Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities (see paragraphs 162 to 174; a copy of the Report can be found at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001975933>). The recommendations concerning College Catering Arrangements are at pages 243 and 244. That led to the introduction in 1926 of Statute G, VI of the University and to the creation of the Stewards’ Committee.

In addition, the Sub-Committee does not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Bursars' Committee.

The Sub-Committee is not subject to the direction or control of the Colleges, either jointly or severally.

All recommendations shall be provided to the Bursars' Committee in the form of written minutes and/or a written report for discussion and approval at the next convenient meeting of the Bursars' Committee, providing that the Chair has discretion to allow for a formal decision to be made by circulation to the Bursars' Committee.

Any advice provided to Colleges and other institutions, either through members of the Sub-Committee, or through staff of the Office of Intercollegiate Services or subsequently through the Bursars' Committee, is provided on the basis that the advice is offered without any warranty as to its accuracy and that no liability shall fall on the Committee or any of its officers or members for such advice.

3. Membership

The membership of the General Purchasing Sub-Committee shall be a maximum of 12 persons elected by the Bursars' Committee, on the nomination of the Sub-Committee or the Bursars' Business Committee. Membership shall include:

- a) The lead Bursar(s) for each of the established collaborative purchasing initiatives.
- b) Representatives of the Sub-Committees and groups that are involved in Value for Money initiatives.
- c) A member of the Bursars' Legal Affairs and Employment Sub-Committee.
- d) At least one person who is closely involved in the production of the annual KPI report.

Officers

The Chair of the General Purchasing Sub-Committee shall be a Senior Bursar who is appointed by the Bursars' Committee, on the nomination of either the Sub-Committee or the Bursars' Business Committee. The Sub-Committee will appoint from within its numbers a Secretary to record the meetings.

Attendees

The Chair and/or Secretary of the Sub-Committee, at their discretion, may permit other persons to attend all or part of one or more meetings, provided that permission has been sought in advance of any meeting. Attendees do not have voting rights. Regular attendees are expected to include:

- i. The Head of Procurement in the University Procurement Office
- ii. The Chair of the Catering Managers' Committee and/or its Procurement Management Group
- iii. The Energy Manager/CRC Co-ordinator for the Cambridge Colleges.
- iv. A representative of the Maintenance Officers' Group
- v. Representatives from the appointed agents or advisors relating to a particular initiative under discussion.

4. Meetings of the Sub-Committee

Meetings are convened by the Chair and/or Secretary: the Sub-Committee meets not less than four times a year, and at least once each Term. Notice of the date, time and place of meetings, and agenda and papers, is provided by the Chair or Secretary, in a manner to be determined by them.

At the beginning of each meeting, the Chair shall ask those present to declare any possible conflicts of interest. A member with a conflict may be asked to leave the meeting for the particular item of business concerned.

There is no quorum for the approval of business.

Attendance at the Committee may include remote attendance through teleconferencing or other mechanisms, providing it is clear that the members can contribute effectively to any discussion and vote.

In the absence of the Chair, he or she will nominate another member of the Committee to chair that particular meeting. Otherwise, the Committee determines amongst those members present who chairs the meeting as its first item of business: this may be agreed by circulation in advance.

Decisions of the Committee are made wherever possible by consensus. In the event of a vote being required, a decision is carried on a simple majority of the members of the Committee present. In the event of a tie, the Chair carries an additional and deciding vote.

5. Conduct of business outside meetings

In exceptional circumstances, the Sub-Committee may agree to conduct business by circulation.

The Sub-Committee may also agree which matters it wishes to delegate to a single member of the Committee, to decide on its behalf. Any item of delegated business is reported on at its next meeting.

The Committee may, at its discretion, set up (and otherwise suspend or disband) Working Groups, providing that these relate directly to the purposes of the Sub-Committee outlined above. The Sub-Committee may establish the membership, terms of reference, and duration of the Working Group, and shall report on these at least annually to the Bursars' Committee.

6. Reserved business

The Sub-Committee's business shall include consideration of reserved business. Matters which are deemed to be reserved business include:

- information for note or discussion relating to the individual salaries of persons employed by the University or one or more of the Colleges;
- information for note or discussion relating to the performance on individual persons employed by the University or one or more of the Colleges;
- any other matter at the discretion of the Chair and/or Secretary (but normally limited to matters of commercial sensitivity or legal privilege).

Where matters have been identified as reserved business, attendees shall be asked to leave the meeting unless the Chair deems that their continued presence is relevant to the matter under discussion.

Papers and minutes of reserved business shall be circulated only to members of the Committee, and shall not be published.

7. Terms of reference

The terms of reference of the Sub-Committee are approved by the Bursars' Committee: the Sub-Committee shall receive the terms of reference at least annually and may make recommendations to the Bursars' Committee on proposed changes at any time.

Modus operandi of the General Purchasing Sub-Committee

Approach

- The Chair of the General Purchasing Sub Committee will attend the University Procurement Group.
- Working parties will be formed from members of the Committee, and other interested Bursars to oversee new tenders, or re-tenders.
- The Committee will seek to engage with those intercollegiate staff groups which are not directly linked in to the Bursars' Committee (Maintenance Managers, IT Managers etc.).
- As new topics are identified the normal approach will be to seek a Bursar to take the lead on that topic, and if that Bursar is not already on the Sub-Committee, to propose them for election at the next opportunity.

Meetings

- The Committee will meet at least four times a year, timed to ensure the opportunity to make a report to the Bursars' Committee.
- Written reports from lead bursars covering each initiative will be received at each meeting.
- Once a year the Sub-Committee will devote the major part of a meeting to close consideration of one of the major collaborative initiatives. It will often be appropriate for the appointed agent or advisor to attend that meeting and present.
- A standing list of scheduled business will be prepared and maintained by the Committee.

Value for Money Report

- Each Sub-Committee of the Bursars' Committee will be asked to provide a brief half yearly report to the VfM Sub-Committee. A simple template will be prepared to encourage consistency.
- Where appropriate the VfM Sub-Committee will meet with representatives of other Sub-Committees to discuss Value for Money initiatives.
- The Chair of the General Purchasing Sub-Committee will attend the University Audit Committee with the Chair or Secretary of the Bursars' Committee to present the Value for Money Report.