Aston University Sustainability Working Group Action Sheet

Meeting: 3rd October 2007

Meeting Date	Action	Who By	By When	Priority	Date Completed
12:07:07	Prepare membership contact list	PH	End July	Medium	July
12:07:07	Invite 2 members from LHS to join Group	SC	End Aug	Medium	Aug
12:07:07	Circulate members with paper to Executive on Green League Table position	GE	End Aug	Low	Sept
12:07:07	Report back on current Sustainability activities in Schools with respect to 'research' and 'teaching & learning'. Review status with respect to Aston 'community'	SC, RG, PH, RC, LHS rep GE	Sept meeting	High	Oct
12:07:07	Develop Group membership – see Item 5.3	SC, PH, BN	End Aug	High	Aug
12:07:07	Agree date of next meeting and invite VC	PH	Mid Aug	High	Aug
12:07:07	Prepare draft Environmental Policy	GE, RC, BN	Sept Meeting	High	Sept
03:10:07	Confirm Student Membership of Group	РН	End Nov	High	
03:10:07	Edit draft and produce final Environmental Policy	GE, RC, BN	Dec Meeting	High	
03:10:07	Produce Catalogue of Taught Sustainable Modules	РН	Dec meeting	Medium	



Sustainable Aston Working Group

Minutes of Meeting 3 October 2007

Present: Prof Julia King Vice- Chancellor

Richard Middleton RM Chief Operating Officer

Prof Michael West MW ABS
Dr Robin Clark RC SEAS
Dr Stuart Cooper SC ABS
Garry East GE Estates
Dr Reiner Grundman RG LSS

Dr Pete Hedges PH SEAS (Chair)

Breno Nunes BN ABS

Amber Pleass AP Aston Student's Guild

Dr Caroline Witton CW SLHS
Dr Julia Brown JB SLHS

In attendance: Emma Sutton ES Secretarial support

1. Welcome Action

Brief welcome and introduction was given to those who had not been present at previous meetings. The presence of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Julia King and newly appointed Chief Operating Officer, Richard Middleton, illustrated the level of interest in the group amongst senior management. Both were warmly welcomed.

A student representative from the Guild was present. However, greater efforts are to be made before the next meeting to achieve a more permanent student representation (possibly from People and Planet society).

PH

2. Review of Group's Origins and Current Objectives

A short overview of the Group's origins was given for the benefit of new members. From the inaugural meeting the guiding principles had been drawn up, and agreed: to create an environmental strategy evolving from three main themes - Community, Research and Teaching.

From discussions at the 12th July meeting, the immediate goals are:

- Commitment from Senior Management
- Appointment of a full-time Environmental Manager
- Produce an Environmental Policy
- Undertake an Environmental Review.

To guide the establishment of a sustainability management process, the principles embedded in ISO14001 would be followed, ensuring that the spirit of the system was employed rather than becoming overwhelmed by bureaucracy. Accreditation to ISO14001 would not be sought directly at this stage.

2.

5. The Role of the Working Group

(Item brought forward due to VCs commitments elsewhere)

The object of this item was to establish the Group's status within the

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University and its operating remit.

5.1 University Commitment

The group is to have full support from the VC and members of the Executive. Once finalised the Environmental Policy will be signed by the VC, confirming the commitment of the University. It will also be formally presented to Council.

5.2 The Group's Position

- Status the Group will report directly to the Executive.
- Membership

 need to be representative and voice for all sectors of University. Chief Operating Officer (RM) will be a member of the group and be the link to the Executive, together with the Executive Dean of ABS (MW).
- Objectives To be 'Aston's conscience' and to create a sustainability strategy which embraces all of the Aston community and permeates how we teach. To make the little things count.
- Budget Permission was given by the VC for the costs of running the group to be paid for from the VCs budget.

3. Minutes of 12th July Meeting

Minutes were agreed and accepted

4. Matters Arising/ Action Points

4.1 Membership

Membership is to stay at about 12 people, but with at least two people representing each school. PQ will represent both LSS and the Unions. Guild/student representation to be confirmed. The structure of the group is to remain Ad Hoc; however it is to report directly to the Executive.

4.2 Green League Table

Important to bear League in mind, but have agreed not to 'chase' position by focusing on the listed criteria but, through considered actions, improvement should occur. It was noted that already, by default, Aston should have improved its position: Fair Trade status (CW); full time Environmental Manager; Policy etc.

6. Immediate Goals

6.1 Environmental Manager

Interviews for the Environmental Manager are set to take place in three weeks time with GE and RM on the panel. A shortlist of 5 has been drawn up.

6.2 Environmental Policy

PH expressed need to tread carefully with regard to the concept of a Sustainability Policy at this stage, as it embraces financial, social and environmental responsibilities, and hence raises wide corporate issues. Agreed that the immediate focus would be an Environmental Policy, as both achievable and am immediate positive outcome.

The purpose of the environmental policy is to highlight and provide a framework for the University's commitment to the field. First draft circulated, thanks to GE, RC and BN. Comments were made that it should be:

- Precise in content
- Linked to corporate directives, therefore will incorporate ISO14001, guidance
- Appealing to all areas of the university to encourage wide participation. Should include words such as 'contribute and engage'.

3.

- By next meeting final article to be produced and put forward to the

ES

GE

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Executive to be signed off. (RC the quicker the better). MW highlighted need for it to be stronger and clearer to highlight the way forward for the University.

GE to edit policy in light of comments, with support of RC and BN, and bring back to Group

GE, RC, BN

6.3 Initial Environmental Review

Need to assess where Aston is now in order to provide a baseline, so that the University can identify what it needs to do and where it needs to go. New Environmental Manager is likely to have a significant input to this when in position, so further significant action held in abeyance.

However in the meantime, RM suggests that each school finds out information on four areas:

- 1) Amount of Paper in/ paper out
- 2) Fuel consumption (Fuel bills)
- 3) Rubbish Waste
- 4) Water (rate of consumption)

GE has been asked to lead on this; however a certain degree of responsibility will fall on each school.

Quick fixes to be implemented as soon as possible: e.g. bottle banks, recycle bins. However, there is a logistical problem for this from an Estates point of view.

6. Provisional Baseline

6.1 Teaching and Research in Schools

'Provisional Baseline of Sustainability Teaching and Research' document compiled from members' responses, was tabled. School representatives provided feedback from their areas.

CW stated that although it would be difficult for SLHS to change any degree programmes to incorporate sustainability, there is a general positive feeling towards the topic. Encouragement could be made within the School to increase discussions on the topic within classes. CW has suggested that as she is a member of the LHS school board she will propose that sustainability be made an item on the agenda so feedback can be gained.

CW

RG/PQ suggested the sharing of information could help break down barriers between schools and enable more interdisciplinary sustainability teaching and research.

PC/PH observed that within SEAS commitment was patchy with a few very strong pockets of activity

The overall consensus from the group is that Aston needs to look at what existing teaching is available and consider how it relates to other subject areas, so teaching can be broadened, and possibly cross-School barriers breached.

Task - PH asked for schools to email a list of teaching modules in order to create a catalogue of sustainability related modules.

RM has asked if this could be available online for prospective students to see.

PH

6.2 The Aston Community

GE had largely fed back on wider campus issues at previous meeting. Activity will develop once Environmental Manager is in post.

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7. Short Term Initiatives

71. Teaching and Learning Workshop

RC

RC has organized a half day teaching and learning workshop on sustainability to take place next March. The room is booked and he stated that it would be helpful if at least one staff member from each school could attend.

7.2 Campus Development Seminar

GE

GE will hopefully be ready to organize one by the next meeting. However, is willing to answer any questions about campus development in the meantime.

8. Any Other Business

PH will give an introductory presentation on the principles of ISO14001 at the next meeting for those still unclear.

РΗ

9. Next Meeting

December - immediately after end of term

ES/PH

5. 03/11/07