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Mr. P. Bowles 144

NI/GP/61/Third meeting

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at the Office of the
Royal Fine Art Commission, 5, Old Palace Yard,
Westminster on July 20th 1961.

Present: Lord Bridges (Chairman)

Sir Robert Aitken
Mr. A. E. Drake
Professor R. E. Peierls
Professor D. H. Wilkinson
Dr. T. G. Pickavance
Mr. P. Bowles

Dr. J. A. V. Willis (Secretary)

Mr. G. W. Dixon attended for the items reported
in minutes 1-3.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on
April 21st 1961.

2. Increased estimate of cost of the PLA building extensions Paper 61/35

The Chairman asked for an explanation of the large increase.
Mr. Bowles said that none of it was due to any increase in the
requirements of the PLA Group. Apart from the increases in
prevailing prices and in the fees, the main item was for roads and
drains. The policy was that the principal roads and general services
on the site were dealt with separately, but the items closely associated
with particular buildings were included with those buildings. The PLA
extension was approved at about the time when this policy was being
established, and it had recently come to light that the items of
roads and services properly chargeable to the building had been
eliminated from the estimate, possibly due to some misunderstanding
between the Institute staff and the Southern Works Organisation.

Mr. Drake said that he would have to submit the revised estimate
to the Treasury. He recommended that anticipated further increases
under the cost variation conditions in the contracts, mentioned in
paragraph 8 of the paper, should not be added to the revised estimate
until the wage increases had actually occurred, though they might be
mentioned in the letter to the Treasury. This was agreed.

Mr. Dixon said that the Southern Works Organisation had
confidence in the revised estimates now submitted.

The Chairman said that he was disturbed by the omission of essential
items from the approved estimates.

ACTION 1 The Committee approved the increase in the
estimated cost of the PLA extensions to
£268,500.

3. Heavy Laboratory and Additional Office Accommodation Paper 61/37

After some discussion it was agreed that the heavy laboratory and the new office block were essentially separate requirements for different purposes. If either could not be had the other would still be needed. Placing them together on the same site had however led to some integration: for example the office building included mess rooms and lavatories for the laboratory.

It was difficult to separate the estimated costs of the two precisely because the tenders had been for both buildings and some items were not split between the two. The office building had been approved by the AEA under local powers but it now looked as if the cost attributable to it would exceed £90,000. It was therefore thought that the Treasury should be informed of the office building and its partial association with the heavy laboratory.

Mr. Dixon said that after proper adjustments to make the tenders comparable there was only £3,000 difference between the two lower ones. The Committee noted that the two buildings combined, including the clearance of a good new site at a cost of £11,000 were now expected to cost less than the amounts previously approved for the two separately, and they endorsed the choice of Messrs. Beecham's tender.

ACTION 2 The Committee approved the acceptance of Messrs. Beecham's tender subject to the clearance of further details to the satisfaction of Mr. Drake.

4. Paper taken by Correspondence

The Chairman said that after reference to the Committee by correspondence he had approved on their behalf the recommendations in papers 61/28 (Cable installation), 61/29 (Housing), 61/30 (Surface water drainage) and 61/31 (Quadrupole magnets).

5. Housing at South Queensway, Didcot. Paper 61/40

Following on from the first item of paper 61/29, just mentioned the Chairman said that paper 61/40, circulated at the meeting, gave details of tenders for the 31 houses at Didcot, and recommended acceptance of the lowest at an estimated cost substantially less than the approved sum. After discussion, the recommendation was approved.

ACTION 3 The Committee approved the expenditure of £108,343 as detailed in paper NI/GP/61/40 and authorised the placing of a contract with Frederick Minns Ltd., Oxford within that sum, for the construction of 31 houses at South Queensway, Didcot.

6. Magnetic Spectrograph for the PLA Paper 61/32

Dr. Pickavance outlined the functions of the proposed multi-gap magnetic spectrograph, emphasizing the discussions with users which had taken place during its planning, and the large amount of work which could be done with it in a given amount of machine time. Professor Wilkinson said that he agreed that this would be a good instrument with many potential users, and complementary to the single channel spectrograph magnet approved at the last meeting.

ACTION 4 The Committee approved the manufacture of a broad range spectrograph magnet as recommended in paper 61/32 at a cost not exceeding £55,000.

7. General Financial Statement Paper 61/33

The Committee took note of the substantial increase since the last meeting in the estimate of what the expenditure had been in 1960/61.

In connection with Schedule III (major schemes) it was noted that the Treasury approval of the Atlas computer scheme was expected very soon and that this would then become an approved Institute scheme.

In schedule IV it was noted that an under-spend on both capital and non-capital in the current year is at present forecast.

8. Nimrod Quarterly Statement Paper 61/34

The Committee took note of paper 61/34, giving the position at the end of March 1961.

9. Overseas Travel Budget Paper 61/35

After some discussion of the details of foreign travel expenditure in 1960/61, given in paper 61/35 as requested at the last meeting, the Committee approved the sum recommended.

ACTION 5 The Committee approved a budget of £15,000 for overseas travel in 1961/62 as recommended in paper NI/GP/61/34.

There was also some discussion of the financing of visits to international conferences by university staff including conferences of modest size such as the one at Aix en Provence in September 1961. The Chairman reminded the Committee that it had been agreed that this was a function of the Royal Society. As a result of the Institute's action in the two previous years the Royal Society's funds for this purpose had been increased, though they were still not large. The Secretary said that at the request of the Royal Society he was collecting details of the numbers of U.K. physicists expected to be invited to conferences arranged by the I.U.P.A.P. in 1962/3, so that the Royal Society could ask for adequate funds.

10. Review of Contracts with N.G.Bailey and Z.D.Berry Paper 61/38

(It was pointed out that in some copies of this paper the last page of the first enclosure and the last page of the second enclosure had been interchanged).

Mr. Bowles said that a careful enquiry had now been made into the circumstances in which commitments on these two contracts had reached the approved sums without any warning and greatly increased approval had to be obtained urgently. He considered the prime cause to be that drawings and instructions to carry out the work had been issued by the Southern Works Organisation without estimating the cost of the work. X

In discussion, it was pointed out that if it had been possible to negotiate in advance for the large increase in these contracts, it might have been possible to obtain lower rates. A further point was the importance of getting final agreement as early as possible between the Quantity Surveyor and the contractor on the measurement of parts of the work.

The Committee considered that the cost of work which contractors were instructed to do should be estimated at the time, and they invited Mr. Drake and Mr. Bowles to look further into the matter. Mr. Drake said that he was also considering this point in connection with AEA work.

11. Proposed Housing development at Peach Croft, Abingdon Paper 61/39

(In the second line of paragraph 7 of the paper the words "staff and" should be inserted before "University visitors").

In discussion of this paper, the Committee considered that the assessment of housing needs was about right. They considered that the Treasury would need to be satisfied on this point, and also that all other possibilities, such as tenancies of council houses, had been fully explored. The secretary said that some tenancies of two-bedroomed flats and small houses were available from the Abingdon Council, and were being used where possible, but they met only a small section of the requirement.

Other possibilities, such as an improved assisted house purchase scheme and a Housing Association were suggested, and it was thought that the former might be raised in discussion with the Treasury.

ACTION 6 The Committee approved in principle the proposal detailed in paper NI/GP/61/39 to build 80 houses on a 12 acre site at Peach Croft at a cost provisionally estimated at £320,000. Subject of course to no commitment in advance of Treasury approval, they authorised the opening of negotiations for the land.

J. A. V. Willis
Secretary,
Rutherford High Energy Laboratory,
Harwell.
27th July, 1961.

Circulation: To Members of the General Purposes Committee and
To Members of the Governing Board for information.