

STRATEGIC FACILITIES PLANNING MODEL FOR PUBLIC PROPERTY – UK HEALTHCARE CASE STUDY

Tim BENNETT, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This work is posited as a work in progress and is a speculative paper based on a recent case study undertaken by the author. It describes various speculations concerning effective facilities planning and management of public healthcare sector property. The aim of the paper is to develop the conceptual framework within which activities should take place. To do this it draws upon a variety of types of study of asset management, and offers preliminary investigations on the validity of such facilities planning. The paper will consider the relationship between customer and business led strategies and how their different strategies affect facilities planning. A local healthcare economy within the UK National Health Service (NHS) will be used as a case study where the emphasis is now towards local ‘mobile’ patient care rather than hospital based ‘static’ care. The paper will aim to propose a prototype strategic model for healthcare property provision with the aim of testing and developing this framework at a later date for wider applications to aid the decision making process when considering facilities solutions to meet business needs and challenges.

It is the proposal of this paper that facilities/asset strategies should be centred on business strategies and organisational aspirations rather than allowing the current assets, to dictate the direction of strategic business goals. The former approach allows the definition of a destination or destinations where as the latter approach provides and indication of the starting point and as a consequence the length of journey. A reversal of the focus will change the direction of the business strategy. This business focus rather than facility or asset focus allows strategies to be developed which once in place can then provide an informed platform for the more recognised facilities management models to come into play; cost in use, maintenance planning, space planning are just a few of the ‘usual suspects’. The paper therefore proposes a two-staged approach. The need for this higher level of strategic planning outside the parameter of a physical asset is also highlighted by *Then (1999)* who identified three emerging themes requiring further research one being to link real estate/facilities decisions to corporate strategy.

Then (1999) illustrates the critical interface that facilities management makes between strategic decisions and facilities provision issues – ‘core business drivers’ and ‘affordability drivers’. The proposed model endeavours to encompass these two aspects by setting parameters for analysis, interpretation and dialogue so that asset planning can be taken out of the long grass and onto the fairway and formulate part of the business debate. The application to the NHS is merely a tool to attempt to facilitate the discussion and identify areas where clarity needs to be developed. It does however

illustrate how past facilities planning driven by isolated decision processes has produced an imbalanced asset portfolio which has increased duplication in customer centred services, increased maintenance and operational costs and more importantly strategic business limitations when applied to an organisations aspirations within a changing marketplace. In relation to the NHS case study additional consideration could also be given to the additional services provided by local government such as social and unitary services which when added to the strategy overview may allow greater use of physical assets and develop customer service.

The paper reflects early work in this area, and seeks to develop associations between the various factors mentioned. It does not purport to offer a definite solution, but to examine the context effective strategic facilities planning can offer to a model for further empirical study.

CONTACT

Tim P. Bennett
Faculty of Design, Surveying Department
Kingston University
Knights Park
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey, KT1 2QJ
UNITED KINGDOM
Tel. + 44 208 547 7070
Fax + 44 208 547 7087
Email: t.bennett@kingston.ac.uk