The group received an update on the UUK/Jisc content negotiation strategy group (which was called the high level negotiation strategy group at this time) and business discussed at their meeting on 20/02/20.

Caren Milloy provided a presentation on Jisc’s open access negotiations and licensing activity which included data by publisher, on sector spend, publication data and the progress of transitional, pure gold and green open access agreements. Future challenges and opportunities were discussed which included the UKRI consultation and achieving financially sustainable agreements that reflect the diversity of and provide value to all institutions. Members acknowledged the need to build a consensus on what an ideal future state post transition to open access would look like and the role this will play in shaping the transition away from current paywall models over the coming years.

Anna Vernon presented on Jisc’s new Transitional agreements oversight group which will work with publishers individually to oversee existing transitional arrangements, providing leadership and recommendations to the sector and to publishers on models that will support a transition to OA in a manner that is achievable and sustainable at the local institutional level. The pricing transparency project commissioned by cOAlition S will be incorporated into the work of this group.

Anna Vernon provided information on cost allocation confirming the need to apportion costs more equitably rather than basing fees for OA agreements on historic print spend. Extensive interviews with stakeholders are required and both a consultant and a task and finish group would be engaged.

The group discussed the sector’s response to the Covid 19 pandemic. Institutions will be impacted by loss of income, including a substantial amount of international student fees. Members reported being asked to model significant budget reductions of up to 30% with some budget lines removed completely. Provision is impacted by students being dispersed, including internationally where there are further licensing implications. Institutions need access to content now and greater support in transitioning out of some agreements. Members reported difficulty in providing digital content for the new term from a significantly reduced budget. The application of the decision on 0% VAT will be significant but it was noted that VAT credits will at best, only mitigate the impact of deeper cuts, and still result in a net reduction in budgets.

Members agreed that collectively as a sector, there is a need to articulate a statement on the impact of Covid-19 and the challenge in maintaining access whilst also managing the increased expectations in the area of teaching and learning. Members also discussed that the Covid 19 situation gives impetus for change and to look for something radically different in the future, including the traditional understanding about version of record and whether this could be widened to include other forms of scholarly communications.

The group discussed the ‘Requirements for Transitional Open Access Agreements’. These seek to set out the sector’s requirements for agreements in a clear and consistent manner. Members agreed that the focus should move from cost neutrality to cost reduction and that there is a need to recalibrate costs to a new baseline. Members noted the importance of financial sustainability rather than simply restraining costs. It was important that the document did not refer to historic pricing models, instead using language clearly compliant with funders policies. Members discussed how different data could be obtained including...
that which demonstrates the unpaid work that researchers are providing including peer review. The full contribution to costs by UK research must be acknowledged. Given the importance of data, members requested that the publisher must provide all data prior to the commencement of negotiations. The amendments and additions put forward by the group will be incorporated. The amended document will be considered by the UUK/Jisc content negotiation strategy group.

Caren Milloy presented on the current Elsevier agreement, international comparators and the data analysis to support the negotiations. The negotiation strategy and approach of other consortia, institutions and countries was outlined, and comparisons drawn, and successes highlighted. Members were provided with a series of negotiation scenarios and principles underlying the scenarios for discussion. The scenarios covered the full range of options for negotiation, including the option not to progress an agreement with Elsevier.

Members discussed the scenarios and their recommendation to the UUK/Jisc content negotiation strategy group. A full and immediate transition is necessary, and the negotiation approach must align with Plan S reflecting the research funders’ clear requirements and the sectors updated Requirements for transitional open access agreements. The group acknowledged that the negotiation scenarios were not mutually exclusive and underlying the scenarios are the timelines set out in Plan S, to achieve a transition to 100% OA by 2024. The group endorsed the data analysis plan and agreed the importance of this in developing the scenarios. The group identified their preferred approaches and their recommendations will be passed to the UUK/Jisc content negotiation strategy group for discussion.

The group members will raise any comments on the Terms of Reference in order that these can be finalised.