



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 13 February at 1pm in Committee Room 2

Present:

Lord Laming (Chairman)
Lord Ashton of Hyde
Lord Borwick
Lord Campbell-Savours
Lord Judge
Baroness Morris of Bolton
Lord Stoneham of Droxford
Lord Touhig
Baroness Wheeler

Together with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

Michael Winders (Director of Communications), Fehintola Akinlose (Director of Finance and Procurement) and Carl Woodall (Director of Facilities) were also in attendance. Andy Piper (Design Director, R&R Programme Delivery team), and James Baker (Design Lead, BDP) attended for item 3; John Thursfield (End User Requirements Manager, shadow Sponsor Body) attended for item 4; Tracey Jessup (CIO & Managing Director, PDS), Dan Cook (Portfolio Director, PDS) and Matthew Stutely (Director of Software Engineering, PDS) attended for item 5; and Justin Hills (Head of Property and Office Services), David Johnstone (Senior Facilities Manager) and David Middlehurst (Senior Facilities Manager) attended for item 6.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope.

2. Minutes of the 1st meeting, and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

The Committee was informed that work was underway looking at alternative smoking areas and a paper was expected at its next meeting. It was noted that following changes to the New Palace Yard project the Committee should expect to receive a further paper on the project.

3. House of Lords Decant Project: Member accommodation (S/19-21/9) [RESTRICTED]

Andy Piper and James Baker presented the design options available for accommodation in the QEII Centre. The Committee considered and discussed:

- The impact the level of cellularisation would have on the natural light available in office space.
- How shared space would be divided and the options for separation between political parties and groups sharing the same floor.
- The requirements for quiet and private spaces within a shared space for phone calls and confidential conversations.
- The benefits of the inclusion of a flexible multi-functional workspace on the top floor.
- The importance of all spaces being wheelchair accessible.

It was noted that the observation in the report from the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster, on the provision of ministerial and front-bench offices was not assumed in the plans. Decisions on allocation of space would be taken later in the process but there was an expectation that the present number of frontbench cellular offices was to be replicated in the QEII Centre.

The Committee also considered the case for a clear set of principles to be developed on the allocation of space in the QEII Centre, with consideration given to the current levels of usage by Members, and the options available for Members who preferred cellular offices in Millbank House and Old Palace Yard. Consideration also needed to be given to a convenient access route between the other buildings on the estate and the QEII.

The Committee agreed that the consultation with Members should include all four options but its preferred options to ensure the most flexibility would be options 1 and 2.

4. House of Lords Decant Project: Member engagement (S/19-21/10) [RESTRICTED]

The Committee was provided with an overview of the plans for Member engagement on the project and gave feedback:

- The importance of sharing plans with all Members at the same time, followed by discussion at group meetings.
- The video showing a fly-through of the building was a helpful visual representation of the space and should be shared with Members as part of the consultation.
- The consultation should be genuine, presenting the full picture in an accessible way.
- It would be beneficial to provide answers to the questions raised by the Committee when consulting more widely with Members.

5. Parliament Website Improvements (S/19-21/11) [UNRESTRICTED]

The Committee received a presentation on, and demonstration of, the upgraded Parliament website. The website was currently undergoing intensive testing and the launch date was expected to be within the next few weeks.

Some of the upgrades had previously gone live including the first publication of Erskine May online and the new Members pages published after the election. The upgraded pages increased accessibility particularly on mobile devices and met Web Content Accessibility

Guidelines A and AA accessibility standards. The look and feel of the website would be consistent across all pages and the improved compatibility with Google Analytics meant that the website featured more prominently in search results. Pages that had already been upgraded had seen a significant uplift in traffic.

The Committee took note of the update and welcomed the recent and imminent improvements to the Parliament website.

6. Estates works update (S/19-21/12) [UNRESTRICTED]

The Committee took note of the Estates Works Update.

7. Fire Safety Improvement Works – Extended testing and commissioning period (S/19-21/13) [RESTRICTED]

The Committee was updated on the requirements for extensive testing of the fire systems at weekends throughout October, November and December. Whilst bookings already taken for events during this time were to be honoured, no further bookings were being taken and there would be no visitor tours of the Palace during this time.

Due to the disruptive nature of the testing it was not possible to carry it out only overnight or during recesses. Once the testing was complete the fire systems would be fully commissioned.

The Committee endorsed the testing period, noting the disruption it would cause and the importance of effective and early engagement, currently underway.

8. AOB

Members of the Committee requested that the trial of changes to the service in the Bishops' Bar be extended to allow sufficient time for them to be used before the Committee took a final decision. The Committee agreed to extend the trial until the Committee received a report at its April meeting.

The Committee noted the letter received from Kenneth Fox on the upgrade to Committee Room 6 and the plans to upgrade further Committee Rooms.

The next meeting will be on 19 March at 1pm.

Gabby Longdin
Clerk
HLServicesCommittee@parliament.uk