



HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monday 27 April 2020

Attendance

- Lord Speaker (Chairman)
- Lord McFall of Alcluith (Deputy Chairman)
- Baroness Doocey
- Mathew Duncan (external member)
- Baroness Evans of Bowes Park
- Liz Hewitt (external member)
- Lord Judge
- Lord Laming
- Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall
- Lord Newby
- Baroness Smith of Basildon
- Lord Wakeham

The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams. Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, was in attendance.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The Commission agreed the minutes of the meeting of Thursday 2 April 2020.

2. Virtual Proceedings and Remote Committee attendance: Eligibility for payment of the Daily Allowances

C/19-21/22 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Members in receipt of the daily allowance declared this as a relevant interest before contributing.

The Lord Speaker began by explaining the current allowance system and the proposal for agreeing a new temporary allowance system which acknowledged members' contribution through virtual proceedings and the new way of remote working. He reminded Commission members of the confidential nature of the discussion.

Fehintola Akinlose, Finance Director, and Jonathan Smith, Head of Finance, were present for this item. Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, explained the details of the paper, including the options available to Commission members for a new temporary system.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park outlined her concerns and suggested that there was a substantial reputational risk if the Commission took the wrong decision. She suggested

the immediate suspension of the current allowance system and a new much lower allowance for members who speak during proceedings or participate in the work of a select committee. Baroness Smith of Basildon said that the Commission should make a positive statement about the work of the House of Lords and the important role it is continuing to play in the midst of the national public health crisis. She suggested that all who participate in virtual proceedings receive the reduced daily allowance and that the figure be the same for those who participate in physical proceedings in the chamber. She also called for a review of the main allowances system at a later date. Lord Newby agreed that a review of the main system should take place but argued for a meaningful amount to be paid for those who participated and continued to work. He made the point that the opportunities for members to participate in the work of the House had been reduced in number, so the amount paid to members may have decreased substantially. Lord Judge disagreed and argued for suspension of all allowances with no temporary scheme but agreed that a review of the main system should take place in the future.

Lord Wakeham and Lord Laming said that the whole allowances system should be temporarily suspended and that no allowances should be paid during the period of virtual proceedings. Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall and Baroness Doocey said that some form of temporary system should be established. Mathew Duncan said that he was persuaded by a temporary allowance system which enabled the reduced daily allowance to be paid for those Members who contribute.

Commission members commented that the situation had exposed the weaknesses in the main allowances system which was based on the principle of allowances for accommodation, subsistence and incidental expenses incurred as a result of attending Westminster. Lord McFall of Alcluith made the point that withdrawing the allowance system altogether may be seen as an implicit comment on the worth of the work of the House and that thought should be given to how the main system would be restored should it be temporarily suspended.

The Lord Speaker summarised the discussion. The Commission **agreed** to suspend the current allowances system and replace it with a temporary system which recognised the contributions made by Members in the new virtual proceedings and in virtual committee meetings. The Commission **agreed** that the claimable sum should be the reduced daily rate of £162, that this should be the amount claimable for those who participate in both virtual proceedings and committee meetings as well as those who participate in physical proceedings and committee meetings. The Commission **agreed** that the new system should be applied retrospectively to 21 April. The Commission **agreed** to review the temporary allowances system before the end of June.

The Commission agreed that the further details of the temporary scheme, including the definition of participation, and a short statement, should be agreed by correspondence. The Leader of the House **agreed** to table a resolution on the matter for agreement by the House.

3. A New Communications and Engagement Strategy

Michael Winders, Director of Communications
C/19-21/23 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Lord Speaker deferred consideration of this item until the next meeting.

4. Steering Group for Change: First Report

Baroness Donaghy, Chair, Steering Group for Change, and Pippa Patterson, Steering Group for Change Lead
C/19-21/24 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Lord Speaker deferred consideration of this item until the next meeting. The Lord Speaker apologised to Baroness Donaghy who had been waiting to join the meeting.

5. Update on the Administration

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments
C/19-21/25 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Commission **took note** of the Update.

6. Virtual Proceedings

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments
C/19-21/26 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Commission **took note** of the paper.

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Next meeting

The Lord Speaker informed Commission members that the next meeting would take place during the week commencing Monday 18 May 2020 via Microsoft Teams and that the date and time of the meeting would be confirmed by correspondence.

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