



HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

Minutes

Thursday 7 May 2020

Attendance

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

Apologies were received from Baroness Evans of Bowes Park, the Leader of the House, and Mathew Duncan. Earl Howe, Deputy Leader of the House, attended in the place of Baroness Evans of Bowes Park. The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams. Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, was in attendance.

I. Matters Arising

Lord McFall of Alcluith updated the Commission on the progress of the External Management Review, the work of the headhunting organisation, Saxton Bampfylde, and said that the advertisement for the reviewer would be published shortly.

The Lord Speaker thanked Commission members for agreeing the final details of the allowances policy by correspondence and asked Earl Howe to pass on his thanks to Baroness Evans of Bowes Park for moving the motion in the chamber (attached as an annex). He explained that an amendment was tabled to the motion but that it passed unamended. The amendment, which called for a review of the temporary allowances system, was discussed and the Lord Speaker reminded Commission members that they had agreed that such a review should take place before the end of June.

The Lord Speaker reminded Commission members that the two main papers on the agenda for the meeting had been circulated previously but had been deferred because of time pressures at the previous meeting.

2. **A New Communications and Engagement Strategy**

Michael Winders, Director of Communications

C/19-21/23 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Michael Winders, Director of Communications, attended for this item and introduced the paper and the strategy. He emphasised that the strategy had been drafted with a joint ownership in mind: Members and the Administration.

Liz Hewitt commented on engagement and asked that the role of the House and the contributions it makes be made clearer. She also suggested developing a set of key messages for internal and external communications on the contributions of the House.

Lord Wakeham suggested that it be made clear in the strategy that the House of Lords was the revising chamber of the UK Parliament though not independent from the House of Commons. He suggested that the value of the House of Lords as a second Chamber should be made clearer. Lord Judge agreed and asked that the purpose of the House of Lords be made clear from the beginning of the strategy. Baroness Smith of Basildon emphasised the complementarity of the bicameral system.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall asked about the work the House does with young people and its engagement programme. Mr Winders explained the plan to relaunch the suite of programmes available to Members and schools: this had been postponed due to Covid-19 situation. Mr Winders told the Commission that virtual engagement would need to be explored further. Lord Newby echoed this approach and suggested the introduction of webinars for Members to engage further with Schools.

Both Lord Laming and Earl Howe suggested that the Communications strategy should be communicated to, and taken on board by, all Members of the House. When asked a question about recent negative press stories related to the House, Earl Howe said that he understood the concern and agreed that stories which sought to undermine the work and role of the House were unhelpful.

The Commission **endorsed** the strategy and agreed to help promote and embed the strategy among Members of the House.

3. **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

Baroness Donaghy, Chair of the Steering Group for Change, spoke to this item. She explained the content of the report and said that the Group was not proposing any firm recommendations at this time. She explained the composition of the Group, how they worked and gave an update on what they had been discussing in the preceding weeks.

Lord Newby asked Baroness Donaghy if she would attend and speak at a Liberal Democrat group meeting to update Members on the work of the Group. Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall and Baroness Smith of Basildon made a similar request and Lord Judge spoke of the importance of Members understanding the importance of cultural

change. Baroness Donaghy agreed to attend party and Crossbench group meetings to discuss the work of the Group.

Liz Hewitt suggested that the Commission communicate with Members and staff on the progress that had been made since the publication of the Ellenbogen Report nearly a year before.

The Lord Speaker congratulated Baroness Donaghy for the work of the Steering Group and thanked her for the update. The Commission **noted** the report from the Steering Group for Change.

4. **Any Other Business**

Lord Newby asked the Commission to consider a request to move towards a hybrid House – a model where proceedings are conducted with some Members in the chamber and others participating remotely.

The Lord Speaker reminded the Commission that there were a number of issues to be resolved before a hybrid model could be established including financial implications, staffing issues and health and safety considerations. He also said that the House would have to proceed in line with the forthcoming announcement of the Prime Minister on Sunday 10 May.

Baroness Smith of Basildon argued that the Commission should agree, in principle, to look at whether this is something that could be implemented but that it should be considered as part of a staged return to normal. Lord Judge agreed with this approach.

Lord McFall of Alcluith, as Chair of the Procedure Committee, spoke about the need for clear communication with Members and the continual task of managing expectations. Earl Howe agreed and said that different Members had different expectations. Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall added that unmediated criticism of staff working under pressure was unacceptable.

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, provided background on number of Members who would be permitted in the Chamber under social distancing rules and also explained the background to the House of Commons' decision to function as a hybrid House. He said that it would take some weeks before the House of Lords could function as a hybrid House but that he stood ready to respond to the wishes of the Commission and the Procedure Committee.

The Commission **agreed** to move forward, in principle, to a hybrid House model and asked for further proposals to be developed. The Commission **agreed** that Lord McFall of Alcluith should communicate this decision to the Procedure Committee.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall asked for clarification about select committee meetings which took place on non-sitting days and asked if the reduced allowance could be claimed by committee Members who participated in such meetings. The Clerk of the Parliaments confirmed that select committee meetings on non-sitting days qualified for the allowance prior to the recent adjustments, and that this would continue to be the case.

5. Next meeting

The Lord Speaker informed Commission members that the next meeting would take place on Friday 22 May 2020 via Microsoft Teams and that the time of the meeting would be confirmed by correspondence.

Thursday 7 May 2020

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ANNEX

Motion passed by the House on Wednesday 6 May 2020

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park (The Lord Privy Seal)

1. The Resolution of the House of 20 July 2010 (House of Lords Allowance) shall temporarily cease to have effect in respect of attendances after 20 April 2020.
2. Members of this House, except any Member who receives a salary under the Ministerial and other Salaries Act 1975 and the Chairman and Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees, should be entitled to an allowance in respect of each day of attendance on or after 21 April 2020.
3. “Attendance” means attendance—
 - a) at a sitting of this House or a Committee of this House,
 - b) at a virtual proceeding of this House or a virtual meeting of a Committee of this House, or
 - c) on such other Parliamentary business as may be determined by the House of Lords Commission.
4. The amount of the allowance payable to a Member in respect of a day of attendance should be £162.
5. In respect of attendance at a physical sitting or virtual proceeding of this House only Members who speak during the sitting or the proceeding, or who are otherwise necessary to the proceedings, should be entitled to an allowance.
6. In respect of attendance at a Committee of this House, only Members of that Committee or Members authorised to attend a meeting of such a Committee by the Chair should be entitled to an allowance.