



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 30 April at 1pm on Microsoft Teams

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) and Carl Woodall (Director of Facilities) were also in attendance. Stephen Perkins (Head of Catering and Retail Services) attended for item 3; Justin Hills (Head of Property and Office Services) attended for items 3, 4 and 5; Debbie McGuire (Member Services Manager, House of Commons) and Sean House (Head of Transformation, In-House Services & Estates) attended for item 6; and Simon Nicholls (Change Projects Lead) and Emma Burke (Governance Support Officer) attended for item 7.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope.

2. Minutes of the 2nd meeting, and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. House of Lords Terrace Smoking Area alternative locations (S/19-21/17) [RESTRICTED]

Since the Committee had last discussed the matter, consideration had been given to the possible alternative locations for the smoking area; with the paper offering four viable options. The paper also included responses from consultation with those known to use the Members' only smoking table on the Terrace.

The Committee reviewed the suggested options noting:

- The expected cost of a canopy to cover the smoking area and the visual impact it may have;

- The removal of the smoking area in Peers' Inner Court resulted in an increase of use of the Terrace by smokers;
- The additional tables that could be freed up by removing the smoking area from the Terrace;
- The distance from the proposed site by the river to the Chamber for divisions; and
- The Committee recognised that it would not be possible to prevent smokers from the Commons using a covered smoking area on the Lords Terrace.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to Option 2; moving the smoking area to Black Rod's Garden River Front. This required the removal of various project storage areas, the creation of a path down from the current smoking area in Black Rod's Garden and the provision of some shelter. It was expected that this work could be completed by any return of the House from the Whitsun recess but this was subject to confirmation. The Committee confirmed by this decision to make the Terrace a non-smoking area.

The Committee was informed that the previously approved new furniture for the Terrace had been ordered but its delivery and installation had been delayed due to the impact of COVID-19.

4. Estates Works Update (S/I9-21/21) [UNRESTRICTED]

The Committee was provided with an update on works on the Parliamentary Estate, in light of COVID-19. Almost all works had been suspended and would not restart until sufficient assurance was received from contractors that they would be able to follow social distancing guidelines on site. Some survey works were expected to start next week.

Payments to contractors were being made for work completed and to guarantee supply chains. Where contractors had furloughed staff, Parliament was not paying for those staff.

The Committee took note of the update.

5. Fielden House Project update (S/I9-21/22) [RESTRICTED]

Since the Committee last received an update on the project, members had decanted the building and it had been fully stripped out. These strip out and survey works informed the Outline Business Case which was approved in February 2020. It had been agreed that Option 8A would be taken forward; delivering statutory compliance, heating and cooling, Millbank House connectivity to provide heating and cooling and electrical resilience, internal & external refurbishment, enlarged riser and lift shaft to facilitate Equality Act compliance, but without the provision of a secondary data centre, which would instead be located in Millbank House. The internal design would be flexible to allow for cellular or open plan offices as required.

It was expected that a fully open plan layout could provide up to 135 desks in the building. A 12 month maintenance contract on all mechanical and electrical installations would be added in addition to the usual 12 month defects period to ensure a smooth

handover to the maintenance team and avoid issues previously seen in Old Palace Yard and 5 Great College Street. It was confirmed that the House of Lords owned the long leasehold of the building, with over 900 years remaining.

The Committee took note of the progress of the project and was supportive of the decision to progress Option 8A.

**6. Review and re-procurement of Travel Office services (S/19-21/23)
[RESTRICTED]**

The Committee was informed that the original plan for the re-procurement exercise was for it to have been completed for this summer, however due to the impact of COVID-19 on the travel industry it was now proposed that the current contract should be extended for a further year in order to shield the re-procurement from some of the risk. A travel consultant had been engaged to review the current service and was involved in the re-procurement exercise. The consultant had suggested a number of improvements that could be implemented before procurement activities to improve the current service.

The Committee discussed the general trend in the travel industry moving to online bookings and the need to balance this with the availability of face to face assistance for those who required it. The Committee was supportive of the move to more digital practices to relieve pressure on the walk-in service and was informed that keeping some form of face to face service under a re-procured contract did not necessarily require a fully staffed static office five days a week.

It was agreed that a further update be provided to the Committee once consideration had been given to possible options for the future of the service, to include detail on current usage levels of the Travel Office.

The Committee endorsed the recommendation to extend the contract with the current supplier until 31 August 2021.

7. Members' Survey Results (S/19-21/24) [UNRESTRICTED]

The Committee was provided with the results of the 2019-20 Members' Survey. Since writing the report, the focus of the Change Projects Lead had been on implementing the new virtual Parliament procedures, and as a result progress on the response to the Survey had been put on hold.

It was explained that one finding from the survey was that 28.6% of members did not feel they received adequate communications from the domestic committees. The Committee welcomed the suggestions of ways to improve the Committee's communication with members, as set out in the paper from the Governance Support Officer.

The Committee welcomed the results of the members' survey and the way in which it had been presented. The Committee agreed that it would reconsider the results at such a time that it was felt more appropriate.

8. AOB

The Clerk of the Parliaments provided an update on Restoration and Renewal. As of 8 April 2020, the Sponsor Body had taken ownership of the project. Both the Commons and Lords Commissions had agreed funding up to the end of June 2020, and further consideration was required for funding for the remainder of the year. The Sponsor Body planned to set up a strategic review to consider the impact of COVID-19, focussed on the decant and the impact on costs. The Member consultation process had been put on hold. The Committee would be kept informed of developments.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 11 June at 1pm.

Small sections of these minutes have been redacted, usually for reasons such as commercial confidentiality and sensitive management information.

Gabby Longdin
Clerk

HLServicesCommittee@parliament.uk