House of Commons

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Note of Discussion for the meeting held on 29 November 2021 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 5

Members present:

Sir Charles Walker (in the Chair)

John Cryer
Michael Fabricant
Marion Fellows
Mrs Pauline Latham
Mrs Maria Miller
Jessica Morden

Apologies: Colleen Fletcher, Sir Greg Knight and Giles Watling.

1. Informal Note

The Committee **agreed** an amended version of the Informal Note of its meeting on 22 November 2021.

Members' Services Fair

At the request of the Chair, Chris Sear (Director of the Members' Services Team, in attendance) provided an update on the Members' Services Fair taking place that week in Portcullis House. The launch of the Fair by Mr Speaker and the Chair had been well attended and their attendance, as well as that of another Member of the Committee, was appreciated by the staff representing House services. Kate Emms (Director of Member Engagement, in attendance) said that she wanted to coordinate the Fair with the induction of Members' staff. The Chair said that the Fair would be a useful learning exercise for similar events in future and suggested that it should be organised biannually and alternative venues on the Parliamentary Estate considered. He also welcomed a communications drive to encourage attendance.

The Committee **noted** the update.

2. Strategic framework for the work of the Administration Committee: follow up

Mrs Maria Miller briefed the Committee on a background paper prepared by Alison Groves, Committee Clerk, summarising the Committee's work setting its strategic framework and proposing the next steps.

Mrs Miller felt that the role of the Committee and the services provided by the House should be to ensure that Members were effective in their roles as scrutineers and legislators and representatives of their constituents and that the Committee's standing orders did not fully reflect this. Using these principles as a basis the Committee could identify gaps in the provision of services on which the House Service could then focus. It was important to continue to engage with Members to inform the Committee's work in this area and a debate on the floor of the House should be organised to discuss the outcomes. There was also a question as to whether the outcomes should be discussed and reviewed by the House of Commons Commission.

Ms Emms noted that hearing from Members had been an incredibly useful way of getting their views on the provision of services. One way the House was acting upon these views was by providing a more streamlined and integrated induction process that focused on the first-day essentials. The Committee's work could also feed into the ongoing work led by Emily Baldock (Director of Strategy and Business Planning) on a refresh of the House Strategy.

The following points were raised by Members during the discussion:

- The Chair recognised that it was legitimate for the House Service to have its own strategy but also that Members should have a statement that collectively set out their requirements of the services provided by the House to enable them to be effective in their roles.

- A Member said that, given that the Committee had already gathered the views of Members and produced a good analysis from the results, further consultation was not needed.

- A Member said that it would be useful for the Committee to work more closely with the teams overseeing the induction of Members to feed into their work and that it was important to provide follow-up to the Members who had responded to the Committee's work so that they were aware that their views were being acted upon. The Chair's letters to all Members were a useful way of informing Members about services but there was still a need to seek their views.

Decision

The Committee **endorsed** the proposal set out in the paper.

3. Transforming Digital and User Survey Update

Libby Kurien, Director of Business Change, Managing Director, Parliamentary Digital Service (PDS), briefed the Committee:

- The Transforming Digital Programme, a strategic investment in the digital services provided by Parliament had recently moved into the delivery phase and would run until 2025. It would begin with the replacement of the technology providing the PDS Helpdesk, which would improve the reporting and resolution of IT issues. The work would also include updating the PDS operating model to ensure an increased focus on customers; the provision of IT equipment and information on services during the induction process for Members and their staff; updating digital systems; and the creation of a new open data platform to improve access to procedural data for Members and the public.

- A user survey would be sent to all Members and their staff to gather their views on the digital services provided by Parliament and inform the Programme [*a copy of the survey was handed round to Members during the meeting*].

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

4. Access rules update

Ugbana Oyet, Serjeant-at-Arms, briefed the Committee on the current access rules on bringing non-passholders onto the Parliamentary Estate following several recent changes which had in some instances caused confusion. The current rules agreed by the House of Commons Commission stated that Members could bring up to 6 guests onto the Estate and that their staff could, with written authority, collect them on their behalf.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

The Committee will next meet on 6 December 2021 at 4.30pm