



HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

Minutes

Thursday 2 July 2020

Attendance

- 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

Apologies were received from Lord Fowler (Chairman) and the meeting was chaired by Lord McFall of Alcluith (Deputy Chairman). Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, was in attendance. The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams.

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

The Commission **agreed** the records of discussions of the meeting of the House of Lords Commission of 26 June. The Commission Secretary reminded members to declare any relevant interests.

Lord McFall informed members of the Commission that Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall had agreed to represent the Lord Speaker on the R&R Strategic Review Challenge Group and thanked her for agreeing to this role. Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall said that she would report back to the Commission in due course.

There was a discussion about the letter from Lord Shinkwin to the Lord Speaker on allowances which had been copied to Commission members. Baroness Smith of Basildon said that the letter was both unhelpful and disrespectful and asked that this be placed on the record.

2. Social Distancing in the Chamber and on the winder House of Lords

Paper by Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments

C/19-21/42 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Ed Ollard, the Clerk of the Parliaments, introduced the paper. Professor John Simpson, Head of the Emergency Response Department and Deputy Director of the Health Protection Directorate, Public Health England, and Professor Virginia Murray, Senior Public Health Adviser and Head of Global Disaster Risk Reduction, Public

Health England, both joined the meeting. They began by explaining that the decision for taking mitigating actions to reduce the risk level in Parliament could only be taken by the Commission. They also said that they had been present at a meeting of the House of Commons Commission some days before for a similar discussion and that they were working closely with the Clerk of the Parliaments and his team to plan for the implementation of social distancing measures and enhanced cleaning procedures. They said that the advice they had provided was necessarily cautious because of the national importance of Parliament.

Questions were asked about the track and trace procedures in place, the testing regime available to Parliamentarians, particularly the immunity test, and whether Members of the House should be asked to attend Westminster in groups to avoid the risk of mass-transmission.

[Restricted Access – More information.]

Professor Murray confirmed that rotation of staff and Members to reduce mass-transmission was good practice.

A discussion took place on the range of mitigating measures which could be taken in the chamber and in the catering outlets to allow more Members to return to Westminster. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park and Baroness Smith of Basildon agreed that the prospect of retaining the 2m rule and associated measures was disappointing but clearly necessary. They asked that the Commission return to the subject in September in order for any decision to be reviewed in the light of the latest public health advice. Lord Judge agreed that this was a sensible approach.

After discussion, the Commission **agreed** that the 2m rule should be maintained in the Chamber and **agreed** that the 2m social distancing measures should remain in place across the wider Estate.

3. **Allowances Scheme: Medium-term Changes**

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments
C/19-21/43 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Ed Ollard, the Clerk of the Parliaments, introduced the paper and explained that the proposals reflected the discussions which had taken place between the leaders and the Convenor. Members in receipt of the daily allowance (Baroness Doocey, Lord Judge, Lord Laming, Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall, Lord Newby and Lord Wakeham) declared this as a relevant interest. Baroness Doocey and Lord Laming also declared their particular interests as Chair of the Finance Committee and Chair of the Services Committee respectively.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park asked if the proposed new supplementary Parliamentary work allowance for frontbenchers would apply to Government frontbenchers. Mr Ollard confirmed that it would not.

Discussion turned to the proposal for a new supplementary Parliamentary work allowance for committee chairs.

[Restricted Access – More information.]

After discussion, the Commission provisionally **agreed** to the main elements of the new scheme but **decided** that the specifics of the proposals be considered further and that the Commission should consider a revised proposal at the next meeting.

4. Next meeting

Lord McFall of Alcluith informed Commission members that the next meeting would take place via Microsoft Teams on Monday 20 July at 4pm, or earlier.

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Patrick Milner
Secretary to the Commission
020 7219 6644
milnerp@parliament.uk