

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Note of discussion for the meeting held on 18 March 2020 at 2.30pm in Committee Room 20

Members present:

Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair)

John Cryer
Michael Fabricant

Mark Tami

Apologies: Marion Fellows, Colleen Fletcher, Sir Greg Knight, Mrs Pauline Latham, Jessica Morden, Sir Charles Walker and Giles Watling.

1. Declaration of interests

Members declared their interests in accordance with the Resolution of the House of 13 July 1992 (see Appendix A).

2. Election of Chair

Mark Tami proposed that Sir Charles Walker be Chair of the Committee.

Sir Charles Walker, *in absentia*, was called to the Chair.

The Committee **agreed** that Mrs Maria Miller should take the Chair of the Committee for that day's sitting in the temporary absence of the Chair.

3. Confidentiality and Privilege

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

4. Working Practices of the Committee: Administrative Matters

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

5. Matters delegated to the Chair's discretion

Kevin Candy, Committee Clerk, briefed the Committee.

The Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to delegate to the Chair the power to schedule meetings, determine the agenda and respond to press queries on behalf of the Committee; and
- (2) to delegate the following approvals specific to its remit to the Chair:
 - to approve music, film and photography requests;
 - to approve income generation requests if required; and
 - to handle other extraordinary requests related to the use of facilities.

6. Work, role and remit of the Committee

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

7. Derby Gate Pass Issuing Office interim move

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

8. Fire Safety Improvement Works

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

9. Parliamentary Fire Safety Committee

This item was deferred to a future meeting

10. House Service response to COVID-19 outbreak

Marianne Cwynarski, Head of the Governance Office, John Owen, Programme Manager, Governance Office, and James Turner, Director of Customer Service and Service Delivery, In-House Services and Strategic Estates, provided an update on the House's arrangements in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Mr Turner thanked the House teams that were assisting in the House's response to the outbreak, which followed the advice issued by Public Health England. The House was also working closely with colleagues in the Lords to ensure that this was a Parliament-wide response to the outbreak.

Mrs Cwynarski said that she was leading on the House's response to the outbreak which consisted of seven workstreams which included the HR elements, day-to-day operations and the Parliamentary Digital Service (PDS). The response group was meeting each day to consider the challenges posed by the outbreak and to consider the key communications to be sent out.

The Chair asked what the most pressing challenges were in responding to the outbreak and how best to deal with them. Mrs Cwynarski said that the biggest concern was a reduction in staff and the subsequent impact on the level of services the House was able to provide.

The Chair asked if there were risks around the provision of catering and retail services, particularly in the preparation of food and the handling of cash, and what measures were in place to protect customers and staff. Mr Turner said that it was not yet clear whether these services would be closed entirely. Cash handling had been raised in discussions with staff though the current evidence on the virus did not suggest that it was transmitted this way. Many catering staff already wore gloves as a precautionary measure and hygiene measures had been stepped up with self-service being removed where necessary and staff serving food instead.

The Chair asked what plans there were to ensure key messages on the House's response to the outbreak were communicated to Members, given that they already received many communications through different channels. She added that it would be useful if the Committee could be notified in advance when significant announcements were to be made. Mrs Cwynarski noted the difficulty of getting these messages to Members and added that the Speaker was taking a key role in ensuring they were communicated to Members through statements made in the Chamber, for example. It was anticipated that both the Speaker and the Whips of the various parties would be assisting in passing these messages on to Members.

The Chair asked if a further update could be provided on the House's response to COVID-19 at the next meeting of the Committee to include details on what would be required to ensure the running of core business and what steps would need to be taken to ensure that.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

11. Members' Library services: COVID-19

[A note on provision of Library services was circulated at the meeting.]

The Committee **noted** an update from Martin Reid, Director of Library Services, Research & Information, on changes to the provision of Members' Library services owing to the availability of staff working on the Estate during the current outbreak.

12. Any other business

House Service strategy

The Chair noted the importance of a House Service Strategy that fully encompassed the work of Members, as well as House staff, and said that Members and the Committee could have a greater involvement in the future development of the Strategy and monitor how the House Service delivered against it. For instance, she suggested that a sub-committee could be set up with the Procedure Committee to look at how the House's procedures and provision of services worked in supporting Members carrying out their roles. The Committee could return to this when considering its work programme.

The Committee will next meet on 27 April 2020 at 4.30pm