



HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

Minutes

Wednesday 26 October, 10.00am–11.30am

Attendance

- Lord Speaker (Chair)
- Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Deputy Chair)
- Earl of Courtown (attending under standing order 64)
- Mathew Duncan (external member)
- Lord German - *virtually*
- Lord Hill of Oareford
- Lord Judge
- Lord Newby
- Nora Senior (external member) - *virtually*
- Baroness Smith of Basildon
- Lord Touhig - *virtually*
- Lord Vaux of Harrowden

Apologies were received from Lord True. Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments, Andy Helliwell, Chief Operating Officer, Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant and Jonathan Smith, Head of Finance, were in attendance. The meeting was held in the Lord Speaker's Office.

• Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Commission agreed the record of discussion of the previous meeting of the House of Lords Commission on 11 July 2022, and agreed to one amendment and one redaction.

Since that meeting, the Commission had by correspondence:

- a) agreed the establishment of the R&R Client Board and its meeting frequency, including while acting in place of the Programme Board;
- b) agreed the proposed number and type of external members of the Programme Board, and the process for appointing them; and
- c) agreed the expectations about the proposed role of the Sponsor Board until the secondary legislation had come into force to abolish it; and for the Speakers to write jointly to the Chair of the Sponsor Board to communicate this.

noted the recommendation by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee in its report of 29 June 2022 *Restoration and Renewal of Parliament*, for the Commissions of both Houses to publish and place in their respective libraries all minutes and advice documents supporting decisions relating to the R&R programme, as well as the interdependent and wider works across the

Parliamentary Estate, and to consider matters of transparency and proactive publication when it meets jointly with the House of Commons Commission as the R&R Client Board.

- **Elizabeth Tower Tours Charging Model**

Abigail Fox-Smith, Director of Visitor Experience, House of Commons and Matt Morgan, Head of Visitor Services, House of Commons
C/21-22/9; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Abigail Fox-Smith and Matt Morgan introduced the paper.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- A member asked about whether Member-sponsored tours of the Elizabeth Tower would form part of the upcoming Visitor Experience review. Abigail Fox-Smith confirmed that they would.
- She pointed out that because Parliament already offered tours, there should be sufficient staff capacity to offer tours of Elizabeth Tower as well.
- A member asked whether all Member-sponsored tours would need to take place on the same day. Matt Morgan said that a pre-booking period was being considered, meaning that not all Member-sponsored tours would need to take place on the same day.
- A member asked how the age limits for children and young people's tickets had been decided. Abigail Fox-Smith replied that the age criteria aligned with existing limits for tours of the Palace.
- She confirmed that Members would not be expected to accompany groups of visitors that they had sponsored.

The Commission endorsed the following proposals:

- That one day per week, or an equivalent volume thereof, of Member-sponsored tours will be provided free of charge
- That there will be a provisional price of £25 (£10 per child) for remaining tours, with the price subject to confirmation in the tours review in December 2022

- **Additional Financial Support to Members**

Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments
C/21-22/10; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Simon Burton introduced the paper.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- There was a discussion of the options proposed in the paper, and Jonathan Smith, Head of Finance, outlined how the existing scheme works and how the proposed schemes would work.
- It was pointed out that any additional allowance would need to be claimed by Members – they would not receive allowances automatically. Jonathan Smith

outlined that Members are assessed individually under the existing scheme, and therefore receive different amounts. Requests for any additional support are considered by the Additional Support Group.

- The discussion stressed that there was a balance to be drawn between ensuring that Members receive the additional support that they require and that allowances should reflect their attendance and work in the House. It was pointed out that additional support is often provided by people with specialist skills who are employed in the expectation of receiving consistent payment.
- In answer to a question about why additional support should be linked to attendance, it was pointed out that Members might need similar assistance for their work outside the House, which should not be covered by the scheme. There was a trade-off between the simplicity or otherwise of the proposals in the paper, Members' work in Parliament and the work that they do outside. It was important to ensure that Members requesting support are treated with dignity.
- Simon Burton proposed that should the existing scheme continue he would return to the Commission to discuss how well it has worked, including whether it delivers bespoke support and whether it reflects Members' attendance and other work in the House.

The Commission agreed that the eligible days for which Members with disabilities can claim additional financial support contributing towards the costs of an assistant should continue as they have done since the COVID-19 pandemic, with Members eligible to claim for days on which the House sits. The Commission also agreed that this decision would be reviewed within six months.

- **Update from the Clerk of the Parliaments**

Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments, updated the Commission.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- Simon Burton explained that the Administration would need to be resilient during the winter. It should be prepared for challenges posed by transport strikes, influenza and COVID. Supply chains would also need to be resilient. The principal goal of maintaining resilience is to ensure that the House is able to sit and conduct its business.
- A question was asked about works on peers' entrance, and when they would be completed. Simon Burton explained that the works carried out over the summer had been preparatory works; he would report back to the Commission about whether costs had changed and on dates for completion of the works. Simon underlined that a priority for the works was to ensure continued access to the Estate.
- A Member asked about the influenza vaccine programme offered to Members and staff; Andy Helliwell, Chief Operating Officer, reported that the availability of vaccines had been extended.
- Members discussed Operation Marquee, and stressed their pride in how staff across the administration had provided a professional service at a time when Parliament was the focus of international attention.

The Commission recorded its thanks to all the staff who worked to support the lying-in-state of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during Operation Marquee. Members noted that colleagues worked long hours enable Parliament to be able to pay tribute to Queen Elizabeth, to offer the condolences of the House to His Majesty King Charles III and to ensure that members of the public could also pay their respects. Their work meant that the historic event ran as smoothly as possible.

- **Restoration and Renewal Client Board**

The Lord Speaker proposed that the Commission should reconfirm that the Restoration & Renewal Client Board should attract allowances under the Members' Finance Scheme, as had already been agreed at the Restoration and Renewal Client Board meeting held on 17 October.

The Commission agreed that, with effect from 17 October 2022, meetings of the Restoration and Renewal Client Board are qualifying attendances for the Members' Finance Scheme and should be added to the list at 3.1.1 in the Guide to the Members' Finance Scheme.

- **Any Other Business and Next Meeting**

The Lord Speaker informed the Commission that a joint event with the Management Board had been confirmed for Monday 12 December at 5.30pm.

The Lord Speaker updated the Commission on the work of the Commission Group, which had begun a 'deep dive' into project, programme and portfolio management in the House of Lords. On 24 October the Group had a useful initial discussion on this topic; at its next meeting, on 30 November, the Group would hear from Lord Morse, who has completed a review of financial management in the Commons. The Group will discuss the relevance and application of his findings to the House of Lords.

There was a discussion of the minutes of other bodies that are circulated to the Commission. Simon Burton said that he would consider how the information could be best presented.

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 14 December at 10.00am.

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