

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Note of discussion for the meeting held on 22 June 2020 at 4.30pm

[[Meeting held over Microsoft Teams as a videoconference]]

Members present:

Sir Charles Walker (in the Chair)

Michael Fabricant
Marion Fellows
Colleen Fletcher
Sir Greg Knight

Mrs Pauline Latham
Mrs Maria Miller
Jessica Morden
Giles Watling

Apologies: Mark Tami

1. Informal Note

The Committee agreed the informal notes of the meeting on 15 June 2020.

Matters arising

Members' HR Advice Service

The Committee **agreed** that the Chair write to all Members to inform them of the new Members' HR Advice Service.

2. Essentials training for Members

Lee Bridges, Director of Members' Services, HR and Diversity, and John Bradbury, Fire Safety Manager, In-House Services, briefed the Committee.

Mr Bridges reported that the Clerk of the House had sought legal advice on his role as the corporate responsible officer for the House in relation to fire safety training for Members and their offices. He was required to provide Members and their staff with the necessary information about his responsibilities regarding fire safety but could not compel them to take the training as they were not employees of the House. The new approach would be to provide information to Members and their offices, in a similar way as was done for contractors, which would meet the corporate responsibilities of the Clerk. More would also be done to find better ways to engage Members, particularly through the work of fire marshals.

A Member suggested that a short fire safety information leaflet should be produced and distributed to offices with information on evacuation routes specific to their location on the Estate. The Chair noted that a laminated information sheet for display in each office or area would be useful. Mr Bradbury said that something similar to this was already in place in the House of Lords, which also received fire safety briefings in the Chamber when the House was not sitting, and both could be introduced in the Commons.

A Member sought clarification on completion rates as it was unclear from the data contained in the paper which training it covered and there was no cumulative figure for the whole year. Mr Bridges said that the data covered the Essentials training modules only and accepted that the presentation of the data could be improved. The Member added that, as a corporate enterprise, it was vital that the provision of training for Members was one of the core elements of the House Service rather than an adjunct, to underpin its values and strategy, particularly in relation to upholding the Nolan Principles and ensuring that Members were better equipped in their roles. Mr Bridges said that greater emphasis had been placed on Valuing Everyone training because of its role in promoting a more positive culture and work environment.

A Member said that members of their team had been unable to sign up to the Valuing Everyone training in recent months because of a high demand for places. Mr Bridges said that numerous sessions had been planned for the spring and summer periods but had been moved online because of the COVID-19 pandemic and this had reduced capacity. Classroom-based courses would be available again in the autumn and early next year.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

3. Access to sanitary products

Sarah Davies, Clerk Assistant and Managing Director, Chamber and Committees Team, and James Turner, Director of Customer Experience and Service Delivery, In-House Services, briefed the Committee.

Mrs Davies said the proposal, which had originated from ParliGender, one of the Workplace Equality Networks (WENs), was for a trial involving around 20 locations across the Estate where sanitary products would be available for emergency situations. The Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament had introduced similar initiatives which had proven a success.

The Chair and several Members welcomed the proposal.

They asked if a full list of the locations where sanitary products would be available could be provided. Mrs Davies said that she sought the Committee's support and a decision in principle. Mr Turner said that 20 locations had been proposed for the trial such as the Jubilee Café and the Education Centre. Providing free sanitary products in these areas, which were accessed by young people, was part of the commitment of the House to providing a diverse and inclusive environment.

A Member welcomed the approach to trial the provision of products in locations such as the Education Centre, which were accessed by young people. Mrs Davies said that care would be taken to monitor usage at the locations selected and that she was happy to tailor the implementation model following the Committee's feedback. She added that an update on the progress of the trial could be provided to the Committee in the autumn. A Member said that a similar initiative in the Scottish Parliament had been a success.

A Member suggested providing the facility for the voluntary donation of products to the initiative to replenish those that had been taken.

A Member asked if consideration had been given to having a staff member oversee the dispensing of products, such as the onsite nurse. Mr Turner said that some products were already available for emergency provision at one of the reception desks in the Palace but had never been asked for.

Decision

The Committee **approved** the trial of the initiative and noted that it would receive an update in the autumn.

The Committee will next meet on 29 June at 4.30pm