HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

Minutes

Wednesday 22 January 2020

Attendance

- Lord Speaker (Chairman)
- Lord McFall of Alcluith (Deputy Chairman)
- Baroness Doocey
- Mathew Duncan (external member)
- Baroness Evans of Bowes Park
- Lord Judge
- Lord Laming
- Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall
- Baroness Smith of Basildon
- Lord Wakeham

Liz Hewitt (external member) participated by telephone. Apologies were received from Lord Newby. Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, was in attendance.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

After discussion, the Commission agreed the record of discussion of the previous meeting of the House of Lords Commission on Wednesday 16 October 2019.

The Lord Speaker spoke about the External Management Review and Lord McFall of Alcluith updated the Commission on progress. Lord McFall of Alcluith confirmed that headhunters would be engaged and that, following a sifting process, a shortlist of reviewers would be brought to the Commission for an individual to be appointed. He added that the Commission would retain ownership of the final report, decide when to publish it and decide how to respond to any recommendations. A discussion took place about the importance of clear communications throughout.

2. R&R Quarterly Report (July-September 2019)

Paper from Liz Peace, Chair of the shadow Sponsor Body and Sarah Johnson, CEO of the shadow Sponsor Body
C/19-20/1 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Commission discussed this with the update paper (C/19-20/2), below.

Sarah Johnson introduced the Quarterly Report and told the Commission that it covered the period July to September 2019. Ms Johnson told the Commission that since the report had been circulated substantial progress had been made on developing the options for the Outline Business Case and an initial paper had been presented to the shadow Sponsor Board. Ms Johnson explained the ongoing work to ahead of the shadow Sponsor Body and the shadow Delivery Authority moving into the substantial phase.

Baroness Doocey asked what consideration had been given to reports of the potential relocation of the House of Lords out of London, and what impact this may have on the Restoration and Renewal Programme and, specifically, the decant of the House of Lords to the QEII Conference Centre.

Ms Peace informed the Commission that the shadow Sponsor Board had agreed to write to the Lord Speaker as Chairman of the House of Lords Commission and Mr Speaker as chairman of the House of Commons Commission outlining the shadow Sponsor Board's intention to continue with their work until instructions are issued to the contrary. The Commission **endorsed** this approach and **expressed concern** about the uncertainty created by media briefings of this nature.

Lord Laming reported that there had been a useful discussion at the Services Committee meeting of 16 January on the location of the chamber, committee rooms and catering outlets in the QEII Conference Centre. Ms Peace explained that this paper would be presented at the next Commission meeting.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park requested further information on the costs of QEII decant project and Lord Laming and Lord Judge asked about the Programme Representative. Ms Johnson explained that by pausing the process they have been able to explore how to secure better value for money for the service and Mathew Duncan endorsed this approach. Ms Johnson also answered questions on the assurance framework.

Liz Hewitt asked about the Parliamentary Relationship Agreement (PRA). The Clerk of the Parliaments explained the purpose of the PRA, said that the document would be signed by the Accounting Officers of both Houses and the Sponsor Body and that will be published. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park explained that the Procedure Committee were considering a proposal for a spokesperson in each House to answer Parliamentary questions when the shadow Sponsor Body becomes substantive and assumes formal responsibility.

The Commission **agreed** to receive the Quarterly Reports as soon as they were available

The Commission **took note**.

3. Update on the Restoration and Renewal Programme

Paper from Liz Peace, Chair of the shadow Sponsor Board and Sarah Johnson, CEO of the shadow Sponsor Body
C/19-20/2 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Commission discussed this paper as part of the Quarterly Report (C/19-20/1) discussion, above.

The Commission **took note.**

4. Behaviour in Parliament
The Lord Speaker
Discussion

[More Information – Restricted Access].

[More Information – Restricted Access].

The Commission discussed the current mechanisms for reporting inappropriate behaviour through the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme to the Commissioner and the merits of third-party reporting and cluster reporting.

The Commission **agreed** that the Clerk of the Parliaments should convey their support for examining the merits of third-party reporting to the Conduct Committee at their next meeting.

Lord Judge commented on the investigations process for the questioning process during an investigation. Lord Judge also commented on the process by which the Commissioner decides whether remedial action is appropriate.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park questioned the length of time taken for complaints to be investigated. The Clerk of the Parliaments said that he would discuss with the Commissioner's staff whether resources were sufficient but noted that by their nature, investigations relating to conduct could take time.

The Commission discussed the differing rules for Members and staff relating to pass wearing. The Commission **requested** further details of the options for introducing a requirement for Members to comply with security rules and possible sanctions. They asked that the options be developed with the House of Commons authorities.

5. Oral Update – Strategic Estates and In-House Services
Liz Hewitt and Mathew Duncan, External members of the Commission, Baroness Doocey, Chairman of the Finance Committee and Lord McFall of Alcluith, Deputy Chairman of the Commission
Discussion

Baroness Doocey updated the Commission on a meeting she participated in with Ian Ailles, Director General of the House of Commons, Liz Hewitt, Mathew Duncan, Lord McFall of Alcluith on the paper *Merger of House of Commons Strategic Estates and In-House Services: Objectives and Arrangements (C/19-19/9)* which the Commission discussed at the meeting on 16 October 2019. She would report back to the Commission when responses were received.

The Commission **took note.**

6. Appointment of the Audit Committee
Paper from Liz Hewitt, Chair of the Audit Committee
C/19-20/3 RESERVED & CONFIDENTIAL

The Commission **agreed** the reappointment of the Audit Committee for the parliamentary session 2019-20, with the membership and terms of reference as outlined in the paper.

7. Letter from Westminster City Council – planning application for the installation of the United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens
C/19-20/4 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Baroness Smith of Basildon declared an interest as a trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Charitable Trust and excused herself for the discussion of this item.

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, updated the Commission and explained that Parliament had received a letter from Westminster City Council inquiry into the planned Holocaust memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens and that they had set a deadline of 10 February for responses. The Commission **agreed** that Mr Ollard should prepare a draft submission on the practical implications of such a development for the House of Lords and that he should circulate the text for information at the earliest opportunity.

8. Update on the Administration
Paper from Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments
C/19-20/5 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, introduced the paper. Mr Ollard asked members of the Commission to encourage Members of the House to complete the Members' survey before the closing date of Friday 14 February 2020.

Mr Ollard informed the Commission that a new Managing Director of Strategic Estates and In-House Services had been appointed and that she would take up post in March.

The Commission **took note.**

9. Any Other Business
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park asked for minutes of the previous meeting to be circulated within two weeks of meetings. The Commission agreed.

Lord McFall of Alcluith reminded the Commission that there would be a townhall meeting on Wednesday 29 January on Members' staff passes and that a paper on this subject would come to the Commission at the next meeting on Wednesday 12 February.

10. Next meeting

The Lord Speaker thanked Commission members and informed them that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 12 February at 10.30am in his Room.

Wednesday 22 January 2020

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