HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

Minutes

Wednesday 12 July 2023, 10.00–11.30am

Attendance

- Lord Speaker (Chair)
- Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Deputy Chair)
- Lord German
- Lord Hill of Oareford
- Earl of Kinnoull
- Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall
- Lord Newby
- Nora Senior (external member)
- Baroness Smith of Basildon
- Lord True
- Lord Vaux of Harrowden

Also in attendance:

- Mathew Duncan (Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee)

Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments; Andy Helliwell, Chief Operating Officer; Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant; Sarah Brader, Director of Culture Change; Baroness Donaghy, Chair, Steering Group for Change; Amanda Saunders, Steering Group for Change Lead; Lucinda Maer, Cultural Transformation Director, House of Commons; Thea Walton, Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) Director; Alison Giles, Director of Security for Parliament; Bev Weston, Director of Capital Investment, In-House Services and Estates (IHSE); Catherine Hallett, Security Portfolio Director, Parliamentary Security Directorate; and Dominic Forbes, Portfolio Director (IHSE), were also in attendance.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Commission agreed the record of the discussion of the meeting of the House of Lords Commission on 26 April 2023, with no amendments or redactions.

2. Precautionary Exclusion Post-Criminal Charge

Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant
C/22-23/30; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Chloe Mawson introduced the paper.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- That safeguarding, particularly of staff, was a central aspect of the proposals; the reputation of the House and its Members was also important.
- That the trigger for exclusion should be at the point of charge. The scope of the policy should be limited to charges for serious sexual and violent offences. Charges for other offences that could affect the reputation of the House and its membership might be considered again at a later point.
- That the policy should not be unwieldy – it should be straightforward for Members and staff to understand.
- That it would be useful for the Commission to receive more information on what exclusion would mean, and on excluded Members' ability to contact staff.
- That the response rate to the consultation reflected only a small proportion of the membership, and that lessons should be drawn for similar consultations in the future.

The Commission noted the outcome of the House of Lords consultation on precautionary exclusion post-criminal charge; and agreed that the Procedure and Privileges Committee should be invited to draft a Standing Order providing for precautionary exclusion from the Estate of Members who are charged with serious violent and sexual offences, and that the Commission would be invited to agree a letter to Lord Gardiner as Chair of the Procedure and Privileges Committee after its next meeting.

3. Annual Report 2022–23 of the Steering Group for Change
Baroness Donaghy, Chair, Steering Group for Change
C/22-23/31; [RESTRICTED]

Baroness Donaghy introduced the paper.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- That it would be useful for the Commission to hold a future discussion on the practicalities of issuing social media guidance for Members.
- That the report, and the work of the Steering Group, were very welcome. The next report might celebrate the Group's impacts as well as identifying actions.
- That the Steering Group provides a unique and valuable discussion forum because it involves Members and staff.

The Commission agreed the Steering Group's Annual Report and revised Terms of Reference to include a permanent Lords Spiritual member of the Steering Group; and agreed that annual reporting to the Commission by the Steering Group for Change would continue.

4. Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Reviewer Appointment
Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant
C/22-23/32; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant, introduced the paper.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- That it was necessary for a final selection of a reviewer to be made in September.
- That the Commons Commission had considered the same paper on 10 July and that the two Commissions would need to come to the same decision.

To Note

5. Victoria Tower and West Front Perimeter Fence (25 minutes)
Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments, Alison Giles, Director of Security, and Bev Weston, Director of Capital Investment
C/22-23/33; [RESTRICTED]
C/22-23/34; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]
Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments, Alison Giles, Director of Security, and Bev Weston, Director of Capital Investment, introduced the papers.

In discussion the following point were raised or noted:

- That the aim of the Victoria Tower project was to secure external stonework. The paper gave an update on progress and the scope of the project.
- That the paper gave a clear description of potential disruption to Chamber business and the costs involved with the project, though it was important to see net present values in order to compare like with like. Disruption might be necessary for the project to be completed in a timely fashion. In discussing this paper the Services Committee had also agreed on the possible necessity for some disruption if the project were not to overrun. Given the working hours of the House, construction could be carried out in the morning with minimum overlap with Parliamentary business.
- That the project should be aligned with restoration and renewal – it was unclear why internal renovations to the tower could not be carried out at the same time.
- That engagement with Members and staff should begin as soon as possible.
- That extensive noise modelling had been carried out.

[Restricted Access – More Information]

6. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Update and Revised Terms of Reference
Mathew Duncan, Chair, House of Lords Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
C/22-23/35; [UNRESTRICTED]

Mathew Duncan, Chair, House of Lords Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, introduced the paper.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- That the recent internal audit process had found the administration's processes to be in relatively good shape, though there was a need for consistent leadership on projects.
- That the proposed changes to ARAC's terms of reference would encourage better cohesion between both Houses, not just on R and R but on other services.
- The Commission thanked Mathew Duncan for his work as Chair of ARAC and as an external member of the Commission.

The Commission:

- <u>noted</u> the update on recent Audit and Risk Assurance Committee activity; and
- <u>endorsed</u> the revised Terms of Reference of the ARAC, to reflect its role in monitoring areas of joint interest with the House of Commons Administration Estimate Audit Committee and in reviewing regularly its effectiveness against best practice guidance.

7. Finance Committee Update
Lord Vaux of Harrowden, Chair, House of Lords Finance Committee
C/22-23/36; [UNRESTRICTED]

Lord Vaux of Harrowden, Chair, House of Lords Finance Committee, introduced the paper.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- That the implementation of the Morse review's recommendations was going well.
- That the zero-based budget review should show further areas for improvement. Bicameral processes would need to be improved.
- That the single biggest project in the following year would be the Victoria Tower project.

The Commission <u>noted</u> the update on Finance Committee activity.

8. Services Committee Update
Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall, Chair, House of Lords Services Committee
C/22-23/37; [UNRESTRICTED]

The Commission <u>noted</u> the paper on Services Committee activity. The paper included the following:

- That the Committee had agreed to the addition of a hot and cold food offer In the Bishop's Bar to be reviewed at the end of the year, and that the Bar space would be refurbished over the summer recess.
- That the Committee had also agreed a tariff increase on food and drinks, reflective of inflation on the cost of product and ingredients.
- That the Committee now receives quarterly updates on the Security Programme, including works to Peers' Entrance. The first of these updates came to the Committee in May. These updates should give the Committee the opportunity to ensure appropriate Member engagement is planned.
- That the Committee continued to be updated on the work of the Parliamentary Digital Services. Action is being taken to improve Wi-Fi and desktop telephones.

<u>Oral Update</u>

- **Update from the Clerk of the Parliaments**
  Clerk of the Parliaments' update paper [UNRESTRICTED]
  Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments, updated the Commission.

  The Commission noted the update from the Clerk of the Parliaments. The update included the following:

  - That a number of colleagues had been awarded King's Birthday Honours.
  - That Simon Burton had met counterparts from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Commons in Edinburgh, where they had discussed a range of issues including codes of conduct for staff, gender-sensitive audits, post-legislative scrutiny and interparliamentary relations.
  - That new passreaders around the Chamber had been activated on 10 July.

<u>Any Other Business and Next Meeting</u>

- The Commission <u>agreed</u> to publish agendas and indicative forward work programmes in advance of future Commission meetings.

- From September 2023, Members with disabilities who are eligible to claim additional financial support as a contribution towards the costs of a member of staff can claim this allowance for days that they attend the House, plus up to three additional days per month. The Commission <u>agreed</u> that in order to provide flexibility to such Members, they will be able to 'roll over' the three additional days per month that they are entitled to claim into quarterly blocks of twelve days.

- The next meeting was scheduled for 6 September 2023.

Tristan Stubbs
Secretary to the Commission
020 7219 0455
stubbst@parliament.uk