HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

MINUTES

Wednesday 13 March 2024, 10:00am–11:30am
in the Lord Speaker's Room and via Teams

Attendance

- Lord McFall of Alcluith (Chair)
- Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Deputy Chair)
- The Earl of Kinnoull
- Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall
- Lord McLoughlin
- Charlotte Moar (external member)
- Lord Morse
- Lord Newby
- Baroness Scott of Needham Market – *virtually*
- Nora Senior (external member) – *virtually*
- Lord True

Also in attendance:

Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments; Andy Helliwell, Chief Operating Officer; Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant; Fehintola Akinlose, Director of Finance; Aisha Bi, Head of Governance – *virtually*; Natasha Large, Governance Support Officer; Dr Patsy Richards, Managing Director, R&R Client Team; David Goldstone, Chief Executive, R&R Delivery Authority; Tanya Coff, Chief Financial Officer, R&R Delivery Authority.

Apologies were received from Baroness Smith of Basildon.

The Commission welcomed Lord McLoughlin, Lord Morse and Baroness Scott of Needham Market to their first Commission meeting as new members. The Commission also welcomed Jackie Lam, who is covering the role of Executive Officer to the Commission while Julie Vardalia is on maternity leave.

For Decision

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Commission agreed the record of the discussion of the meeting of the House of Lords Commission on 18 December 2023 with no amendments.

2. House of Lords Strategy – Full Document
C/23–24/9; [RESTRICTED]

Andy Helliwell, Aisha Bi and Natasha Large introduced the paper. The paper presented the full document of the Administration's draft strategy for 2025–2030. This followed a discussion of the one-page summary of the strategy at the Commission's previous meeting.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- All Commission members had been offered briefing meetings with Andy Helliwell and colleagues about the strategy; members' feedback was reflected wherever possible.
- An aim of the strategy was to align with the Commons strategy while recognising that the Lords was a separate organisation.
- The strategy would underpin financial and business planning for 2025/26 onwards.
- An ambition of the strategy was to focus on continual improvements.
- In future meetings the Commission could examine progress against the aims of the strategy.

The Commission:

- agreed the 2025–2030 Corporate Strategy.

3. House of Lords Corporate Business Plan
C/23–24/10; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Andy Helliwell, Aisha Bi and Natasha Large introduced the paper. The paper presented the Administration's Corporate Business Plan for 2024/25.

The annual Corporate Business Plan set out the Administration's priorities and activities through which it planned to deliver its strategy over the year. The Business Plan was designed to communicate to all members of the Administration the priorities for the financial year and how these would be achieved, and to help the administration monitor performance. It also enabled the Administration to be held to account for the delivery of its activities.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- All Commission members had been offered briefing meetings with Andy Helliwell and colleagues about the business plan; members' feedback was reflected wherever possible.
- In future years, the finance and business planning processes would be aligned.

The Commission:

- agreed the Business Plan for the House of Lords Administration for 2024/25, subject to a circulation of the final draft for information ahead of publication, including a foreword by the Clerk of the Parliaments and reflecting the comments of Commission members.

4. Professional Indemnity Insurance

C/23–24/11; [RESTRICTED]

Chloe Mawson introduced the paper. The paper discussed the possible provision of professional indemnity insurance cover for Members.

Following questions from Lords Members about why Commons Members were covered by professional indemnity insurance but Lords Members were not, the Usual Channels and the Lord Speaker had requested that the Administration explore options for providing professional indemnity insurance for Members of the House of Lords. The paper set out options for the Commission to consider and agree.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- The Earl of Kinnoull declared his interests as a shareholder in insurance firms Hiscox Limited and Resolution Underwriting Holdings Limited, and as a Non-Executive Director of Alpha Insurance Analysts Limited.
- It would be important to communicate clearly to Members the activities that such insurance would cover. These would be very specific activities related to Parliamentary duties and activities.
- Most social media activity by Members would not be covered by professional indemnity insurance unless there was a clear link to Parliamentary duties and activities.
- Members would be given clear guidance on whom to approach for advice in the event of any occurrence that might necessitate cover by the insurance.
- Professional indemnity insurance was common in many organisations.

The Commission:

(a) agreed in principle that professional indemnity insurance should be provided for Members of the House of Lords and that officials should work to procure a policy;
(b) agreed that any professional indemnity insurance policy should cover 'each and every loss', and should cover professional negligence and online activity where it relates to Parliamentary duty and activities; and
(c) agreed that the House should pay the excess if any claims are made under the policy.

The Commission also agreed that the provision of indemnity insurance should be reviewed regularly, and that careful communication would be needed to ensure that Members understood the link between the policy and Parliamentary duties and activities.

5. Allowance Scheme for Overnight Accommodation
C/23–24/12; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Simon Burton and Fehintola Akinlose introduced the paper. The paper outlined the possible introduction of an allowance scheme for Members whose residential address is outside the Greater London area.

The paper followed a letter to the Clerk of the Parliaments from the Leader, who had been approached with a proposal agreed by the representatives of backbenchers of all the main parties and the Crossbench peers.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- The proposal would enable Members whose residential address is outside the Greater London area to claim up to £100 for each day that they attend the House. A Member could claim for no more days than the number of days on which they had attended in a week.
- The proposal had the benefit of being simple and verifiable.
- A review after 12 months would enable the Commission to understand whether the scheme was working as intended, and give an indication of the number of Members claiming the allowance and costs to date.

The Commission:

(a) agreed to introduce a new allowance scheme for overnight accommodation for Members of the House of Lords;
(b) agreed a provisional start date of 15 April for the scheme, subject to approval by the House;
(c) agreed to the same publication policy as daily allowance and travel expenses;
(d) agreed to review the scheme after 12 months, to establish whether it was working as intended;
(e) agreed the draft wording of the new scheme as it would appear in the Guide to Financial Support for Members, as set out in Annex B of the paper; and
(f) agreed the proposed resolution, as set out in Annex C.

As the Commission agreed to a new allowance scheme, a report to the House for approval was also required. *Financial support for Members of the House of Lords* (2nd Report, Session 2023–24, HL Paper 89) was published on Thursday 21 March 2024.

6. R&R Main Estimate and Phase 1 Expenditure Limit
C/23–24/13; [RESTRICTED]

Dr Patsy Richards, David Goldstone and Tanya Coff introduced the paper. The paper presented the R&R Main Estimate and Phase 1 Expenditure Limit.

The paper covered the R&R Delivery Authority's full budget for 2024/25. The budget had been scrutinised by the R&R Programme Board financial sub-board, endorsed by the Programme Board and provisionally approved by the R&R Client Board.

Since discussion of the Estimate at the previous Client Board, Commission members had been offered briefing meetings with the R&R team, which many had taken up.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- All activities of the Delivery Authority were tasked by the Client Team under the direction of both Houses, through the R&R Client Board. The estimate and expenditure limit therefore reflected projected spend on what the Delivery Authority had been directed to do. Money would not be spent if it was not needed.
- The Estimate would also need to be agreed by the Parliamentary Works Estimate Commission and by the House of Commons as a whole.

The Commission:

- <u>approved</u> a revised Phase 1 Expenditure Limit to take account of the Delivery Authority's forecast expenditure for 2024/25 (£83 million). The revised Phase 1 Expenditure Limit would be £426 million; and
- <u>endorsed</u> the Parliamentary Works Grant Main Estimate of £83 million for 2024/25 for submission to the Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission.

The Commission thanked Dr Richards for her work in establishing the R&R Client Team and ensuring that the Strategic Case was agreed, and David Goldstone for his work since 2020 as Chief Executive of the R&R Delivery Authority.

<u>To Note</u>

7. Services Committee Update
C/23–24/14; [UNRESTRICTED]

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall, Chair of the House of Lords Services Committee, introduced the paper. The paper provided an update on Services Committee activity and looked at catering and retail; health, safety and security; Estate works; and technology and information.

The Commission:

- noted the update on recent Services Committee activity.

8. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Update
C/23–24/15; [UNRESTRICTED]

Charlotte Moar, Chair of the House of Lords Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, introduced the paper. The paper provided an update on the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's work in overseeing assurance, risk management and related governance processes.

The Commission:

- noted the update on recent Audit and Risk Assurance Committee activity.

Oral Updates

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

Simon Burton updated the Commission.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- The R&R Strategic Case had been agreed by the R&R Client Board and would be published on 19 March.
- The Trade Union Side in the Commons had written to the Client Board in February. A response had been drafted by both Speakers, and both letters would be discussed at the next R&R Programme Board meeting in April.
- The Administration had begun planning for the expected General Election. Communications would be sent to Members about Parliamentary activities which could and could not continue during dissolution. This would draw on advice from previous General Elections.

Any Other Business and Next Meeting

The Lord Speaker relayed an update on the project to repair and rebuild the exterior of Victoria Tower. The Commission would be further updated when more detailed information became available.

The next meeting will take place at 10.00am on Wednesday 1 May 2024.

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

Jackie Yu Hon Lam
Executive Officer to the Commission
020 7219 8014
lamj@parliament.uk