



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 25 April at 12.30pm in Committee Room 3A and on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Chair)
Lord Hogan-Howe
Lord Howard of Rising
Baroness Hussein-Ece
Earl Kinnoull
Baroness Stedman-Scott
Baroness Wheeler
Baroness Williams of Trafford

Together with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

Andy Helliwell (Chief Operating Officer) Fehintola Akinlose (Director of Finance and Commercial) and Mathew Chandler (Director of Estates and Facilities) were also in attendance. Stephen Penn (Head of Catering and Retail Services) attended for item 4. Sarah Hartwell-Naguib (Deputy Managing Director of the Parliamentary Digital Service) attended for item 5. Justin Hills (Deputy Director of Estates and Facilities) attended for item 6

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Stoneham of Droxford and Lord Faulkner of Worcester.

The Committee noted that item 5 would not be taken on the agenda.

2. Minutes of the 5th meeting, and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. For Information: Notices from the Chair S/23-24/23 RESTRICTED: MANAGEMENT

The Committee received updates on: the Network and Wi-Fi Project; operations in the Bishops' Bar; exterior surveys to Westminster Hall; the New Library News Resource; everyday essential items for sale and members' security information.

The Committee noted the number of members who had been onboarded to the new Wi-Fi. 197 Members had been signed up to the new network on their personal devices, in the first week of the rollout. The rollout would continue for two more weeks, with staff also dropping into members' offices. The Committee highlighted that this was only needed for members who needed to connect with personal devices. The Committee praised the

rollout service and noted that they found the stand in Royal Gallery useful, particularly on voting days.

The Committee asked for more information on the essential items for sale in Hallkeeper's Lodge and asked how it was being communicated. Additional information would be circulated to the Committee.

**4. For Decision: Catering and Retail Services Tariff Review S/23-24/30
RESTRICTED: MANAGEMENT**

The Head of Catering and Retail introduced the item on catering tariff changes. The paper contained the proposed increases with reference to the background, methodology and operational factors that inform and shaped those proposals. Following a recommendation by the Committee and agreement by the Commission last year, price tariff reviews now took place at least twice a year. The previous increase took place in October 2023 and only affected wine prices, prior to that in June 2023, alcohol increased by 5% and food increased by 10%. The paper proposed a tariff increase of 5% on food and non-alcoholic drinks and a 10% increase on alcohol. The Committee noted that this was not a blanket increase but that this was an average based on variations between products.

The Committee discussed the gross profit targets outlined in the paper for each catering outlet. The Committee noted that gross profit was measured by subtracting the cost price of items from the price they were being sold for. Gross Profit did not include staffing costs. The Committee questioned why the proposed tariff increase was similar to last year, when inflation has been lower this year. The Committee was told that the tariff increase had been calculated using the overall catering budget for the year and gross profit targets, alongside the factors set out in the paper including inflation and benchmarking. The Committee noted that the overall budget was a matter for the Commission and asked that the Commission considered the overall cost of catering at a future meeting.

The Committee discussed the price differences between Lords and Commons outlets. The Head of Catering and Retail Services highlighted that it was difficult to directly compare prices as different ingredients or recipes may be used, but stated that the Lords tried to adopt a like for like approach where possible on directly comparable products such as cans of drinks. The Head of Catering and Retail Services agreed to undertake another benchmarking exercise with the Commons and to return to the Committee with their findings.

The Committee noted that chefs play a role in choosing ingredients, due to the fact that there are multiple suppliers in a framework, who supply ingredients of varying quality and price.

The Committee approved the proposed catering tariff review of 5% on food and 10% on alcohol to take effect from 6 May 2024. Following concerns expressed about the factors

contributing to the tariff increase the Committee asked that the Commission looked at the overall basis for catering pricing.

5. For Information: Proposal for a Parliamentary Digital Services administered Members' Roundtable S/23-24/32 RESTRICTED: MANAGEMENT

The Deputy Managing Director of PDS presented the proposal to the establish a Parliamentary Digital Services (PDS) administered Parliamentary Digital Services Members' Roundtable for the House of Lords. The Roundtable would replace the current Digital User Group (DUG).

The Committee supported the proposal for PDS to fully administer the Roundtable, easing the burden for the previous Chair of the DUG. The Committee also noted that the Roundtable would be open to all members to attend and would not have a static membership. The Roundtable was part of the user-centric approach PDS was using to engage with its customers, which would be reflected further in the new Information and Digital Strategy. The new strategy would be presented to the Services Committee at a future meeting.

The Committee noted that Roundtable did not require a formal Terms of Reference as it would not have decision-making powers. The Committee suggested that the Roundtable should have a working document, to help communicate the purpose and scope of the group to members, and keep the remit focused. PDS agreed to take this forward.

The Committee noted that the group was not a sub-committee of the Services Committee, but that reports from the discussions would be shared with the Chair and circulated to the Committee periodically. It was highlighted that the next steps were for PDS to meet with the DUG to discuss the rounding up of its work and the transition to the Members' Roundtable.

The Committee noted the proposal for a Parliamentary Digital Services Members' Roundtable and welcomed the opportunity for members to engage with PDS on the services it provides.

6. For Information: Fire Safety Awareness Training S/23-24/33 RESTRICTED: MANAGEMENT

The Committee was provided with an update on the number of members of the House of Lords who have completed the 'Annual Fire Safety Awareness' training course in the last year. The Committee noted that 35 Labour peers had completed the training since the figures were last updated and that there had been a 20% increase in members who had completed the training since January.

The Committee suggested that the whips offices would benefit from being provided with lists of members who had not completed the training rather than those who had. The Director of Facilities and the committee clerk would discuss how this could be done going forward, taking into account the challenges of the information not being static. The

Committee noted that the Director of Facilities was working with the Health and Safety Director to consider how training across both houses could be improved going forwards.

The Committee noted the engagement work of the Fire Safety Team. There would be an information desk drop to offices and the same messaging on the front page on ParliNet along with a more accessible link to the training. The Fire Safety Team had also been working to reach out to existing member groups to reach out to members more easily. Finally, there would be a stand for members to do their training in Royal Gallery at the next meeting. There would be an update on this at the next meeting.

The Director of Facilities agreed to take away concerns with members who are not able to access the training. The Committee also asked the Director of Facilities to look into members getting reminders once the training has lapsed. The Committee discussed how reminders are only sent to parliamentary email addresses and ways of addressing this.

The Committee took note of the current completion levels and discussed the ongoing work to improve Fire Safety Training for members.

7. For Information: Estate Works Update S/23-24/34 RESTRICTED: MANAGEMENT

The Committee received an update on works including repairs and projects, on the House of Lords and relevant related parts of the Parliamentary Estate. The Committee noted that there would be external works on Old Palace Yard in late April, there would be low impact during working hours and all offices affected would be contacted. There was a risk that the licensing for scaffolding could be delayed, which might mean that works would only take place on the ground floor. The Committee encouraged Facilities to engage with members as soon as possible, even if there were delays to the scaffolding.

The Committee was informed that the furniture in the Bishops' Bar was due to be delivered on 2 May. This example furniture, comprised of two chairs and a table, would be trialled to members, with members able to provide feedback before a final decision was taken on whether to refurbish or replace the current furniture. The Committee asked the Facilities team to be transparent about the cost implications of the different furniture options, to allow that to be factored into members' feedback.

The Committee took note of the estate works programme update.

8. For Information: Letter from House of Commons Administration Committee: Broadcasting Recommendations

The Services Committee had received a letter from the House of Commons Administration Committee setting out the recommendations it had reached in its review of Broadcasting. The Committee was asked to provide feedback on the recommendations.

The Committee discussed the recommendation of a dedicated media Wi-Fi network. The Committee supported the idea being explored further but did not feel able to agree the recommendation without more information about the cost implications and

practicalities. The Committee highlighted that with Restoration and Renewal, any investment in infrastructure could be short term and the cost of any project and its continued maintenance would need to be negotiated with broadcasters.

The Committee was supportive of the suggestion of more filming points on the estate and discussed potential additional locations in the House of Lords. The Committee noted the use of Peers' Lobby as an occasional filming location and considered whether it could be used more frequently. The Committee supported the recommendation of one or more additional filming points in the House of Lords.

The Committee was content with the current broadcasting coverage from the Chamber and the House of Lords Broadcasting rules agreed last year, and did not feel it necessary to add additional cameras to offer additional camera shots to the broadcasters.

The Committee did not feel the need to comment on the recommendations for the changes to broadcasting in Central Lobby.

The Committee had concerns about the recommendation to relax photography rules. There was concern about security risk in particular; looser regulations around photography and filming could reveal information about the layout of the estate. In addition, the Committee noted that relaxing the rules could result in an invasion of members' privacy. The Committee agreed it would be happy to look at specific proposal for changes to the rules, but could not support the broad proposal at this stage. The Committee recommended that the rules around photography should be recommunicated to members and sent to those who have recently joined the House.

Members discussed an instance of visitors taking photos in the Chamber. This would be followed up with Security and Visitor Services.

A response to the Administration Committee summarising the discussion would be circulated after the meeting for comments from the Committee.

9. Forward work programme S/23-24/28 UNRESTRICTED

The Committee took note of the Forward Work Programme including the dates for meetings in the autumn.

10. Any Other Business

The next meeting would be on Thursday 16 May in Committee Room 3A.

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Emma Burke
Clerk

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