HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

MINUTES

Wednesday 1 May 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
- Baroness Smith of Basildon

Other Members present:

- Earl of Courtown (attending under standing order 64)

Members of the Restoration and Renewal Programme Board present for item 5:

- Lord Collins of Highbury
- Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury
- Lord Vaux of Harrowden

Also in attendance:

Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments; Andy Helliwell, Chief Operating Officer; Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant; Alison Giles, Director of Security for Parliament; Sarah Clarke, Black Rod; Dominic Forbes, Portfolio Director, Strategic Estates; Catherine Hallett, Security Portfolio Director, Parliamentary Security Department.

Apologies were received from Lord True and Nora Senior (external member). The Commission agreed that the Earl of Courtown would attend the meeting in place of Lord True.

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 13 March 2024 with no amendments.

2. Integrated Visitor Management System Approach

C/23–24/16; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Alison Giles and Sarah Clarke introduced the paper. The paper briefed the Commission on progress to date in developing a specification for an improved system for visitor management in Parliament, and asked the Commission to endorse the proposed way forward.

This work is being developed in partnership with Black Rod's Office, the Commons Serjeant at Arms' Office, Visitor Services and the commercial operations in both Houses.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- All Commission members had been offered briefing meetings *[Restricted Access – More Information]* about the approach; members' feedback was reflected wherever possible.
- The proposals were designed to reflect the necessary balance between security and democratic access to Parliament. The approach should be practical and pragmatic.
- Analysis had identified 35 different types of visitor to Parliament. The Visitor Management System would be scalable to different groups.
- The Parliamentary Security Department and Black Rod's office had worked together on the proposals, and had taken a cross-Parliament approach.
- It would be useful to know exactly how many people planned to come onto the Estate for events and tours, which the proposal would provide. Such data would also be useful for operational efficiency.
- A further benefit of the proposals would be greater clarity of entrance requirements for the public and members. Members would have better understanding of their own responsibilities. A General Election would present an opportunity to communicate this to new MPs.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*

The Commission:

- noted the drivers for visitor management improvements, and noted progress made to date in developing policy and a specification for an integrated Visitor Management System (VMS);

- endorsed the proposed approach to develop a scalable system which could be implemented incrementally according to risk profile, policy appetite and access needs; and
- discussed how the Commission wished to be consulted on developing policy for implementation of the Visitor Management System. The Commission requested that a paper on policy and implementation be discussed at a future meeting, ahead of any improvements being commissioned or implemented. In advance of this, Commission members would be consulted on policy work as development of the VMS proposals was progressed.

To Note

3. Abingdon Street Interim Fence

C/23–24/17; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Alison Giles, Dominic Forbes and Chris Elliot introduced the paper. The paper presented further information on the design, appearance and functionality of the fence and how it related to other projects, and gave information on engagement proposals for Members ahead of its installation.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- All Commission members had been offered briefing meetings *[Restricted Access – More Information]* about the fence; members' feedback was reflected wherever possible.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*
- It was suggested that the proposed fence was not aesthetically attractive; it was agreed that clearer images of the fence design would be shared with the Commission.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*

The Commission:

- noted the update on the Abingdon Street interim fence; and
- discussed the engagement proposals.

4. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Update

C/23–24/18; [RESTRICTED]

Charlotte Moar introduced the paper. The paper updated the Commission on the recent work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC). It also contained Charlotte's reflections as the new Chair of ARAC on priorities for the Committee. This was in addition to the formal reports that the Commission receives twice annually, most recently in March this year.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- ARAC seemed to be working well; the Committee received good secretariat support.
- The most significant risks to Parliament were physical and cyber security; and safety.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*

The Commission:

- noted the proposed priorities for the House of Lords Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and the Joint ARAC with the House of Commons;
- discussed other areas of risk, internal control and governance that ARAC should consider; and
- agreed to consider at a future date a report from the joint meeting of the Lords Management Board and the Commons Executive Board on physical safety in Parliament, due to take place on Thursday 13 June 2024.

Oral Updates

5. Restoration and Renewal Programme Board Update

Following the agreement of the Restoration & Renewal (R&R) Strategic Case, the Commission had concluded that it would be important for the Client Board and Programme Board to communicate openly and clearly with each other, and for the two boards to build on the progress that they have made.

As a result, the Commission asked Simon Burton to lead off with an initial update of the R&R Programme Board. R&R Programme Board Members Lord Collins of Highbury, Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury and Lord Vaux of Harrowden had the opportunity to come in afterwards.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- David Goldstone would soon retire as CEO of the Delivery Authority and Patsy Richards as Managing Director of the Client Team. Commission members wished to express their thanks to David and Patsy for their work and agreed to write to them accordingly.
- The Programme Board had had a busy agenda. There was a strong focus on safety.
- The Client Board's reappointment might be delayed by any General Election and the need to reappoint the Commons Commission. The make-up of the Commons might be quite different, and there would need to be a communications effort for new members.

- The finance sub-board was giving close scrutiny to costs and the assumptions behind them.
- There was now strong data and information in place to begin the programme once the political decision was made.
- It would be important to get clarity on the QEII centre and whether the Lords would be able to decant there. There would need to be frequent assessment of the level of disruption if not decanting and tolerance of it.
- It was important to ensure that the three R&R options were properly comparable.
- Staged costings for the programme could make a decision more politically palatable. The trade-offs involved would need to be made clear, including the effect on members' working lives.
- Strategic Estates needed to have sufficient resources to work-up the Enhanced Maintenance and Improvement (EMI) option; the DA and SE had given assurances that they were making use of each other's resources.
- The next CB meeting should include a frank discussion of what the two Commissions wanted to achieve.

The Commission:

- noted the update on the recent activity of the Restoration and Renewal Programme Board.

The Commission welcomed Michael Torrance to his new position as Lords R&R Director and thanked Kate Meanwell for her work in that role over the last five years.

- **Update from the Clerk of the Parliaments**
  Clerk of the Parliaments' Update Paper; [UNRESTRICTED]

  Simon Burton provided the Commission with an update, which included Restoration and Renewal, the people survey, estate works, HR and recruitment and recent Management Board activity.

  In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

  - The new House of Lords strategy had been launched yesterday.

Any Other Business and Next Meeting

The Lord Speaker relayed a letter he received from *[Restricted Access – More Information]* a Member during the Easter recess. The letter proposed an extension to the new £100 per night allowance to Members with disabilities to cover costs for accommodation including private rental. Subsequently, he met *[Restricted Access – More Information]* the Member on 24 April 2024 to discuss the letter. They discussed how this proposal would require a new or amended resolution, and agreed that the proposal might be considered alongside the agreed 12-month review of the new allowance. The letter was circulated to the Commission following the meeting.

The next meeting will take place at 10.00am on Wednesday 12 June 2024.

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