



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 12 September at 12.30pm in Committee Room 2A and on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Chair)
Baroness Hussein-Ece
Lord Faulkner of Worcester
Earl of Kinnoull
Baroness Stedman-Scott
Lord Stoneham of Droxford
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. Alison Giles (Director of Security), Rob Brewer (Head of Security Engagement) and Gabija Bingelyte (Assistant Director, Strategic Estates) attended for item 4. Andy Smith (Managing Director and Chief Information Officer of PDS) and Dan Cook (Deputy MD of PDS) attended for item 5. Michael Winders (Director of Communications) and Abbie Fox-Smith (Director of Visitor Experience) attended for item 6. Michael McFarlane (Director of Broadcasting and Audio/Visual) and William Humphey-Jones (Editor of Debates) attended for item 7.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Hogan-Howe and Lord Howard of Rising.

Minutes of the previous meeting, and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the 7th meeting.

The Committee noted that the Participation Strategy item would be postponed to the next meeting on 31 October.

The Committee would be kept updated on the outcome of the Leader's Group on Catering produced in the previous Parliament. The Committee noted that some of the financial implications of the report would be discussed by the Finance Committee.

Chair's Notices S/24-25/1 UNRESTRICTED

The Committee took note of the updates provided, including on catering, the HoL Chamber Roof Repairs, vehicle reassurance checks, Fire Safety Training on ACT and the PDS drop-in service.

The Committee discussed the trial of the GP location move. The move to Richmond House was being trialled after feedback from attendees and the medical team providing the medical service. Feedback on the previous location mentioned; poor wi-fi signal; issues with sewage and drainage; no provision for chaperones; inadequate lone worker support; and limited collaboration between the medical and nursing teams to better provide services to those seeking support. The Committee was advised that work was taking place to improve signage to help members and staff find the GP in Richmond House. The Committee was invited to share any feedback on the trial by emailing PHWS@parliament.uk.

The Committee noted that the gas main pipeline works, which were required before work could begin on Victoria Tower, would be undertaken over the conference recess in consultation with Westminster City Council. There would be no disruption from the works during sitting time.

For Information: Security Portfolio - Physical Works Update S/24-25/2 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Committee was provided with an update on works being undertaken by Strategic Estates and the Parliamentary Security Department, to improve the physical security of the Parliamentary Estate.

The Committee was updated on other projects, including the works to improve the security of entrances. The Security Portfolio team assured the Committee that there would be sufficient warning and alternative routes communicated to building occupants in advance.

The Committee discussed some of the recent accessibility and health and safety concerns at Peers' Entrance. The placement of a drop curb outside the entrance had created a perception that it was a less direct route for wheelchair users to enter the building. Concerns had been raised that the kerb was a trip hazard. The Committee noted that the previous ramp at Peers' Entrance did not comply with building requirements, and so accessibility had improved overall. There were limited options in the design of the kerb arrangements due to heritage considerations and drainage constraints. The team agreed to further look into the health and safety concerns by finding ways to mark out the drop curb for members. The Committee took note of the update and asked the Portfolio team to circulate the reasons they had provided to the Whips to communicate them more widely.

The Committee was informed that the Victoria Tower Project was being considered by the Finance Committee and that it would come back to the Services Committee once there was clarity on a start date and the level of disruption it would cause.

The Committee took note of the Physical Works Update.

**For Discussion: Digital Services - a member forward look S/24-25/03
HIGHLY RESTRICTED**

The Committee welcomed Andy Smith as the new Managing Director and Chief Information Officer of PDS and thanked Dan Cook for acting up as Managing Director of PDS. The Committee discussed the upcoming changes to digital in the forward look and its impact on members.

The Committee noted that the forward look would cover updates to critical services, such as Wi-Fi and telephones.

The Committee asked when Digital Services Members' Roundtable would be convened. The Deputy Managing Director of PDS responded that he would circulate an update for the Committee on the date of the first meeting at the next meeting in October.

The Committee took note of the proposal to publish a member forward look regarding intended changes to digital services, and noted Parliamentary Digital Service intended to structure its regular bi-annual updates to the Committee on the activities included in the forward look.

**For Information: The work of the Participation Team 2023-24 S/24-25/4
RESTRICTED: COMMERCIAL**

The Committee was provided with an update on the services that the Participation Team delivered in 2023/24.

The Director of Visitor Experience highlighted that in the past year; there had been an increase in tours of 50k visitors; _tours of Big Ben had resumed following the refurbishment project; the high vacancy rate was improving; the price increase had contributed £19k income in August. Finally, the Committee was informed that tours had taken over £1m income for the first time ever in August.

The Committee asked what percentage of the 3m participants who had engaged with Visitor Services and Education had physically attended Parliament. The Director of Visitor Experience confirmed that around 225k people had attended the various tours offered. Details for the Education Service would be confirmed at the next meeting.

The Committee congratulated Participation on hitting their £1m income milestone, and the extension of planning permission for the Education Centre. The Committee then drew attention to the potential impact Holocaust Memorial and the Victoria Tower works could have on the current location of the Education Centre and asked to be kept updated on work to find a longer-term solution.

The Committee asked for an update on the deep dive into the Travel Subsidy Policy. The Participation team agreed that it would return to a future meeting. The recent report on Learn with the Lords would also be circulated to the Committee for information.

The Committee asked Participation to look into resuming their tour guidance for non-guides as it could ease the burden on Visitor Services tours.

The Committee took note of the update.

Verbal Broadcasting Update

The Committee was provided with a verbal update and introduction from the Director of Parliamentary Audio/Video, Michael McFarlane. William Humphrey-Jones also introduced himself as Editor of Debates. He highlighted that Broadcasting sits within Commons Hansard, and so as head of House of Lords Hansard, he works with the Commons to champion Lords issues within Broadcasting.

The Committee noted updates including the new cameras which had been installed in the Chamber over the summer and the installation of new speakers planned for conference recess. The updates were in response to the increasingly digital sphere in which the Broadcasting team was now operating. The Committee discussed the challenges of responding to the digitalisation of the service including; the updates needed for the annunciators, and the scarcity of spare parts when working with specialist equipment still to be updated. The Committee highlighted the importance of using non-traditional broadcasting services to reach a wider audience.

The Committee asked to keep updated to any updates to Broadcasting, along with the Administration Committee in the Commons.

Forward work programme S/24-25/6 UNRESTRICTED

The Committee took note of the Forward Work Programme. Dates to the end of 2025 would be available at the next meeting.

AOB

The next meeting would be on Thursday 31 October in Committee Room 3A.

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Governance Support Officer

Emma Burke
Clerk

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