



HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

MINUTES

Wednesday 19 March 2025, 10:00am–11:30am
in Committee Room 1 and via Teams

Attendance

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

Also in attendance:

Lord Vaux of Harrowden, vice-chair of the Restoration and Renewal Programme Board, was present for the following items: *Restoration and Renewal (R&R) Lords temporary accommodation: QEII design scheme selection; Enhanced Maintenance and Improvement (EMI) option: implications for the House of Lords; and Restoration and Renewal (R&R) Phase I Expenditure Limit.*

Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments; Andy Helliwell, Chief Operating Officer; Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant; Fehintola Akinlose, Finance and Commercial Director – *virtually*; Alix Langley, Human Resources Director; Jonathan P Smith, Head of Finance; James Young, Programme and Assurance Director from the R&R Client Team; Andy Piper, Design and Engineering Director from the R&R Delivery Authority; Bev Weston, Head of Integration, Strategic Estates; Charlotte Simmonds, Managing Director, R&R Client Team; Russ MacMillan, Chief Executive Officer, R&R Delivery Authority.

Since the Commission's previous meeting on 5 February 2025, in February and March 2025 the Commission had considered by correspondence:

- **Commission Governance Framework and Operating Manual**
Revised draft of the Commission Governance Framework and annexes;
[RESTRICTED]
Revised draft of the Commission Operating Manual' [RESTRICTED]

Further to discussion of the Commission Governance Framework and Operating Manual at the Commission's meeting on 5 February 2025, revised drafts were sent to the Commission on 24 February 2025 for agreement by correspondence by 3 March 2025.

The Commission:

- agreed to the revised drafts of the Commission's Governance Framework and Operating Manual.

At the meeting on 19 March 2025, the Commission considered the following:

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Commission agreed the record of the discussion of the meeting of the House of Lords Commission on 5 February 2025 with redactions.

2. Update from the Clerk of the Parliaments

Clerk of the Parliaments' Update Paper; [UNRESTRICTED]

Simon Burton provided the Commission with an update, which included the work of the Management Board, Members Inductions, the Archive Relocation Programme, Recruitment, the Victoria Tower's Fabric Safety Programme and Temporary Public Entrance, Chamber Roof, and Abingdon Street Fence.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- The Commission asked the Clerk of the Parliaments for further information on the following points:
 - Cost estimates for the Victoria Tower project.
 - Arrangements for visitors using the Victoria Tower temporary public entrance.
 - Recruitment of a Chief Commercial Officer for the Parliamentary Commercial Directorate (PCD).
 - PCD governance framework
 - Grand Committee resilience
 - Streamlining governance agendas
 - Abingdon Street Fence
 - Recent security incidents

For Decision

3. Financial Support for Members of the House of Lords C/24–25/28; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Simon Burton and Jonathan P Smith introduced the paper. An overnight allowance was introduced with effect from April 2024. After 12 months, the Commission reviewed a paper to establish whether it was working as intended.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- There was disagreement about the accuracy of the costs presented in the paper. It was noted that hotels' use of dynamic pricing means that the figures presented in the paper may differ from those available online at a later time.
- Information on the system proposed by the Senior Salary Review Body in 2009 was included for context and comparison, rather than as a proposal by the paper author.
- Any scheme should be designed to be as simple as possible with due regard for transparency.
- There was concern that the scheme did not sufficiently consider the needs of members who live outside London.
- The Services Committee should consider the work of the travel office, including exploring more opportunities for hotel accommodation in the area local to Westminster.

The Commission:

- agreed that Airbnb type accommodation is allowable, subject to a Member providing the correct documentation and it is not via a related party (paras 17–19);
- agreed the approach set out regarding room sharing (paras 33–34);
- agreed to give the Clerk of the Parliaments limited discretion in exceptional circumstances to allow travel costs to be claimed from somewhere other than a Member's registered residential address (paras 35–38);
- noted the other matters covered in the review (paras 6–9 and 39–40); and
- decided that further consideration should be given to the current allowance level and the options for extending the allowance to cover other accommodations costs. The Lord Speaker indicated that informal meetings would be convened to discuss a revised paper which would then be brought back to the Commission.

4. Supplementary Daily Allowance for non-salaried domestic committee chairs

C/24–25/29; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Chloe Mawson and Jonathan P Smith introduced the paper. The paper asked the Commission to consider a supplementary daily allowance for the non-salaried domestic committee chairs of the Conduct, Finance and Services Committees.

The Commission:

- agreed to introduce a supplementary daily allowance for the non-salaried domestic committee chairs (currently the Conduct, Finance and Services Committee) and such Members may claim up to three additional days per month, provided that for any month the total number of days claimed for does not exceed the total number of sitting days of the House in that month;
- agreed a provisional start date of 1 April 2025 for the supplementary daily allowance, subject to approval by the House;
- agreed to the same publication policy as daily allowance and travel expenses;
- agreed to review the scheme after 12 months, to establish whether it is working as intended;
- 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; and
- agreed the proposed resolution, as set out in Annex C.

5. Restoration and Renewal (R&R) Lords temporary accommodation: QEII design scheme selection in principle

C/24–25/30; [RESTRICTED]

James Young and Andy Piper introduced the paper. The paper invited the Commission to provide feedback on its preferred scheme for a Lords occupation of the QEII under the full decant and continued presence R&R options, subject to further discussions.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*
- Acquisition of QEII should be considered as part of all three R&R options.
- Relevant committees have not recently had the opportunity to tour QEII.
- Concerns were raised in relation to ceiling heights, condition of the foundations, and the adequate provision of catering.
- A decision by Parliament on which R&R delivery option is going ahead would provide clarity and support preparation of the QEII.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*
- Use of QEII could be beneficial to facilitate decant of the Palace under all three R&R delivery options.
- Decisions on the fit-out of QEII were distinct to those on use of and readiness of the Northern Estate.

- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*
- Approximately half of the Gross Construction costs for the QEII fit-out relate to refurbishment of mechanical and electrical systems.
- The costs across the scheme options were relatively close.

The Commission:

- considered the assessment of scheme options for the House of Lords Temporary Accommodation in the QEII Centre under the full decant and continued presence Restoration and Renewal (R&R) delivery scenarios and the user experience of the scheme options; and
- endorsed scheme option 3 for the Lords Temporary Accommodation in the QEII Centre under the full decant and continued presence R&R delivery scenarios, subject to ongoing work on a range of issues raised in the meeting.

6. Enhanced Maintenance and Improvement (EMI) option: implications for the House of Lords
C/24–25/31; [RESTRICTED]

Bev Weston and Charlotte Simmonds introduced the paper to allow the Commission to consider the implications of all three Restoration and Renewal (R&R) delivery options for the House of Lords. The paper considered the Lords temporary accommodation implications of the EMI option, which was considered at the same meeting as paper C/24–25/30.

In discussion the following points were raised or noted:

- Concerns were expressed about the possible reduction in provision, and quality, of committee rooms for a significant period during works to the relevant zone.
- Members also expressed doubts about the EMI assumption that Commons parts of the Palace could be relied upon to accommodate temporary Lords committee and catering provision during the works.
- There was concern about the length of time that EMI would take. It was noted that a contributing factor is reducing disruption by work only taking place at night and during recess.
- The paper was helpful in showing the challenges of EMI.
- It was difficult to predict the appetite of members for tolerating ongoing disruption and may be difficult to manage during the works.
- As with the other R&R options, EMI would also require members and staff to move offices and/or out of the Palace, and take different routes during the course of the works.
- With respect to the BAU+ scenario, it would be difficult to make a fully informed decision at this stage without confirmation of where the Lords Chamber and other Palace-based offices would decant to if the Commons moved into the Lords Chamber for a limited period.

- There was a risk that Parliament could change its mind on requirements during delivery of EMI.
- One member suggested that virtual select committee meetings could be considered to reduce disruption during EMI.
- The construction team would review disruption on an ongoing basis.
- All three options would require the removal of asbestos, and this would be more challenging under EMI.
- The Programme Board had asked for information on what disruption would mean in real, tangible terms.
- Assurance is being sought by the Clerks of both Houses in relation to Health, Safety and Fire for the R&R delivery options.
- Two members asked for information on how outcome level 4 was chosen for EMI.
- One member asked whether packaged financial commitments could instead be granted by Parliament throughout duration of EMI works.

The Commission:

- noted the Enhanced Maintenance and Improvement (EMI) option at the current stage of design maturity;
- noted the proposed approach to the conservation works inside the House of Lords Chamber during the EMI works;
- noted the temporary accommodation implications of a zoned approach to the EMI works, including for the continued provision of committee, catering and library services during the EMI works; and
- noted the assumption that under the EMI Business as Usual Plus (BAU+) scenario the House of Commons would seek to relocate to the Lords Chamber, including the logistical implications, and its preferred approach to the subsequent consideration of this assumption.

Any Other Business and Next Meeting

- **Restoration and Renewal (R&R) Phase I Expenditure Limit**
C/24–25/34; [RESTRICTED]

Charlotte Simmonds and Russ MacMillan introduced the paper. The paper proposed a further variation to the R&R Phase I Expenditure Limit to £475m, to account for the Delivery Authority's budget expenditure set out in the Main Estimate for 2025/26.

The Commission:

- approved a revised Phase I Expenditure Limit to take account of the Delivery Authority's forecast expenditure for 2025/26 (£53.2m). Agreement in both Commissions of this Expenditure Limit will also be interpreted as agreement by the Client Board of the Delivery Authority budget for 2025/26; and

- agreed that the Speaker and the Lord Speaker write to the Chair of the Estimates Commission to respond to the recommendation on the Phase I Expenditure Limit covering the points raised in paragraph 28 of the Client Board paper (paras 24–29 of appendix).
- **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Member Appointments**
C/24–25/35; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

The paper proposed the appointment of two members to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The Commission:
 - agreed to the appointment of Baroness Ford as a member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, in place of Lord Macpherson of Earls Court; and
 - agreed to the appointment of Lord Lemos as a member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, in place of Lord Haskel.
- **Establishing the Parliamentary Commercial Directorate as a joint department – update**
C/24–25/33; [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

The paper updated the Commission on work to establish the Parliamentary Commercial Directorate as a joint department.

The Commission:
 - took note of the steps being taken to establish the Parliamentary Commercial Directorate as a joint department and enhance Member oversight.

The next meeting will take place at 10.00am on Wednesday 7 May 2025. A joint meeting of the Commission and the Management Board will take place at 10.00am on Wednesday 2 July 2025

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