HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

MINUTES

Wednesday 21 January 2026, 10:00am–12:00 midday
in Committee Room 1 and via Teams

Attendance

- Lord Speaker (Chair)
- Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Deputy Chair)
- Earl of Kinnoull
- Lord McLoughlin
- Alice Maynard (external member)
- Charlotte Moar (external member)
- Lord Morse
- Baroness Pitkeathley
- Lord Purvis of Tweed
- Baroness Scott of Needham Market
- Baroness Smith of Basildon

Other Members present:

- Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (attending under Standing Order 64)
- Earl Howe (attending under Standing Order 64)

Apologies were received from Lord True.

Officials also in attendance:

Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments *(virtual)*; Roger Hargreaves, Director, Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) Directorate, National Security Secretariat; Andy Helliwell, Chief Operating Officer; Elizabeth Hunt, Director of Restoration and Renewal Boards and Groups; Alix Langley, Human Resources Director; John Owen, Director of Strategic Business Resilience; Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant; Charlotte Simmonds, Managing Director, Restoration and Renewal Client Team; and Andy Smith, Managing Director, Parliamentary Digital Service.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Commission congratulated Lord Forsyth of Drumlean on his election as Lord Speaker, noting that he will assume office on 2 February 2026.

The Commission agreed the record of the discussion of the meeting of the House of Lords Commission on 17 December 2025.

2. Update from the Clerk of the Parliaments

Clerk of the Parliaments' Update Paper [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

In discussion the following points were noted:

- As part of the review of strategic communications to Members that forms part of the Organisational Effectiveness Review, engagement with Members on their requirements should take place. This review should be an agenda item at a future Commission meeting. **[Action: Michael Winders]**
- The impact of the resignations of the Finance Director and Director of Parliamentary Security on their respective departments was discussed.
- The impact of industrial action by the Public and Commercial Services Union branch of the Parliamentary Security Department was discussed.

3. Business Resilience Update

C/24–26/76 [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

John Owen, Director of Strategic Business Resilience, and Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant, introduced the paper. The paper updated the Commission on resilience and sought the support of the Commission for further work to develop and strengthen existing arrangements. Roger Hargreaves, Director, Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) Directorate, National Security Secretariat, gave an overview of the national risk landscape.

In discussion the following points were noted:

- Ensuring that both Houses can sit was critical, while also ensuring the safety and security of everyone in the Parliamentary community.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*
- A further paper with more detail on relocation options would be presented to the Commission. **[Action: John Owen]**
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*
- Work was undertaken with other Parliaments, as well as the private sector, to ensure sharing of best practice across all areas of resilience.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*

The Commission:

- noted the progress to date on developing resilience and endorsed proposed future work to continue aligning with the resilience framework and national security strategy;
- agreed that further work should continue on developing the logistical capability for a hybrid and/or virtual sitting, for use in an emergency;
- agreed to ask the Procedure and Privileges Committee to look at the case for a resilience standing order to ensure the continuity of business in an emergency where the Government advise the House that they do not believe it is safe or logistically possible for a physical sitting to take place within Westminster, or for a physical sitting to take place with the participation of all Members; and
- considered and provided direction on (a) options for relocation arrangements including whether venues need to look like the chamber and whether a detailed out of London plan is needed, and (b) whether detailed planning on how Parliament would operate should be conducted.

4. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Update
C/24–26/77 [RESTRICTED]

Charlotte Moar, Chair, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, introduced the paper. The paper updated the Commission on the House of Lords ARAC meetings in July and September 2025 and the joint meeting with the House of Commons Administration Estimate Audit & Risk Committee on 4 November 2025.

In discussion the following points were noted:

- Strategic risks should be reviewed once the new Lord Speaker and Clerk of the Parliaments were in post.
- More information on risks and mitigations would be provided. **[Andy Helliwell]**
- Retention of staff within the Parliamentary Commercial Department was being monitored.

The Commission:

- noted that the assurances provided by the Head of Internal Audit around internal controls have improved to moderate (previously limited);
- noted the ongoing limited assurances around strategic estates, commercial and major project management; and
- noted the continuing concern of the Committee that the House of Lords Administration and bicameral services are not ready to deliver the scale of estates projects which are planned.

5. Finance Committee Update
C/24–26/78 [RESTRICTED]

Lord Morse, Chair, Finance Committee, introduced the paper. The paper provided the Commission with an overview of the work of the Finance Committee in the last six months.

In discussion the following points were noted:

- The efficiencies programme would not remove essential resources from the support of Members.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information]*
- Improving the external reputation of the House of Lords was an important priority.

The Commission noted the update.

6. Services Committee Update
C/24–26/79 [RESTRICTED]

Lord McLoughlin, Chair, Services Committee, introduced the paper. The paper provided the Commission with an overview of the work of the Services Committee in the last six months.

In discussion the following points were noted:

- The Commission congratulated the Catering and Retail Services team on their award of Best Heritage Venue at the London Venue Awards 2025.
- Changes to the functioning of the Long Room had been well received.
- The Commission thanked PDS for their in-person training sessions for Members held for a trial period in the Salisbury Room.
- Whether the feasibility could be explored for public tours of Parliament on Sundays.

The Commission:

- noted the update; and
- agreed that the Parliamentary Digital Service should work with the Services Committee to explore further opportunities and locations for the provision of in-person digital training for Members.

7. Restoration and Renewal Programme Board: renewal of external members' appointments
C/24–26/80 [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Elizabeth Hunt, Director of Restoration and Renewal Boards and Groups, introduced the paper. The paper proposed that the current external members of the Restoration and Renewal Programme Board are renewed for one year, within the original terms of appointment set out by the report.

The Commission:

- noted the expiry of external board member appointments to the R&R Programme Board on 28 February and 28 September;
- agreed to renew the appointments of all external members of the Programme Board for one year, to provide continuity during a transitional period in which the Programme's future governance and continuing requirements for external expertise will be reviewed;
- noted that a light-touch appraisal is being conducted in connection with the renewal process; and
- considered whether further proportionate steps should be taken to provide assurances of the appointees' effectiveness in advance of any renewal.

Any Other Business and Next Meeting

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Member Appointment

The Commission agreed to the appointment of Lord de Clifford as a member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Offensive language

The Commission referred requests to review the procedures around offensive language in the Chamber to the Procedure and Privileges Committee.

The Commission thanked Lord McFall of Alcluith for his dedicated work as Lord Speaker. The next Commission meeting would take place at 10.00am on Wednesday 4 March 2025.

The Commission discussed the resignations of the Director of Parliamentary Security and the House of Lords Finance Director in private.

Alasdair Love
Secretary to the Commission

Raquel Fernández Vidal and Julie Vardalia
Executive Officers to the Commission