



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 25 February at 1pm on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Lord Touhig (Chair)
Lord Ashton of Hyde
Lord Borwick
Lord Clark of Windermere
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Deech
Lord Judge
Baroness Morris of Bolton
Lord Stoneham of Droxford
Baroness Wheeler

Together with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

Michael Winders (Director of Communications) and Carl Woodall (Director of Facilities) were also in attendance. Sarah Johnson (Chief Executive, Sponsor Body) and David Goldstone (Chief Executive, Delivery Authority) attended for item 3; Steven Mark (SRO, Microsoft Teams Programme), David Smith (Interim Managing Director, PDS) and Loraine Midda (Head of Member Services – Lords, PDS) attended for item 4; Abigail Fox-Smith (Director of Visitor Experience) attended for item 5; and Debbie McGuire (Travel Office Contract Manager) attended for item 6.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

The Chair welcomed Baroness Deech and Lord Clark of Windermere to the Committee.

The Committee noted its thanks to Lord Laming for all his work as former Chair of the Committee and to Lord Campbell-Savours for his service as a Committee member.

2. COVID-19 Update (S/19-21/57) [RESTRICTED]

The Committee received an update on the operation of the Estate, and was also updated on the planned response to the Prime Minister's Roadmap announcement on 22 February. The Commission was considering a paper on the proposals at its next meeting recommending that the House continued to follow PHE advice and maintained parity with the physical arrangements in the Commons (though procedural arrangements might continue to differ). It was expected after Easter that some in person services such as the PDS drop in and Library enquiry service would return with appropriate social distancing

arrangements. In line with guidance, outdoor catering could return on the Terrace, with full indoor catering and the shop re-opening as guidance allowed.

Staff in the Catering and Retail Service, directly employed by the House, had been operating on a rota system to provide resilience and ensure that any outbreaks could be quickly shut down and an alternative team brought in. This, combined with the reduction in income, had resulted in a significant increase in the catering subsidy; work was underway to review the operating model, and the outcome of the review would be presented to the Committee in due course.

The Administration would continue to monitor demand to ensure there was a sufficient service offer. Staff would continue to work remotely where possible, but the relaxation of the requirement to work from home at the end of March would allow those staff who found it difficult to do so to work from the Estate.

The Committee took note of the update.

**3. Strategic Review of the Restoration and Renewal Programme (S/19-21/58)
[HIGHLY RESTRICTED]**

The Committee was updated on the Strategic Review and the progression of Phase I Funding. **REDACTED**

The Strategic Review was commissioned last spring as the Sponsor Body and Delivery Authority were being formally established. **REDACTED**

The Committee discussed the review and the current position of Phase I funding, including who was responsible for the final decision on funding and how the programme planned to engage with new members.

The Committee took note of the key findings and recommendations.

4. Changes to the telephone system (S/19-21/59) [RESTRICTED]

The Committee was informed of the required changes to the telephone system. Microsoft was retiring part of the Skype for Business product meaning that to ensure the continued use of the telephone system, external calls would now be made through Microsoft Teams. It was a behind the scenes system change and would be less disruptive than the previous move from the legacy phone system to Skype for Business.

Several members and their staff had taken part in a trial of the Microsoft Teams service and feedback had been positive. The move allowed members to use their own devices to place calls from their parliamentary number through the use of an app. So far 2000 staff across the two Houses had been moved across to Microsoft Teams and the initial batch of around 250 members required to be transferred would take place in early March. Support would be provided to set up call diverts and delegates. The remaining members would continue on Skype for Business for now to ensure a smooth transition.

The Committee took note of the work that was underway and planned, including the results of the pilots that took place in January. The Committee requested a short note on the cost of the change.

5. Options for public tours and paid-for tours of the Palace of Westminster (S/19-21/60) [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

Visitor access to the Estate was suspended in March 2020; the paper set out a number of options for the proposed return of visitors to the Estate on paid tours. Pre pandemic paid tours had been available on Saturdays and during recesses. Visitor Services planned to maintain the digital offer developed during the last year **REDACTED**. Educational visits and Democratic Access tours would remain free when they were able to return. It was hoped that on site tours may be able to begin in the summer, subject to government guidelines.

The Committee was supportive of the paid tour offer returning on Saturdays and during recesses. The Committee requested a short note confirming the pre-COVID charging arrangements for tours.

6. Oral update on re-procurement of Travel Office services

The current Travel Office contract was due to expire on 31 August 2021. A travel consultant had been engaged and, after market engagement at the end of last year, the decision had been taken to conduct an open market tender. The tender had now been published and an evaluation panel agreed. The contract was expected to be awarded by mid-May to commence on 1 September 2021.

REDACTED

7. Any other business

The Committee noted the papers circulated for information:

Fire Safety Awareness Training completion figures (S/19-21/61) [RESTRICTED]

IT equipment ordering (S/19-21/62) [UNRESTRICTED]

Forward work programme (S/19-21/63) [UNRESTRICTED]

The Committee discussed member completion of fire safety training and further ways to ensure that members undertook the training.

The following papers had been circulated since the last meeting:

COVID-19 Update (S/19-21/54) [RESTRICTED]

Estates Works Update (S/19-21/55) [UNRESTRICTED]

Changes to the telephone system (S/19-21/56) [UNRESTRICTED]

The next meeting would be on Thursday 25 March at 1pm.

Sections of these minutes have been redacted, usually for reasons such as commercial confidentiality and sensitive management information.

Gabby Longdin
Clerk
HLServicesCommittee@parliament.uk