



## HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

### Minutes

Friday 26 February 2021

#### Attendance

- Lord Speaker (Chairman)
- Lord McFall of Alcluith (Deputy Chairman)
- Mathew Duncan (external member)
- Baroness Evans of Bowes Park
- Lord German
- Lord Hill of Oareford
- Lord Judge
- Lord Newby
- Baroness Smith of Basildon
- Lord Touhig
- Lord Vaux of Harrowden

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, was in attendance. The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams. The Lord Speaker welcomed Lord Hill of Oareford to his first meeting. He also thanked Commission Members for their kind messages following the announcement of his intention to stand down as Lord Speaker at the end of April.

The Lord Speaker thanked Commission members for considering the following items by correspondence:

- The report of the 18-month review of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) by Alison Stanley. The Lord Speaker explained that it had been published on Monday 22 February and that it would be formally considered at the Commission meeting on Friday 26 March;
- An initial draft of the Corporate Business Plan 2021-22 by Jake Vaughan, the Reading Clerk and Director of Corporate Services, ahead of the formal consideration at the Commission meeting on Friday 26 March; and
- The draft Commission report on the Withdrawal of Retired Member Privileges. The Lord Speaker explained that a paper setting out the background and options had been circulated on 21 December 2020 and agreed by correspondence on 8 January and that the agreed report would be published the following week and then put to the House for agreement.

The Lord Speaker explained that any further consideration of the Oversight Panel/Implementation Group as recommended by the External Management Review would take place when the next Lord Speaker had assumed Office. The Leader suggested that the Commission's role be reviewed when the new Lord Speaker and Commission Secretariat were in place.

**1. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Commission agreed the record of discussion of the previous meeting on 10 February 2021.

**2. Restoration and Renewal**

Quarterly Report: Q3 2020/21

Sarah Johnson, Chief Executive of the R&R Sponsor Body  
C/19-21/108 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Phase I Expenditure Limit, Annex A and Annex B

Sarah Johnson, Chief Executive of the R&R Sponsor Body  
C/19-21/109 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Letter from Sarah Johnson, Chief Executive of the R&R Sponsor Body, to the Lord Speaker of 22 February (Phase I Funding)  
C/19-21/115 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Judith Brooke, one of the Lords R&R Directors, explained the background to the papers. She said that the Commission was being asked to align with the House of Commons Commission in two areas:

- agree to a single year's funding, instead of agreeing the entirety of the Phase I funding limit, as set out in Sarah Johnson's letter to the Lord Speaker of 22 February; and
- agree an amended approach to the business case process which the Sponsor Body had developed in order to reduce expenditure during Phase I.

She said that, following the Commons Commission meeting on 22 February, the Sponsor Body had revised the initial Phase I Expenditure Limit (that was approved last year) to reflect the funding required for the next financial year (2021/22) which was £155,613,000 and that the revised formal Phase I Expenditure Limit was therefore £263m. She also said that the Sponsor Body were asking the Lords Commission to note the steps they would take to reduce the number of options to be assessed as part of the Outline Business Case, as set out in Annex B to the main paper.

Sarah Johnson, Chief Executive of the R&R Sponsor Body, and David Goldstone, Chief Executive of the R&R Delivery Authority, joined the meeting and summarised the recent discussions with the House of Commons Commission.

On the funding for the following financial year Ms Johnson said that the decision to agree funding only for the following financial year was disappointing but that the Programme was still committed to delivering savings and efficiencies. In response to a question about the high level, order of magnitude numbers as set out in the Deloitte Independent Options Appraisal in 2015, she agreed to provide an update on the actual costs of the Programme to date.

On the amended business case process Ms Johnson explained that two options would be developed, a 'do-minimum' option and a 'variant' option. She said that both options would presuppose a full decant delivery model, that both would involve a comprehensive refurbishment of the critical systems (electrical, heating, fire safety etc.) and that both would deliver increased accessibility. Lord Judge suggested that

the use of the term 'do-minimum' be reviewed and Ms Johnson explained that the Programme was now referring to 'essential objectives' and 'stretch objectives'.

Lord Touhig suggested that further engagement work with Members should take place, particularly newer Members of the House. Ms Johnson said that further engagement was planned and that they would take steps to target newer Members.

Lord Vaux of Harrowden said that some of the Phase 1 costs appeared to be excessive in the light of the relatively small size of the organisation, particularly the cost of digital systems and the human resources function. Mr Goldstone said that some of these costs were investments for Phase 2 and that industry benchmarking was taking place.

Ms Johnson and Mr Goldstone left the meeting.

*[Restricted Access – More Information].*

After discussion, the Commission **agreed** a revised Phase 1 Expenditure Limit of £263m to reflect the funding requested for the financial year 2021/22 (£155,613,000) and **agreed** that the Lord Speaker should write to Ms Johnson accordingly.

**3. Medium Term Financial Plan**

Jonathan Smith, Head of Finance  
C/19-21/110 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Claire Arlington, Head of Finance Business Partnering, introduced the paper. Lord Vaux of Harrowden, Chairman of the Finance Committee, said that the Finance Committee had endorsed the Plan.

The Commission **agreed** the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021-22 to 2023-24, as recommended by the Finance Committee.

**4. Letter from Baroness Donaghy, Chair of the Steering Group for Change, to the Lord Speaker, 27 January**

C/19-21/111 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

After discussion, the Commission **agreed** that the Lord Speaker should speak with Baroness Donaghy, the Chair of the Steering Group for Change, about the issues raised in the letter.

**5. COVID-19 Measures on the House of Lords Estate: Roadmap**

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments  
C/19-21/112 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, introduced the paper and explained that there would be no significant changes to the operation of the Estate and the Chamber until the publication of the Government's social distancing review later in the spring. The Leader said that the Commission should be in a position to act quickly following any announcement about the relaxation of social distancing rules.

Mr Ollard suggested that detailed consideration of the post-recess operation of the Lords Estate and associated guidance for members be deferred to the meeting on Friday 26 March and that Public Health England officials be invited to attend that meeting. After discussion, the Commission:

- **Agreed** to continue to act in accordance with the public health advice (including social distancing in the Chamber and wider Lords Estate), insofar as possible to maintain a single set of standards applicable across the Estate, in collaboration with the House of Commons, and that any changes to the configuration and operation of catering venues and other services should remain in step with the national guidance;
- **Noted** the continuation of existing restrictions on the operation of the Lords Estate for the period until the Easter recess;
- **Agreed** to defer a detailed consideration of the post-recess operation of the Lords Estate and associated guidance for members to the meeting on Friday 26 March, at which Public Health England officials would be present; and
- **Agreed** to issue a communication to Members explaining the decisions taken in the meeting.

**6. Update on the Administration**

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments  
C/19-21/113 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

After discussion, the Commission **noted** the Update.

**7. Next meeting**

The Lord Speaker informed Commission members that the next meeting would take place via Microsoft Teams on Friday 26 March.

Friday 26 February 2021

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