MINUTES

R&R Client Board

Meeting date	Monday 2 March 2026
Meeting location	Committee Room 4A
Meeting time	16:30–18:00

Attendees

Client Board	Programme Board (in attendance)
Simon Burton	Lord Vaux of Harrowden
Sir Alan Campbell MP	
Judith Cummins MP (Chair, for Mr Speaker)	**Officials**
Marianne Cwynarski	Michael Berry (Lords)
Bobby Dean MP	Chris Dawson (Client Team)
Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Chair)	Catherine Hallett (Client Team)
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Jack Holden (Client Team)
Tom Goldsmith	Elizabeth Hunt (Client Team)
Andy Helliwell	Kate Long (Lords)
Mr Shrinivas Honap	Alasdair Love (Lords)
The Earl of Kinnoull	Russ MacMillan (Delivery Authority)
Dr Alice Maynard	Chloe Mawson (Lords)
Charlotte Moar	Danielle Nash (Cabinet Office)
Lord McLoughlin	Lloyd Owen (Commons)
Lord Morse	Ed Potton (Commons)
Jesse Norman MP	Robert Razzell (Delivery Authority)
Baroness Pitkeathley	Vicky Rock (Commons)
Lord Purvis of Tweed	Saira Salimi (Commons)
Baroness Scott of Needham Market	Abi Samuels (Commons)
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Charlotte Simmonds (Client Team)
Nick Smith MP	Michael Torrance (Lords)
	Matt White (Delivery Authority)
	Michael Winders (Lords)

1. Welcome and standing items

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Lord Speaker) chaired the meeting. The Board welcomed Lord Forsyth to his first Client Board meeting. The Board also welcomed Bobby Dean MP, recently appointed to the Board.

Apologies were received from Rachel Blake MP, Irene Campbell MP (delegate for Steve Barclay MP), and Lord True.

The minutes of the meeting on 8 December 2025 had been agreed by correspondence and published alongside the Costed Proposal report on 5 February 2026. A letter from Jesse Norman MP was appended to the minutes.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- A letter from Jesse Norman MP to the co-chairs of the Client Board had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Jesse Norman outlined the letter, which included the following questions:
  - should the Client Board reconsider how to proceed with the programme given the works' extended duration and the position of the official opposition; and
  - should the Client Board begin to develop contingency plans in case the Houses could not endorse the Board's recommendations in the report.
- The Board agreed that the answers to Jesse Norman's questions would be addressed following debates in the Houses on the Costed Proposals.
- In order to understand the views of each House as a whole, some Members noted the importance of timely debates.
- It was noted that the Phase 1 works included provision for work to ensure costs and time were minimised. The Client Board requested a breakdown of the proposed expenditure.
- The Client Team would provide a summary note on the development of the Phase 1 works figures and a more detailed breakdown of Programme costs.
- The Board agreed to be guided by the outcome of the debates in determining the Programme's next steps.

2. Programme Board Update from the Client Team Managing Director

Charlotte Simmonds provided the update on behalf of the Chair. Charlotte noted that the costed proposals report had been published on 5 February. Following publication, the engagement and communications teams had provided copies of the report to all Members' desks on the estate, had provided stands in the Royal Gallery and Portcullis House, and was running an extensive programme of briefings for Members and staff as well as for stakeholders and journalists. Rebuttals had been provided wherever necessary, for example on perceptions relating to net zero. Scepticism was evident about the cost, time, and the visitor entrance and education centre. Members had expressed frustration at the length of the decision-making process and Members had raised the risk of not returning to the Palace.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- There was significant positive interest in apprenticeships and heritage skills.
- The National Audit Office had initiated a review to support a Public Accounts Committee (PAC) inquiry. A public PAC session would take place on 19 March.
- The Programme and Sub Boards had engaged on issues including the strategic partner procurement, apprenticeship and skills strategy, programme governance and (for the Sub Board) town planning processes.

The R&R Client Board <u>noted</u> the update from the Client Team Managing Director.

3. Delivery Authority 2026/27 Main Estimate

Russ MacMillan, Chief Executive, R&R Delivery Authority; Charlotte Simmonds, Managing Director, R&R Client Team; and Robert Razzell, Finance Director, R&R Delivery Authority, presented the paper. The Estimate had been scrutinised by the Finance Directors of both House administrations, the Delivery Authority Board, the Sub and Programme Boards. Two changes in the 2026/27 estimate reflected the costs of adopting EMI+ and procurement relating to the House of Lords temporary accommodation. The Programme Board and Sub Board supported the estimate on this basis. The Delivery Authority (DA) did not anticipate any need for supplementary funding in 2026/27.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- The Board discussed lessons which could be learned for the Programme from other Parliamentary projects. It heard that the Programme had learned key lessons including the importance of obtaining clarity from the Houses and continuing engagement with Members.
- The Board discussed the Strategic Partner Procurement exercise which would cover three areas: programme management, design, and construction.
- The Board discussed the DA's overheads, which had reduced substantially over previous years. As the programme proceeded with the Phase 1 works the DA expected that overheads would increase, but in proportion to the increased delivery. The DA would need to keep costs under review. The DA was confident that costs would remain level in 2026/27, which was the budget the Board was being asked to agree.
- If the outcome of the debates was a reduced package of works, a proportion of the costs anticipated by the DA in 2026/27 may reduce.
- The Board expressed an interest in shared services and accommodation with Parliament.

The R&R Client Board:
a) <u>approved</u> the Delivery Authority's 2026/27 Annual Estimate of £67.6m, for submission to the Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission; and
b) <u>noted</u> that, subject to its approval of the 2026/27 Estimate, the House Commissions would subsequently be invited to revise the Phase 1 Expenditure Limit to £540m, in accordance with the 2019 Act.

4. Governance Review

Charlotte Simmonds, Managing Director, R&R Client Team, and Elizabeth Hunt, Director of Boards and Groups, R&R Client Team, presented the paper. The Programme Board had provided a paper on its previous discussions, noting that during the period preceding a section 7 decision the governance structure would have to support both strategic decision-making and delivery of the phase one works. The Sub and Programme Boards recognised the importance of clarity in the Boards' terms of reference.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- There was a general consensus that decisions on future governance should be taken once the debates had provided direction on the way forward.
- Future governance should be streamlined and as simple as possible.
- The Board supported proposals that input and connections should be established between the governance arrangements for R&R and other significant Parliamentary projects where there were dependencies, such as the House of Commons Building and Infrastructure Portfolio (CBIP).

- The Board supported a proposal that it would be helpful to tie the Delivery Authority more closely within the governance structure, for example through a monthly update from the Delivery Authority Board to the Programme Board. It was agreed that the terms of reference for different Boards in the governance model should be reviewed to ensure they worked effectively together and provided continuity.
- The Client Team was asked to explore a two-board model for future governance.

The R&R Client Board:
a) considered the roles, membership and practices suggested by the Independent Assurance Review Panel (IAAP) for each board;
b) considered how areas of focus identified by Orr and the National Audit Office might be addressed; and
c) identified other questions, approaches and areas for improvement which should be included in the review.

5. Reappointment of Delivery Authority Chair

The R&R Client Board agreed to renew the appointment of Dr Simon Thurley CBE as Chair of the Delivery Authority Board for three years from 1 April 2026.

6. Any other business and date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting would take place in June, with the exact date to be confirmed.

7. Papers to note

The R&R Client Board noted the forward look.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean
Judith Cummins MP
Chairs, R&R Client Board

25th February 2026

Dear Michael and Judith

I hope I may register some concerns about the substance and procedure of decisions under discussion at the Client Board next Monday.

Since the release of the Costed Proposals Report, the Official Opposition has declared itself to be opposed both to of the proposals being made, on the grounds of excessive cost, and to the governance process suggested.

It seems to me this is a meaningful development. It raises two questions in particular, In relation to next Monday's meeting:

- Is it appropriate for the Client Team to continue with work on proposals which the Client Board knows in advance will not be the subject of cross-party support? If not, how should the Client Board and the Programme Board respond?

- Should the Client Board now ask the Client Team to prepare options to address the possibility that the Costed Proposals Report and the proposed interim funding are not accepted in their current form -- including de-scoped and lower-cost options?

Yours ever,

Jesse

Rt Hon Jesse Norman
Shadow Leader of the House of Commons

Member of Parliament
Hereford and South Herefordshire