HOUSE OF LORDS

S/26-27
4th Meeting

HOUSE OF LORDS SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

The Committee met on Tuesday 14 July at 3.30pm in Committee Room 1 and on Microsoft Teams

Present:
Lord McLoughlin (Chair)
Lord Faulkner of Worcester
Lord Goddard of Stockport
Viscount Goschen
Baroness Humphreys
Earl of Kinnoull
Baroness Williams of Trafford
Baroness Wheeler
Baroness Wilcox of Newport

Together with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

Andy Helliwell (Chief Operating Officer) and Mat Chandler (Director of Estates and Facilities) were in attendance. Ellen Large (Events and Office Manager), Alex Tilston Fleming (Head of Marketing and Digital Communications) and Ed Davis (Black Rod) attended for item 4. Carolina Filippini (SRO of the Project) attended for item 5. Andy Smith (CIO and Managing Director, Parliamentary Digital Service), Avi Dussaram (Head of Members' Services, PDS), and Dan Weedon (Head of Member Engagement) attended for item 6.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Mawson.

2. Agreeing the minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes from the previous meetings.

3. Notices from the Chair S/24-25/7 RESTRICTED

The Committee received updates on the Quarterly Members' Insight Programme, recent Restoration and Renewal publications, and the next joint meeting with the House of Commons Administration Committee, scheduled for 27 October.

Members discussed the Committee's remit, which had been circulated as an annex to the paper in the context of future deep-dive discussions. It was noted that business cases are approved by the Accounting Officer and therefore it was not possible to establish a financial threshold below which the Committee could approve spend but the Committee would always be consulted early on proposals that impact member services.

Members discussed access arrangements for House of Lords members in the Strangers' Bar in the House of Commons.

In considering the findings of the Quarterly Members' Insight Programme, the Director of Estates and Facilities provided further context, improvements had been seen since issues had been reported through the House of Lords Facilities team, with 44% of reported issues responded to within the first day. Members were encouraged to report issues through the Facilities team to enable a more timely response.

The Committee took note of the Chair's notices.

4. For Decision: Review of Filming and Photography Rules on the Lords estate
S/26-27/8 RESTRICTED: MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered a paper setting out the findings of a review of filming and photography rules on the House of Lords estate and proposals to update the associated guidance. Members noted that the last review had been 12 years ago and noted the intention to conduct another review within the next 3 years.

Members welcomed the intention to enable greater promotion of the work of the House while maintaining appropriate security, privacy, reputational and copyright safeguards. Discussion focused on the proposal to increase the number of approved filming and photography locations and to permit broader access for routine filming activity. Members sought clarification on how the proposed arrangements compared with those in the House of Commons and were advised that the changes would align the House of Lords approach with existing Commons practice. Concerns were raised about the practical enforcement of the rules. Members emphasised the importance of keeping the guidance as simple as possible and ensuring that sponsoring members took responsibility for the conduct of their guests. The Committee supported a varied communications plan in promoting the rules to members widely.

The Committee discussed the proposals relating to photography at banqueting events. Members noted the balance that would need to be struck between allowing reasonable personal photography and preventing activity that could imply parliamentary endorsement. Officials advised that requests for wider commercial or promotional use would require approval and that event organisers and sponsoring members would remain responsible for compliance with the rules. Members noted that breaches could result in future access or booking restrictions for guests and, sponsoring members could be in breach of the Code of Conduct.

Members also discussed the proposed six-month pilot of the use of the Residence Rooms as dedicated filming and recording room and sought clarification on how the success of the pilot would be assessed. Officials advised that the room currently operated at around 50% occupancy and that an occupancy rate of approximately 75%, driven primarily by increased use for on-camera and audio interviews, would be regarded as a successful result of the pilot. Concerns were also raised about extending filming activity into committee rooms. The Committee suggested allowing still photography in committee rooms, however concerns were raised that this might create uncertainty about the distinction between parliamentary proceedings and external media activity.

The Committee approved the publication of updated filming and photography guidance and approved a six-month trial prioritising a Residence Room for media interviews and recordings. The Committee also supported future behind-the-scenes filming access for the Digital Communications team.

5. **For Information: Lords Chamber Roof – Project update** S/26-27/9 HIGHLY RESTRICTED: SECURITY

The Committee considered an update on the Repair to the Lords Chamber Roof project, including feedback from recent governance reviews, cost mitigation measures and the proposed timetable for delivery.

Members discussed the estimated project cost and noted that opportunities to reduce expenditure were being actively pursued. Particular attention was paid to cost mitigation measures, including the use of in-house resource in place of external support, reviews of project management arrangements to identify potential efficiencies, and future value engineering opportunities. Members noted that further engineering solutions could not be fully explored until a contractor had been appointed. Officials advised that the current cost estimate represented a worst-case position and included risk and contingency allowances, and that work was underway to identify savings and monitor risks closely as the project progressed.

The Committee discussed concerns previously raised regarding the impact of peregrine falcons on the programme. Members noted recent engagement with Natural England. Officials advised that a practical solution had been identified which safeguards the peregrine falcons and enables the planned works to proceed, without any additional cost to the public purse.

Members considered the proposed timetable and associated risks. Officials explained that the project was subject to ongoing scrutiny of risk allowances and that trends would be monitored closely to identify opportunities to reduce contingency requirements. The Committee noted the anticipated approval of the Full Business Case later in 2026, ahead of procurement and contract award, and the forecast completion date of 2030.

The Committee noted the importance of the project as a prerequisite for future Restoration and Renewal works and was advised that completion of the roof repairs would provide a necessary watertight building before subsequent programmes could proceed.

The Committee took note of the update

6. **For Guidance: Parliamentary Digital Services (PDS) Update** S/26-27/10 UNRESTRICTED

The Committee considered an update from Parliamentary Digital Services on work to support Members' digital needs, including the development of PeerHub, the Digital Coaching Hub, and the digitisation of attendance allowance claims.

Members discussed the work to distinguish the digital requirements of Members in the House of Lords and the House of Commons. It was noted that with fewer or no staff Peers potentially benefitted from more digital support. Discussion focused on improving support for correspondence and inbox management, and Members welcomed work to explore how digital tools, including AI-enabled services, could assist Members in managing parliamentary business more effectively. **REDACTED.**

The Committee discussed the Digital Coaching Hub and noted that, while still at an early stage, engagement had increased in recent weeks. Members welcomed plans to promote the service through practical examples and targeted support. Discussion also focused on the future development of PeerHub. Members recognised the potential benefits of a single point of access for parliamentary services but cautioned that additional functionality should not compromise ease of use. Officials agreed to explore options for securing member input and to report back after the summer recess.

Members welcomed progress on the pilot of digital attendance allowance claims and noted positive feedback received following demonstrations of the new system. Questions were also raised about the use of personal devices, printing arrangements and mobile phone provision. Officials advised that work was continuing to allow members to use their personal devices for some functions while maintaining appropriate security controls, such as the recent addition of allowing members to access the Peers' guest registration system through mobile devices. The Committee noted ongoing efforts to reduce reliance on personal printers in favour of managed printing solutions.

The Committee also noted the planned estate-wide Wi-Fi surveys, which would take place during the summer recess as part of a wider programme to replace wireless access points. Officials advised that the surveys would be non-intrusive and that any photos would avoid personal or identifying information. A further update would be brought to the Committee in the autumn.

The Committee took note of the update

7. For Discussion: Members Handbook on Facilities and Services for members and their staff

The Committee considered the annual update of the *Handbook on Facilities and Services for Members and their staff*.

The Committee provided views on the current *Handbook*. Members suggested that the copies be printed on A4 paper for better useability, understanding that this would increase the cost of printing.

8. For information: Forward Work Programme S/26-27/11 UNRESTRICTED

The Forward Work Programme was circulated for information.

9. Any Other Business

The Committee received an update on planned works in the Churchill Corridor during the Conference Recess. Members were advised that revised proposals for a new access-control door would address security concerns associated with visitors accessing restricted areas, while avoiding disruption to members' and guests' access to the River Restaurant and other facilities. Further communications would be issued to members in due course.

The Committee noted that its next meeting would take place on Wednesday 8 September in Committee Room 1.

Before publication text in italics will be removed and the following text added:
Small sections of these minutes have been redacted, usually for reasons such as commercial confidentiality and sensitive management information.

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