Finance Committee

Minutes

Wednesday 14 October 2026 at 3.45pm in Committee Room 3

Present:

Lord Morse (Chair)
Baroness Buscombe
Lord Kennedy of Southwark
Lord Massey of Hampstead
Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall
Lord Redesdale
Baroness Scott of Bybrook
Lord Stoneham of Droxford
Lord Young of Old Windsor

together with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

Andy Helliwell (Chief Operating Officer), Jessie Peramal (Finance Director- interim) and Alix Langley (HR Director) were in attendance. John Hunt (Director, Enterprise Portfolio Management Office) and Gemma Corfe (Senior Portfolio Manager) attended for the item on the Quarterly Portfolio Report; Jon Dewsbury (Managing Director Strategic Estates – interim) attended for the items on the Health and Wellbeing Hub and the Strategic Estates Portfolio.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Carter of Coles.

Agreeing the minutes of the last meeting, and matters arising

The minutes of the Committee's September meeting were agreed.

A debate would be taking place on the proposal for new sitting times on 22 October, members requested an update on potential budgetary implications.

A member expressed concern about the progress of the Restoration and Renewal Programme and whether agreement to a full decant was a realistic possibility. The Committee felt it important that it had the opportunity to discuss this more fully. A date for a debate on the floor of the House had not been set, but it was thought it would be before the end of the year. Should the debate not take place before the end of the year it would have a significant impact on the programme.

Action Log F/26-27/20

The Action Log was noted. Details of the current permanent, temporary and interim headcount across the House of Lords and bicameral teams had been circulated for information.

Q1 Quarterly Portfolio Report 2026/27 F/26-27/21 RESTRICTED

The Committee considered the Quarterly Portfolio Report, the report provided an update on the 30 most significant projects and programmes. The report highlighted ongoing challenges in governance, stakeholder engagement and resource capacity.

The Commons Building and Infrastructure Programme made up half the value of the Portfolio, it was having to replan following confirmation that land previously expected to be used in the project was not available. The Committee questioned whether the change in plans should have been known sooner and whether the expected four year delay would impact on Restoration and Renewal (R&R). It was felt that the unavailability of land could have been known sooner had the right conversations taken place, however work was underway to look at resequencing R&R works to mitigate any impact. The exact impact on timelines was still being assessed.

In discussion of the Abingdon Street Car Park it was confirmed that although it was House of Commons asset, the House of Lords still had an interest in its future use and wished to be involved in the decision making. Significant remediation works were required to make the car park usable again. The use of Peers' Car Park was being monitored to understand the level of parking required by the House.

It was noted that both the Victoria Tower and Chamber Roof Projects were both well rated in the report. Both projects had moved to the new governance structure that was in the process of being rolled out to all projects. Each project had its own challenges but at present both were in a good place. It was confirmed that the internal ventilation system was within the scope of the Chamber Roof project.

The Committee discussed how the report was used, and its role in supporting management decisions. The Committee took note of the update, and thanked the Enterprise Portfolio Management Office for their work.

Verbal Update on the Health and Wellbeing Hub

The Committee was informed that the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service (PHWS) was currently delivered from multiple locations across the Parliamentary Estate. A number of those services were delivered from Richmond House which was due to close in summer 2027 for refurbishment. Having considered the options for the future delivery of PHWS the preferred option was to deliver a co-located service from a space below Central Lobby.

Following the Committee's last update before the summer recess further work had taken place and it was found that the project would monetise benefits of £7.7m over 14 years. The co-located service would be able to increase its offer while reducing running costs. The Investment Committee was happy to approve the project, subject to the approval of the Clerk of the Parliaments.

The project would start work in November 2026 for completion in June 2027. The total cost including risk and optimism bias was £9.4m. A large part of the risk cost related to an ongoing issue with the water mist system provider.

The space would be serviced by two lifts, one of which would be meet building regulation accessibility standards. The Committee welcomed the change but felt it was important that communications to members began well in advance of services moving.

The Committee was informed that the R&R team had not yet confirmed what the space would be used for after R&R. The Health and Wellbeing Hub was expected to remain until 2042.

Strategic Estates Project Portfolio F/26-27/22 RESTRICTED

The interim Manging Director of Strategic Estates had been in post for six months, whilst in post he had conducted a review, identifying seven themes for improvement. The Managing Director discussed these with the Committee, key points included:

- Parliament having a better understanding of the long term investment it is committed to beyond the three year forward planning cycle
- Reorganising projects into six clear programmes with identifiable Directors responsible for their success
- Prioritisation of projects based on surveys of the Palace providing a clear understanding of what is needed to keep it running
- An in house design team embedded alongside delivery teams
- A review of the thin client resource model to focus on ensuring value for money
- Better alignment between the commercial approach and scale of delivery
- Creating an in house rate book to assess Parliamentary abnormalities
- Creating a culture of psychological safety in Strategic Estates.

The Managing Director would return with a paper on the Capital Envelope at a future meeting and update the Committee on the six programmes in the new year.

It was noted that the themes identified had a lot of commonalities with those identified in the Quarterly Portfolio Report. The Committee welcomed the update.

Forward Work Programme F/26-27/23

The Committee noted the Forward Work Plan.

Any Other Business

The Committee would next meet on Wednesday 4 November at 3.45pm.

Emma Burke
Clerk
HLFinanceCommittee@parliament.uk