



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 25 March 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. Justin Hills (Head of Property and Office Services) attended for items 7 and 8; and Carolina Filippini (Assistant Director, In House Services and Estates) attended for item 9.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Agreeing the minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. Notices from the Chair (S/19-21/64) [RESTRICTED]

The note from the Chair set out responses to a number of matters raised at the last meeting and in the intervening period. Members praised the response to concerns that had been raised about changes to the presentation of Bills on the parliamentary website.

The Committee requested further information on the usage levels and the benefits of the new telephony system. The most recent change had been made as a result of Microsoft withdrawing elements of the Skype for Business product which Parliament had originally moved to when it was no longer possible to support the copper wire system. The Chair

had used the coaching service provided by the Parliamentary Digital Service and had found it helpful in developing knowledge of the new system.

5. COVID-19 Update (S/19-21/65) [RESTRICTED]

The paper set out the Administration's Roadmap proposals and would be presented to the Commission's 26 March meeting. It was planned that physical services would be opened in line with government advice and expected member requirements. The Peers' Guest Room and Peers' Dining Room were both expected to be opened from 12 April, as they had been at the end of 2020. These changes had the agreement of Public Health England and were possible as the House was a workplace; social distancing would be in place in both venues.

If demand required, the Millbank House Cafeteria or a 'grab and go' station in the Millbank Library could be opened in addition to services in the Palace. Weddings and baptisms were unlikely to take place before the summer as the Estate remained closed to non-passholders other than (at Step 3) those supporting the business of the Houses. Bookings for banqueting events were being taken for dates after 21 June, but were provisional and subject to further guidance.

The Chair noted that it was important that caution continued to be exercised, as some members, and the majority of House staff, may not have had the opportunity to be vaccinated until later in the year. It was crucial that members and staff work together to keep everyone safe.

The Committee took note of the update.

6. Oral update on Palace-wide testing of fire safety systems

Work to upgrade Palace fire life safety systems had resulted in the installation of 15,000 devices, all of which had been tested on installation. Every Sunday since January cause and effect testing had taken place on the system, culminating in a successful Palace-wide test which took place on Sunday 14 March. In future, such a test would take place annually in addition to regular fire evacuation drills.

7. Estates Works Update (S/19-21/66) [UNRESTRICTED]

The Committee was updated on works scheduled to take place in Millbank House over the summer recess. Permanent flood mitigation measures would be installed, and the second Data Centre would be moved from 7 Millbank into the basement. Changes would be made to the access from Great Peter Street and the lift in the reception area would be refurbished. The boiler system replacement would take place in two phases over this summer and the next, with the heating system in the Great College Street building being recommissioned and works to link the two systems scheduled for this summer and the full replacement of the Millbank House boiler taking place next summer.

Clarification was sought on when the Mobility Impaired Persons (MIP) fire evacuation project would be completed. It was confirmed that the work to install emergency voice communication systems in the Palace was expected to take place over the summer; the work on resilient electrical supplies to the lifts was expected to complete in 2022.

Enabling works were underway in Fielden House and the invitation to tender for the fit out works had been published.

Members questioned the decision to locate the Data Centre in the basement and were informed that careful consideration and planning had gone into the design to minimise any risk to the Centre. The flooding in 2016 and 2018 had been as a result of a combination of a high tide and heavy rainfall; the pumped solution due to be installed would mitigate this risk. It was agreed that a note would be provided to the Committee with further detail on the design for the flood mitigations.

8. Oral update on Electric Vehicle Charging Points

Since the Committee had taken the decision in principle to agree to the installation of EVC points, work had continued on the project, particularly around payment options. A paper would come to the next Committee meeting. Should the proposals be endorsed the work could be carried out over the summer and conference recess periods.

9. Mechanical, Electrical, Public Health & Fabric Safety Programme Update (S/19-21/66) [HIGHLY RESTRICTED]

The paper provided the Committee with an introduction to the programme. It was a risk mitigation programme which aimed to maintain the functionality of the Estate until Restoration and Renewal commenced. The programme encompassed a number of projects including fridge packs in catering; chiller units in the Chambers and Committee Rooms; the sewage ejector; fire hydrants; and steam systems.

Extensive surveys had been undertaken to establish the criticality of works and prioritise projects by need. One of the fabric safety projects focussed on the void above Central Lobby, where work was required to prevent water ingress and damage to the structure.

The Committee would receive further updates on individual projects as required.

10. AOB

The Forward Work Programme had been circulated with the Committee papers; the Chair welcomed any suggestions from members for future items to be considered by the Committee.

The Chair expressed the Committee's thanks for the hard work and dedication of the Clerk of the Parliaments and the support he had provided the Committee, and wished him well in his retirement.

The next meeting would be on 29 April at 1pm.

Gabby Longdin
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