



## HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

### Minutes

Friday 26 March 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 thanked Commission members for considering the following items by correspondence:

- **Agreeing** a number of changes to the Allowances Guidance (two small changes in respect of (1) meetings of the Consultative Panel on Parliamentary Security, and (2) a Member of the House serving as President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE) (C/19-21/116);
- Subject to the agreement of the House, **agreeing** to the appointment of Ms Nora Senior as the second external member of the Commission (C/19-21/119); and
- **Noting** the letter from Lord Mance, Chairman of the Conduct Committee, about the possibility of amending the scope of the Code of Conduct to include a disrepute clause (C/19-21/126).

The Lord Speaker explained that he would respond to Lord Mance and convey the Commission's general support and thanks for the Conduct Committee's work in this area.

The Commission **agreed** to merge the meetings which had been scheduled for 30 April and 28 May into one meeting on Friday 21 May at 10.30am. The Lord Speaker explained that, as a consequence, the meeting would be his last in the chair. The Commission **recorded** their thanks to him for his service to the House as Lord Speaker and Chairman of the Commission since 2016. The Commission also **recorded** their thanks to Ed Ollard, the Clerk of the Parliaments, ahead of his final day on 1 April and they welcomed Simon Burton to his new role. The Commission **recorded** their thanks to the Earl of Kinnoull for his service to the House as Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees and Chairman of the EU Committee and its six sub-committees and the Lord Speaker suggested that the question of

appointing a third Office-holder be kept under review by the Commission. Finally, the Commission **recorded** their formal thanks to the staff of the House for the diligent work which had enabled the House to function throughout the pandemic.

**1. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Commission **agreed** the record of discussion of the previous meeting on 26 February 2021.

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

Paper by Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments

Oral Update from Professor John Simpson, Head of Public Health Advice, Guidance and Expertise Pillar COVID-19 Response, and Dr Mark Salter, Consultant in Global Health and Senior Medical Advisor, Public Health England

C/19-21/120 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Lord Speaker welcomed Professor Simpson and Dr Salter to the meeting. Professor Simpson explained that overall, the number of deaths was decreasing and that the number of positive cases had plateaued. He explained that progress on the Government's roadmap was good but that the re-opening of many schools had been coupled with a rise in cases in younger age groups. In response to a question about the effect of the vaccines on the transmissibility of the virus, Dr Salter said they would know more when a programme of events-based research, undertaken in a controlled environment, had concluded. In response to a question about the revision of social distancing guidance Professor Simpson said that the Government's social distancing review would be published in advance of 21 June. He also said that when non-pharmaceutical interventions had been abandoned in other countries, a rise in cases had followed.

The Clerk of the Parliaments presented his paper relating to the operation of the House of Lords Estate. Questions were asked about the extent to which the arrangements in the Lords would match the arrangements in the Commons, with particular regard to catering provision. After discussion, the Commission **agreed** that, after the Easter recess:

- The guidance about staying away from the Estate should be changed to mirror the change in the Government's roadmap meaning that Members and Members' staff should continue to work from home where they can and minimise travel to Westminster. If Members or their staff are to be present on the Estate, they should be encouraged to spend the minimum time necessary for their work on the Estate and non-passholders should not be permitted to access the Estate;
- On the Estate and in the Chamber social distancing should remain and that face-coverings should be worn when in the communal parts of the Estate and when entering, leaving, and moving about the Chamber and Grand Committee Room;
- Some catering services should be available on the Estate for those who are working onsite but that these services should operate with restrictions. The Peers' Dining Room and Peers' Guest Room should re-open but be configured to ensure social distancing and compliance with rules limiting indoor socialising; the terrace seating should be re-arranged so that two people are able sit at each table. In line with the arrangements in the House of Commons, no alcohol should be sold in outlets on the Estate; and that

- The House Authorities should put in place support for Members returning to the Estate, in particular for any digital needs. PDS drop-in support should be made available in the Royal Gallery and guidance should be sent to Members about managing common difficulties.

The Commission **agreed** a number of changes to the draft communication to Members, including the addition of a section thanking staff for their efforts, and **agreed** that it should be circulated, with the table in Annex A, before Easter.

**3. Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme: 18-Month Review Report**

Report by Alison Stanley, Independent Reviewer

Cover Paper by Jo Willows, Director, Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, and Chloe Mawson Clerk of the Journals

C/19-21/121 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Lord Speaker suggested that consideration of the paper be deferred to a future meeting and the Commission **agreed**.

**4. Corporate Business Plan for 2021/22**

Jake Vaughan, Reading Clerk and Director of Corporate Services

C/19-21/122 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Jake Vaughan, Reading Clerk and Director of Corporate Services, presented his paper. Lord Vaux of Harrowden suggested that additional emphasis be placed on the House's Communications function and Lord German suggested that the Business Plan reflect the programme of change as set out in the External Management Review. Lord Hill of Oareford suggested removing reference to an assumption that the hybrid House would continue to operate until the summer recess, pointing out that changes may need to be made after 21 June. The Commission agreed with his suggestion and Mr Vaughan agreed to amend the Business Plan accordingly.

The Commission **agreed** the Corporate Business Plan for 2021/22 with an amendment.

**5. Restoration and Renewal**

Letter from the Lord Speaker to Sarah Johnson, Chief Executive of the R&R Sponsor Body (R&R Funding), 2 March 2021

C/19-21/123 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Letter from the Lord Speaker to Sarah Johnson, Chief Executive of the R&R Sponsor Body and David Goldstone, Chief Executive of the R&R Delivery Authority (R&R Financial Plans), 2 March 2021

C/19-21/125 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Letter from Sarah Johnson, Chief Executive of the R&R Sponsor Body to the Lord Speaker (R&R Financial Plans), 15 March 2021

C/19-21/124 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

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

**6. Any Other Business and Next meeting**

Baroness Smith of Basildon suggested that the Lord Speaker issue a short statement in support of Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws and Lord Alton of Liverpool, both of whom had been publicly sanctioned by the Chinese government for their work relating to human rights. The Lord Speaker **agreed** to do so.

The Lord Speaker informed Commission members that, as agreed, the next meeting would take place via Microsoft Teams on Friday 21 May.

Friday 26 March 2021

**Patrick Milner**  
Secretary to the Commission  
020 7219 6644  
milnerp@parliament.uk

## ANNEX A

		Government roadmap	House of Lords
MARCH		<b>Current position</b> 'Lockdown' in England in place since January 2021	Members strongly encouraged to work from home, limited facilities available on the Estate
	8 Mar	<b>Step 1(a)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools reopen</li> <li>1-2-1 outdoor socialising permitted</li> <li>Stay at home message remains</li> </ul>	<b>Step 1(a)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No changes (agreed by Commission on 26 Feb)</li> </ul>
	26 Mar		<b>Review: Commission meeting to discuss and consider operation of the Estate at step 2 and beyond</b>
	29 Mar	<b>Step 1(b)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rule of six or two household outdoors</li> <li>Outdoor sport and leisure resume</li> <li>Legal stay at home lifted, but travel should be minimised. Working from home should continue if possible.</li> <li>No international travel</li> </ul>	<b>Step 1(b)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised guidance to members (continue to work from home 'where possible')</li> <li>Revised guidance to members' staff</li> </ul>
APRIL	12 Apr		House returns from the Easter recess
	12 Apr	<b>Step 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indoor leisure, including gyms</li> <li>Rule of six or two households outdoors.</li> <li>Outdoor hospitality reopens (not indoors)</li> <li>All retail re-opens</li> <li>Minimise travel, no international holidays</li> <li>Mitigations such as workforce testing and continued social distancing guidance</li> </ul>	<b>Step 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gym, hairdresser and shop re-open if safe to do so</li> <li>Peers' Guest Room and Peers' Dining Room to re-open but reconfigured to ensure social distancing and compliance with rules limiting indoor socialising</li> <li>Outdoor catering spaces to be reconfigured in line with any guidance.</li> <li>Onsite library enquiry service to re-open</li> <li>Additional support in place for members returning to the Estate, including the PDS drop-in (relocated to Royal Gallery)</li> <li>Testing capacity on the Estate may be increased</li> <li>Social distancing on the Estate remains in place</li> </ul>
	12 Apr	Review of international travel expected	
MAY	17 May	<b>Step 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indoor entertainment and attractions and hospitality re-open</li> <li>30 person limit outdoors</li> <li>Rule of six or two households indoors</li> <li>International travel, subject to review</li> </ul>	<b>Step 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-configure socially distanced indoor catering outlets in line with regulations and guidance</li> <li>Subject to national regulations, allow service of alcohol indoors</li> <li>International travel rules re-considered</li> <li>Access resumes for business-related non-passholders</li> </ul>
	21 May		<b>Review: Commission meeting to consider operation of the Estate and international travel.</b>
J	TBC	Review of social distancing published	

TBC		<b>Review: Commission meeting</b> to consider impact on the operation of the Estate and access of social distancing review
21 June	<b>Step 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No legal limits on social contact but have guidance on how to reduce transmission, subject to review</li> <li>• Reopen remaining venues</li> </ul>	<b>Step</b> The impact of these measures on the operation of the Estate and access will need to be calibrated once revised social distancing advice is published.