



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 27 May at 1pm on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Lord Touhig (Chair)
Lord Ashton of Hyde
Lord Borwick
Lord Clark of Windermere
Baroness Deech
Lord Judge
Lord Stoneham of Droxford
Baroness Wheeler

Together with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

Fehintola Akinlose (Finance Director), Michael Winders (Director of Communications) and Carl Woodall (Director of Facilities) were also in attendance. Lucy Owen (Chief of Staff, R&R Sponsor Body) and John Thursfield (Engagement Strategy Manager, R&R Sponsor Body) attended for item 4; Stephen Perkins (Head of Catering and Retail Services) attended for item 6; Steven Mark (Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), Microsoft Teams Programme) attended for item 7; Justin Hills (Head of Property and Office Services) and David Johnstone (Senior Facilities Manager) attended for items 8 and 9.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Clement-Jones and Baroness Morris of Bolton.

2. Minutes of the 11th meeting, and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting. The presentation from the Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit would be received by the Committee at a future meeting.

3. Notices from the Chair S/21-22/1 [RESTRICTED]

The Chair highlighted the importance of members installing the Windows 10 update before the deadline. The Committee took note of the updates.

4. Restoration and Renewal: Parliamentary engagement plans for 2021 S/21-22/2 [RESTRICTED]

The engagement programme was due to run from 7 June to the summer recess and would cover five topic areas to inform Palace designs. The Programme had taken on board the feedback previously received from the Committee and diversified the ways in

which it planned to engage with members, including offering one to one sessions. The programme welcomed the Committee's support in publicising the offer to members.

The Committee noted the importance of public engagement and the need to bring the public on the journey of the importance of the works; public support would be critical. It was noted that the engagement was likely to raise questions of the cost of the works, the Committee was informed that this work was underway and the ongoing detailed survey works were all part of developing a business case to be brought to both Houses in 2023. It was agreed that the Committee would be provided with further detail on the plans for public engagement when this was available.

Members felt that it was important that the engagement considered the views of those beyond London and the South East; the programme was aware of the importance of this and was currently looking at how skills and apprenticeships in all regions could be developed as part of the works. Concern was expressed that there may be some consultation fatigue whilst there was still no certainty on plans for the works.

The Committee endorsed the planned engagement with Members and noted the Programme's planned engagement with the public.

5. COVID-19 Update S/21-22/3 [RESTRICTED]

The update provided details on the current operation of the estate; numbers of members on the estate at the start of this week had been in line with the numbers the previous week. The member testing service had been extended in the Strangers' Bar. Although no formal decisions had been taken, the Administration and Commission were starting to consider what operation would look like if social distancing were lifted on 21 June.

The Committee requested an update from the Parliamentary Digital Service on the potential for hybrid facilities in future, not just those supporting the Chamber and Committees but all potential meetings that take place on the estate, as it was likely that these would take place in a hybrid fashion more regularly.

QR codes were in operation in all catering venues on the estate and an option to leave contact details manually was available for those who were unable to use the QR code. This was in line with the current government guidance for all venues.

The Committee took note of the paper and agreed to defer a decision on whether the Administration should continue to fund Members' printing costs whilst they worked from home until after the summer recess.

6. Annual Review from Catering and Retail Services S/21-22/4 [RESTRICTED]

The last year had been challenging both financially and operationally. Catering and Retail Services (CRS) had maintained service throughout the pandemic, in line with government guidance. However only a limited offer was possible and there had been no income from events and banqueting. A number of suppliers had gone into administration and CRS had

worked with the Parliamentary Procurement and Commercial Service to find alternative suppliers.

Teams had been working in shifts to ensure that continuity of service could be provided; plans had also been put into place with the Commons to provide business resilience should an outbreak have occurred in the kitchens of either House.

The Committee passed on its thanks for the work of CRS staff throughout the pandemic.

The Committee took note of the update.

7. Microsoft Teams Programme S/21-22/5 [RESTRICTED]

The programme was focussed on moving members from Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams in order to maintain the parliamentary telephone system. There were 353 members and their staff still to be moved following the successful move of the first group of members and a test of 10 members in the second group.

Communications of the change and support for members would be provided via desk drops, floor walks, phone calls and the usual coaching services. For most members the only point at which they would notice the change was once they returned to the estate. The programme and PDS generally were prepared to support increased enquiries at this point.

Members questioned whether it was possible for the current level of usage of the telephone system to be compared against the old copper wire system, given anecdotal evidence that many members rely on their mobile phones more than the previous system. It was noted that data could be provided but it would be difficult to separate out calls made from the estate from those made remotely to provide a direct comparison. The current level of calls on the Estate had also gone down substantially as a result of COVID-19 and reduced numbers on the estate.

Discussions had resumed with Microsoft to try and identify a solution for members that operated more like an analogue telephone and did not need to be logged into. The Teams app could be used to make and take calls from members' mobile phones using their parliamentary phone number.

It was suggested that members would benefit from a short, clear document setting out how the system worked and its benefits, to encourage members to use the system or seek support to do so. This should be shared with the Committee for comment.

The Committee took note of the work completed so far and endorsed the proposed approach for Members of the House of Lords and their staff who were still to be transferred to Microsoft Teams.

8. Oral update on outcome of Electrical Vehicle Charging Survey

The Committee received an update on the outcome of the Electric Vehicle Charging (EVC) survey; 146 responses had been received, which equated to 18.5% completion rate amongst all members of the House. Of those who completed the survey:

- 136 had been supportive of the proposals to introduce six EVCs in Royal Court;
- 40 members currently owned electric vehicles and of those 33 expected they would make use of EVCs; and
- 56 members were considering buying an electric vehicle in the future.

The business case had been submitted and there were now a number of further questions to answer on the whole life costs, impact on the Administration and cost to members. It was expected that this would be completed before the summer recess. It would no longer be possible for the works to be completed during the summer recess but the aim would be for the work to be undertaken as soon as possible once the business case was approved. The Chair would keep progress under review.

9. Estates Works update S/21-22/6 [RESTRICTED]

Since the paper had been circulated the Fire Safety Improvement Works Programme had received a green delivery confidence assessment from its gateway review. The paper included the planned installation of temporary chillers in State Officer's Court to support the replacement of the current chillers and ensure cooling could continue to be provided throughout the process.

The removal of the West Front northern scaffold section will begin later this year and take a total of four months due to the complex nature of the structure. The remaining West Front scaffold sections will be removed in phases when the roof restoration works are progressively completed.

The Committee took note of the update.

10. AOB

The Fire Safety Training completion figures had been circulated for the Committee's information, the level of completion had increased since the Committee was last updated.

The Forward Work Programme had been circulated for the Committee's information, it was also expected that the Committee would receive a paper on Fielden House in July.

The next meeting will be on 24 June at 1pm.

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