



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 24 June 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), Fehintola Akinlose (Finance and Procurement Director) and Carl Woodall (Director of Facilities) were also in attendance. John Angeli (Director, Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit) attended for item 4; Lucy Owen (Chief of Staff, R&R Sponsor Body) and Clementine Brown, (Head of Parliamentary Engagement, R&R Sponsor Body) attended for items 5 and 6; Neil Baverstock (Yeoman Usher) attended for item 8; and Patrick Vollmer (House of Lords Librarian), Sheila Gopaulen (Head of Service Development) and Seonaid Still (Communications and Engagement Manager) attended for item 9.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Minutes of the 1st meeting, and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting. The Committee received an oral update on the progress of the proposed Electric Vehicle Charging Points.

A member reiterated the request for an update from the Parliamentary Digital Service on the potential for hybrid facilities in future.

3. Notices from the Chair S/21-22/9 RESTRICTED

The paper provided an update on a number of matters including: the Archives re-opening; Banqueting events; GB News broadcasting; member contact details database; and Travel Office re-procurement. The database would be communicated to members

using multiple channels: PeerHub, Whips' and Convenor's Offices, member newsletters and information screens. Members questioned whether the member contact detail database would be accessible for members to use, there were no plans at present but the Committee would be kept updated on progress of the rollout of the new database.

4. Presentation from Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit on new live subtitling service

The Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit (PBU) was responsible for the Broadcast of the work of the House of Lords and the House of Commons and over the last year had enabled the hybrid sittings of both Houses. One million people in the UK have acute hearing difficulties and the addition of the subtitling service to the PBU broadcast would widen the accessibility and audience of its broadcasts. The change would also bring the service in line with legal changes to access requirements for public sector bodies.

The Committee received a demonstration of the service. The service works in the same way as subtitles on the television. The PBU was working with Hansard to see if they had any use for the live subtitle feed. The service was expected to go live from 6 September 2021.

The Committee welcomed the addition of the service.

5. Restoration and Renewal: Palace of Westminster Design Assumptions S/21-22/10 RESTRICTED

The paper intended to provide the Committee with visibility of the Design Assumptions developed by Restoration and Renewal, in conjunction with the Administration. There was further work to do to develop the detail before the proposals were put to both Houses.

It was assumed that both Houses would return to pre-pandemic physical sittings, but the aim was to ensure that the designs were as future proof and flexible as possible. The Design Assumptions would be considered by the Commission in July.

The Design Assumptions aimed to cover a 30-50 year period, but decisions would have to be taken on the basis of value for money and the possibility of future maintenance. Due to there being a finite amount of space and the Palace being a working building, only a modest increase in visitor numbers had been allowed for in the Assumptions. The design of the Chambers and the integration of technology would be considered at a later stage in the process.

The programme was limited to the Palace itself but was working closely with the team responsible for the Masterplan to meet access and accessibility requirements across the Estate. It was expected that health and wellbeing facilities would be extended as current facilities did not meet Public Health England guidelines.

There were currently no Design Assumptions on security, the programme was working closely with the Parliamentary Security Department to ascertain requirements. There

was a communications plan in place and it was hoped that the programme would engage with as many members as possible. It was expected that once possible it would have a visible presence on the Estate. The works would look to make the building more climate efficient within the constraints of heritage requirements.

The Chair requested that a note of the Committee's comments be produced for circulating to the Commission in July alongside the Design Assumptions.

6. Restoration and Renewal: Space Utilisation Survey Proposal S/21-22/11
RESTRICTED

The proposed survey would allow the programme to better understand and gather objective information on how the Palace was used. The survey would collect data for 12 months and the output would be used to inform key strategies, route planning and heating and cooling plans.

The sensors detected heat and movement but were not capable of identifying individuals. The proposed supplier, Occupeek, had been used previously elsewhere on the Estate and provided technological resilience guarantees. The Heritage Team was providing advice on where devices could be fixed. 230 priority spaces had been identified with an additional 750 spaces also proposed. The additional spaces were largely in member and staff offices, consent would be sought by individual members for sensors to be installed in their offices.

Sensors would be fixed to walls and ceilings, where restrooms have been identified the sensors would be placed on the doorframe outside the room. It would take a number of months for the preliminary work to be completed and the sensors to be installed, by which point the use of the building was expected to be back at or close to normal usage levels. The survey covered 12 months as there was value in understanding how the Palace was used both in sitting and recess periods.

Subject to the agreement of member committees of both Houses, the proposals would go to the Intrusive Works Access Group for engagement directly with affected members. It was proposed that a demonstration area would be installed for members to be able to see the devices and how they operate before installation.

The Committee agreed to the extended survey.

7. COVID-19 Update S/21-22/12 RESTRICTED

The Clerk of the Parliaments provided an update on the current operation of the Estate, the Procedure Committee would be considering the proposed changes from September shortly.

It would be possible to implement the removal of social distancing restrictions quickly but whilst those restrictions were still in place members had to be mindful of the limited capacity in the Chamber.

The Committee took note of the update.

8. Broadcasting in Central Lobby – Proposal for Parliamentary Plug-in Point
S/21-22/13 RESTRICTED

The paper contained a request for the Committee to endorse further work on the production of a business case, at which point the proposal would return to the Committee for agreement. Currently the BBC, Sky and ITV all ran their own broadcasting points in Central Lobby, this was considered unsustainable given the number of news outlets requesting to broadcast from Central Lobby, most recently GB News. This paper looked at developing a technical solution, in the form of the provision of Parliament owned and run broadcasting points, it would then require a policy decision on how the points would be managed.

The points installed and used by the BBC, Sky and ITV had been installed at their own cost, consideration would have to be given as to whether news outlets would be charged for the use of Parliamentary broadcasting points to offset the cost of installation and maintenance.

The Committee was supportive of the business case being pursued.

9. Library Annual Update S/21-22/14 UNRESTRICTED

Since March 2020 the Library had operated a virtual enquiry service, allowing members to continue to access the service remotely. At the same time the new website went live improving the presentation and remote access of briefings. The selection of e books had increased, and the new Press Reader service had been launched alongside the existing Times and Financial Times web access available to members.

A limited physical service returned in the autumn of 2020 but was paused in early 2021. The physical service was again available and the hours would be extended from 28 June with a full service expected to return from September. The Library would be continuing its virtual service offerings alongside this.

There was a focus on member communications and engagement going forward, looking to ensure members are informed at the right time and in the right way of the support the Library can provide and the briefings it had produced.

The Library was also working towards the Customer Service Excellence Standard. The national quality kitemark would require external validation of 60 standards. It aimed to provide members with confidence in the service they were receiving.

The Chair thanked the Library for its contribution to the work of the House and the level of engagement and support received over the last year. The Committee took note of the update.

10. AOB

Members expressed some views on the wording of the Chief Operating Officer job advert.

It was confirmed that there had been no change in Terrace access for members and MPs.

The following papers were circulated for information:

- Parliamentary Estate Masterplan Update
- Forward Work Programme

The next meeting would be on Thursday 15 July at 1pm.

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