

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Note of Discussion for the meeting held on 1 February 2021 at 4.30pm

[Virtual meeting held on Microsoft Teams]

Members present:

Sir Charles Walker (in the Chair)

Michael Fabricant
Colleen Fletcher
Sir Greg Knight
Mrs Pauline Latham

Mrs Maria Miller
Jessica Morden
Mark Tami
Giles Watling

Apologies: Marion Fellows

1. Informal Note

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

2. Fees and charges policy

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

3. Maintenance on the Parliamentary Estate

Tim Killip, Director of Parliamentary Maintenance, In-House Services and Strategic Estates, briefed the Committee.

Mr Killip provided an update on the work of the Parliamentary Maintenance Team.

The Chair recognised the importance of the work undertaken by Maintenance Services and asked how long it took for a reported issue to be resolved. Mr Killip said that staff aimed to be on call within four hours or less where the repair was deemed to be crucial, or a few days where it was of a lower priority. He gave the example of a recent incident where a network outage had caused the master time clock to fail; staff from Maintenance Services and the Digital Service had been working to address the issue within minutes.

A Member said that they had found the Parliamentary Maintenance Service Desk to be quick and responsive in dealing with maintenance issues, and asked to what degree Maintenance Services worked with the Serjeant at Arms and his team in providing support to Members' offices. Mr Killip said that the two worked very closely together. The Serjeant at Arms' team acted as the 'eyes and ears' for office maintenance issues. Faults could be reported to members of the team who would then raise them with colleagues in Maintenance Services.

A Member said that cleaning and maintenance were fundamental to how Parliament presented itself and recognised the recent work done by the cleaning team. The Member asked how Maintenance Services worked with other parts of the organisation to ensure that it recruited and retained a first-class team to maintain the highest of standards. Mr Killip said that the Maintenance Team sat within In-House Services and Estates so that both

he and James Turner, who oversaw cleaning services on the Estate, worked closely together on related issues under the direction of Isabel Coman, Director of IHSE.

A Member said that the Parliamentary Maintenance Service Desk facility was excellent and asked how many staff were employed in Maintenance Services and whether, given that the Palace was a heritage building, specialist skills had to be brought in from outside. Mr Killip said that the service employed around 137 staff, representing a range of skills and knowledge from apprentices to locksmiths, though where specialist skills were required but it was not economical to employ someone on a permanent basis expertise was brought in from outside. The Member then asked how the pandemic had impacted staffing and whether Mr Killip was confident that Maintenance Services could continue to respond effectively to the challenges that it presented. Mr Killip said that a rota system was put in place at the start of the pandemic and staffing levels were adjusted in response to changing circumstances and the introduction of the tier system. He added that he was confident that Maintenance Services had and would continue to respond to the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

4. Introduction to the Parliamentary Masterplan

Bev Weston, Director of Capital Investment, In-House Services and Estates, briefed the Committee.

Ms Weston gave a visual presentation introducing the Parliamentary Masterplan, the intention of which was to ensure that future decision-making on major projects affecting the Parliamentary Estate was informed by wider strategic decisions and context. The Masterplan was centred around three core principles: that parliamentary business was paramount; value for money was essential; and health, safety and security underpinned everything. Facilitated discussions had been held with senior stakeholders, and the Masterplan had been approved by the management structures of both Houses. It would be presented to both Commissions following engagement with Members via the Domestic Committees in due course.

The Chair welcomed the development of a Masterplan as it linked with the Committee's ongoing work on how Members could be better supported in carrying out their legislative functions.

A Member noted that, while supporting the business of Parliament was at the heart of the Masterplan, Members' business needs differed depending on whether they were a Minister, member of a select committee or a constituency MP, for example. Given this, there was a need for Members to assist the House Service in gaining a better understanding of what the business of Parliament constituted for those groups so that it could meet those needs. Ms Weston said that one area in which she hoped to gain a clearer insight was on the touchpoints identified by Members on the physical Estate that either helped or hindered them in their work. In response, the House Service would then be able to develop design strategies within the Masterplan to support improvements in this area. She added that engaging with Members was key to ensuring that the work and facilities of the House Service aligned with the needs of Members.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

5. Any other business

Commission decisions

The Committee **noted** the decisions of the House of Commons Commission for the meetings held on 14 December 2020 **[M64a]** and 11 January 2021 **[M64b]**.

Library – hours of service

The Chair said that he had **endorsed** a proposal to reduce the operating hours of the Members' Library's onsite service as usage had been very low in recent weeks as a result of the pandemic but with the expectation that services would be restored to normal levels when circumstances allowed.

The Committee will next meet on Monday 8 February 2021.