

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Note of Discussion for the meeting held on 8 March 2021 at 4.30pm

[Virtual meeting held on Microsoft Teams]

Members present:

Sir Charles Walker (in the Chair)

Michael Fabricant
Marion Fellows
Colleen Fletcher

Sir Greg Knight
Mrs Pauline Latham
Jessica Morden

Apologies: Mrs Maria Miller and Giles Watling

I. Informal Note

The Committee **agreed** the amended informal note of the meeting on 1 March 2021.

Matters arising

COVID-19 roadmap

The Chair reported on the roadmap approved by the Commission for the House to begin its transition out of lockdown. The policy was in-line with the government roadmap for the rest of the country and had been endorsed by Public Health England.

A Member asked if capacity in the Chamber would be increased as current social-distancing measures severely restricted the number of Members that could be physically present during proceedings. The Chair said that changes to the rules governing the use of the Chamber were a decision for Mr Speaker rather than the Commission.

The Chair asked if a short paper detailing the roadmap and the resumption of services could be produced for consideration at a future meeting so that the Committee could make recommendations to the Commission.

2. Priorities of the Administration Committee and the House Service

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

3. Room naming policy

The Committee considered a proposal from Mr Speaker to rename the Members' Tea Room in honour of Julia Clifford, a member of the catering team who had recently passed away, and a paper summarising the existing room naming policy.

4. Work of the Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit

John Angeli, Director of Parliamentary Audio-Video, and Mark O'Brien, Production Editor, Broadcasting Unit, briefed the Committee on the work of the Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit (PBU) over the past 12 months, the provision of British Sign Language at Prime Minister's Questions and for major statements, the possibility for subtitling and audio description in the Chamber, and the Commons' Annunciator system.

Mr Angeli thanked the Committee for its encouragement in recent months and noted the work of the PBU to increase accessibility for Members in their work. Mr O'Brien then gave a presentation on the introduction of BSL for PMQs and statements of national importance.

A Member asked if there was an option to view proceedings without the onscreen BSL interpreter. Mr O'Brien said that there was. Mr Angeli said that BSL interpretation of key business in the Chamber was being offered to broadcasters in the hope that they would provide it every day, particularly for PMQs, and discussions were ongoing with the BBC to see if there was interest. Mr O'Brien added that the current onscreen display was a significant improvement over previous ones and it was hoped that it would make the service more appealing to broadcasters. A provider for the service had been found following a procurement process carried out the previous year and the service employed several high-quality interpreters who were established in their field.

A Member asked if there was likely to be an interpreter present in the Chamber if required by a Member who was deaf or hard of hearing. Mr Angeli said that in these instances BSL interpretation was likely to be provided via a live video stream direct to the Member's mobile device while they were in the Chamber as it would be difficult to position an interpreter in a place where they could be easily seen in the Chamber.

The Chair asked for information on usage data of the BSL service. Mr O'Brien said that for the recent financial statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer there were 15,000 viewers for the standard feed and around 5,000 for the BSL version suggesting a good uptake of the service. The Chair asked if further data could be provided in future. A Member said that it would be useful to have data on the geographical location of viewers.

A Member asked if the scrolling tab at the bottom of the Annunciator screen could provide information on when an item of business in the Chamber was due to end and when votes were expected. Mr Angeli said that he was happy to look into the suggestion and liaise directly with the Member.

A Member commended the new web version of the Annunciator that allowed users to follow Chamber business from any location.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

5. Any other business

Decisions of the Commission

The Committee **noted** the decisions of the House of Commons Commission for the meeting held on 22 February.

The Committee will next meet on 15 March 2021 at 4.30pm