

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Note of Discussion for the meeting held on 15 March 2021 at 4.30pm

[Virtual meeting held on Microsoft Teams]

Members present:

Michael Fabricant
Marion Fellows
Colleen Fletcher

Mrs Pauline Latham
Mark Tami
Giles Watling

Apologies: Sir Greg Knight

In the absence of the Chair, Michael Fabricant was called to the chair.

1. Informal Note

The Committee **agreed** the amended informal note of the meeting on 8 March 2021.

2. COVID-19 roadmap

Marianne Cwynarski, Chair of the COVID-19 Planning Group, and John Owen, Director of Strategic Business Resilience, briefed the Committee on the House's roadmap out of lockdown and the resumption of services in the coming months.

Ms Cwynarski said that the roadmap followed the principles set out in the government's roadmap for England and reflected advice from Public Health England that was specific to Parliament. The safety of passholders and the continuation of parliamentary business remained a priority. The roadmap was based on the following principles: that where practicable working from home would continue to be encouraged until government guidance changed; strict limits on the numbers of people allowed on the Estate would remain in place until social distancing was removed, which was expected to be in June; services such as the gym and hairdresser would resume in April. Mr Owen emphasised that the dates set out in the roadmap were indicative and that the resumption of services would respond to changes to the guidance issued by the government and PHE, so it was possible that some services might resume earlier than initially thought and for the timetable to be revised after Easter.

[Sir Charles Walker resumed the chair.]

Decision

The Committee:

- **endorsed** the timetable for the return to the Estate and re-opening of services and facilities, noting that the dates may change depending on the Government's roadmap and the public health advice received; and
- **agreed** to derogate to the Chair any decisions that happen during recess or over a weekend, with a commitment to inform Committee Members by e-mail as soon as possible.

3. Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service

Mandy Eddolls, Managing Director of HR and Diversity, and Chris Sear, Director, Members' Services Team, briefed the Committee.

Ms Eddolls reported that the PHWS had transitioned from one focused on the provision of an occupational health service to a treatment and help service. Mr Sear then provided an overview of the health and wellbeing services available to Members and their staff and sought the views of the Committee on the delivery of those services. Feedback from Members suggested that the Employee Assistance Programme was targeted more at employees of the House Service and less at Members and their staff, so a marketing drive was planned to address this. Given the pressures many offices had faced over the past year, the training programme for dealing with distressed callers had been redeveloped, regular phone-ins with Members' staff continued to be held and it was hoped to extend these to Members if there was demand. There had also been a significant number of enquiries from Members and their offices on social media support, which was available through the Members' Support Service. Ms Eddolls added that the House was also working on finding better ways to gather feedback from Members' staff such as directly through focus groups to engage with a broader range of staff.

The Chair said that he would be chairing the first meeting of the new Members' Services User Group that week and recognised the importance of encouraging take-up of the HR and wellbeing services provided to Members by the House. He thanked Ms Eddolls, Mr Sear and their teams for their work.

A Member commented that a recent suicide awareness webinar that they had attended with their staff and which was provided through the House was very good. It was important to support Members' staff in their work and encourage them to take up the training on offer.

A Member said that staff in their office appreciated the weekly office manager phone-ins organised by the Members' Services Team. A staff member had joined their office during the pandemic and had never been on the Estate; it was vital that sufficient support was provided in these instances. The Member added that there was scope to better clarify where the services provided by the House sat in relation to others such as those provided by IPSA. Ms Eddolls said that building a better relationship between the House and IPSA was a priority and that a member of staff was currently on secondment to IPSA to assist in this area. She added that a support service drop-in centre would be provided in Portcullis House for Members and their staff. Mr Sear said that new starters received a documentation pack and were invited to a new starter event as part of their induction. It was, however, recognised that the turnover of Members' staff was high, with between 20 and 40 new members of staff starting each week. He recognised that there was further work to be done on communicating the services provided by the House and IPSA and how they functioned in relation to each other.

A Member asked if a stand promoting the PHWS could be placed at the top of the escalators in the Atrium of Portcullis House as it was an effective way of engaging with Members. Ms Eddolls said that there were plans to host a promotional stand in the Atrium.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

The Committee will next meet on 22 March 2021 at 4.30pm