

HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION**Minutes**

Tuesday 14 September 2021

Attendance

- Lord Speaker (Chairman)
- Mathew Duncan (external member)
- Baroness Evans of Bowes Park
- Lord German
- Lord Hill of Oareford
- Lord Judge
- Lord Newby
- Nora Senior (external member)
- Baroness Smith of Basildon
- Lord Touhig
- Lord Vaux of Harrowden

Apologies were received from Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Deputy Chairman). Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments, was in attendance. The meeting was held in the Moses Room.

The Lord Speaker informed the Commission that the panel interviewing candidates for the new position of Chief Operating Officer had made a unanimous choice from a strong field.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Commission **agreed** the record of discussion of the previous meeting on 31 August 2021.

2. R&R Quarterly Report: Q1 2021-22

C/21-22/33; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Letter to the Lord Speaker regarding R&R

Mathew Duncan, Chair, House of Lords Audit Committee
HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Mathew Duncan declared as an interest that the Chief Executive Officer of his employer (Tideway) was married to the Chief Executive Officer of the Restoration & Renewal Sponsor Body.

Mike Brough (Director of Programme and Assurance) and Gurdip Juty (Director of Finance and Corporate Services) of the Restoration & Renewal Sponsor Body presented the Q1 report, and provided an oral update on work underway to consider the feasibility and impact of the 'continued presence' option. Whether this option

should be pursued further would come to both Commissions for decision early in 2022.

Issues discussed included the following:

- The QI report. The shorter format of the QI report was welcomed, but the report could still provide a clearer sense of whether progress was being made.
- The first gateway review carried out by the Government's Infrastructure and Projects Authority.
- How a design freeze in early 2022 - a snapshot in time to enable a detailed and costed plan to be delivered in early 2023 - would relate to the current uncertainty around the route for the Programme (full decant of the Palace, or a continued presence). Mike Brough said that if the continued presence option remained in the Programme beyond early 2022, the timetable for the detailed and costed plan would need to be re-evaluated.
- How a design freeze could be implemented before intrusive surveys were carried out. Mike Brough noted that the Programme had been into about 1000 Palace rooms for condition surveys, and other surveys were beginning in the coming weeks and months. Those surveys would inform the design, both before and after the design freeze.
- The Programme Mandate for decanting the House of Commons during the works, which was being prepared by In-House Services & Estates. There was considerable concern in the Commission about how the question of a continued presence would be resolved by the two Houses, and the need for a solution to be found as quickly as possible.
- How decisions to be taken by the Commissions about the Programme's funding would relate to the decision on continued presence. Gurdip Juty informed the Commission that the funding decisions for the Programme would be taken later than the usual cycle of decisions on the Houses' budgets, in order to follow the decision on continued presence.
- When a revised plan for the Lords decant solution would be brought to the Commission.
- The savings made by the Programme in the year to date and further savings identified for the current financial year. There was discussion about whether these represented true cost savings, rather than delays or deferrals. Gurdip Juty confirmed that the Sponsor Body was challenging the Delivery Authority on this point; decisions had been made to delay recruitments which would mean a saving across Phase I of the Programme.

The Commission requested information about the cost of the work being done on the continued presence option. Commission members expressed concern about whether enough was being done to resolve the issue of the continued presence, and wanted more transparency and clarity. The Lord Speaker requested ongoing work outside the Commission to interrogate progress on the Programme and how it could be supported. A meeting would be convened for Commission members to discuss the Programme with the Lords members of the Sponsor Body. A Commission member also asked to see the recommendations of the recent R&R governance review.

3. **The Commission's role**

Susannah Street, Secretary to the House of Lords Commission
C/21-22/34; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Commission priorities

Susannah Street, Secretary to the House of Lords Commission and James Whittle,
External Management Review Implementation Lead
C/21-22/35; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Susannah Street introduced the papers. The Commission discussed its role and its priorities for its work. It was **agreed** that the Lord Speaker and Clerk of the Parliaments, as Chairs of the Commission and the Management Board respectively, would begin work on a Memorandum of Understanding or governance framework to clarify their relationship. Some work would also be done to scope what would be required in order to place the Commission on a statutory footing, for the Commission's information; there were different views within the Commission about whether that course would be desirable.

New mechanisms would be put in place to allow the Chairs of the Audit Committee, Finance Committee and Services Committee to raise or comment on issues. Interest was expressed in exploring how the Commission or certain of its members could be involved with business and financial plans earlier in the planning cycle, and how the Commission's agendas could be more focused on risks and key priorities rather than topics 'reserved' to the Commission or uncontentious updates. The Commission **agreed** to hold annual away-days with the Management Board, and work would be undertaken to build stronger links between the Commission and Board.

4. **Membership Change to the Audit Committee**

The Lord Speaker
C/21-22/36 with Annex; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Commission **agreed** to appoint Lord Cromwell to the Audit Committee until 14 September 2027, with immediate effect. It recorded its thanks to Baroness Fritchie, whose term had expired.

5. **Any Other Business and Next Meeting**

There was some discussion about wearing of face-coverings on the Estate and clarity and reinforcement of the rules and expectations, and a request that the ability of members to bring guests onto the Estate be reconsidered.

The Clerk of the Parliaments answered questions about the refurbishment of Fielden House, and about a recent security incident. He would provide an update on the external works on Victoria Tower.

The Lord Speaker informed the Commission that, as agreed at the previous meeting, he had discussed remote participation with the Senior Deputy Speaker as Chair of the Additional Support Group. There was little flexibility under the new standing order

and a change to it was not proposed. A report on the operation of the new scheme would come to the Commission before the end of the year.

The next meeting was scheduled for 19 October 2021, and a provisional meeting would also be arranged during the conference recess.

Also circulated for information:

- **Clerk of the Parliaments' Monthly Update**
Clerk of the Parliaments
C/21-22/37; RESTRICTED

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