

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Note of Discussion for the meeting held on 7 June 2021 at 4.30pm

[Virtual meeting held on Microsoft Teams]

Members present:

Sir Charles Walker (in the Chair)

Michael Fabricant
Marion Fellows
Sir Greg Knight

Mrs Pauline Latham
Mrs Maria Miller

Apologies: Jessica Morden.

1. Informal Note

The Committee **agreed** the informal note of the meeting on 24 May 2021.

2. Broadcasting on the Parliamentary Estate

Alasdair Rendall, Head of Media Relations, briefed the Committee.

Mr Rendall said that GB News, a new domestic broadcaster, would be launching on 13 June.

The Chair said that he would write to the Chair of the Lords Services Committee if the Committee was happy to agree to the use of the broadcasting points.

A Member sought assurances that any broadcaster filming in Central Lobby was first required to seek the permission of anyone filmed so that Members were not surreptitiously recorded. Mr Rendall said that for Central Lobby the rules on filming stated that recording could not take place without the permission of the individual recorded for interview and had to be confined to that day's business.

Decision

The Committee:

- **noted** the update; and
- **agreed** to the interim and non-exclusive use of the Central Lobby broadcasting point and House of Commons filming points by GB News until the outcome of the work on the ownership and management of filming points.

3. COVID-19 update

A full discussion on this item was deferred to the next meeting after the Government's announcement on the national roadmap.

4. Hybrid Working Trial

Mandy Eddolls, Managing Director, People and Culture Team, and Patsy Richards, Decant Director, briefed the Committee.

Ms Eddolls said that the aim of the trial was to ensure there was no diminution in the level of service provided to Members and that the staff with whom they interacted with directly would still be available to them. Decisions on the feasibility of staff working from home would be taken by Managing Directors and these would typically be professional services staff with whom Members had little or no interaction. Allowing staff to work from home would ensure that the House Service remained competitive with other employers and a desirable place to work. It would also open up the recruitment pool more widely to other regions of the UK and would generate a significant saving on office space and income generation by allowing the House to sublet buildings in the area. The trial would be kept under review and would be stopped if it was not found to be beneficial to the House as an organisation.

A Member noted that many businesses were reducing office space considerably at the present time and asked by what percentage the House would be reducing its office space and to what extent it would move to a more agile working pattern in better utilising that space. Ms Eddolls said that there was varying appetite across teams for hybrid working but that it would be kept under review. In some areas staff office space on the Estate was found to be underoccupied. Buildings had also been redesigned to better reflect the ‘new normal’ offering spaces to better reflect different work needs. No-one would be forced to work from home if they found it difficult or did not wish to do so and staff would be expected to be onsite for collaborative and developmental work.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

5. Parliamentary Switchboard Service

Sean House, Head of Transformation; James Turner, Director of Customer Experience and Service Delivery; and David Newsome, Customer Director, In-House Services and Estates, briefed the Committee.

Mr House said that following the Committee’s helpful feedback in November, better quality assurance controls had been implemented in the management of the service. He now sought the Committee’s views on the future of the service as the current contract was due to expire which allowed 12 months to define and resource a new service.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

6. Any other business

Commission updates

A Member said that the decisions of the House of Commons Commission that were circulated to the Committee among its papers lacked detail and asked if some background information could be provided on them, particularly where they were pertinent to the Committee’s discussions. The Chair suggested inviting the Clerk of the House to a future meeting to provide an overview of the work of the Commission. Several Members welcomed this proposal. Robert Cope (Clerk of Domestic Committees, in attendance) suggested a regular verbal update from the Chair on the work of the Commission.

Correspondence with the Leader of the House

The Committee noted correspondence between the Chair and the Leader of the House, dated 25 May and 27 May, on divisions of the House.

Decisions of the Commission

The Committee **noted** the decisions of the House of Commons Commission of 17 May.

Forthcoming meetings

The Committee **agreed** to meet at the later time of 5.30pm on 14 June after the Government's statement on the COVID-19 roadmap.

The Committee **noted** that there would be no meeting on 21 June.

The Committee will next meet on 14 June 2021 at 5.30pm