



SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 21 October at 1pm in Committee Room G and on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Lord Touhig (Chair)
Lord Ashton of Hyde
Lord Borwick
Lord Clark of Windermere
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Deech
Lord Judge
Baroness Morris of Bolton
Lord Stoneham of Droxford
Baroness Wheeler

Together with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

Carl Woodall (Director of Facilities) was in attendance. John Owen (Director of Strategic Business Resilience) attended for item 4; Chris Sexton (Chief of Staff, R&R Sponsor Body) attended for items 5 & 6; Clementine Brown (Head of Parliamentary Engagement, Sponsor Body) and John Gullick (Head of Stakeholder Engagement, Delivery Authority) attended for item 5; John Thursfield (Parliament Relations Manager, Sponsor Body) and James Tringham (Head of Engagement (External Relations), Sponsor Body) attended for item 6; Patrick Vollmer (SRO for the Archives Relocation Programme) attended for item 7; and Ryan Auvache (Head of Programme Logistics Requirements) attended for item 8.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting, and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. Chair's Notices S/21-22/29 HIGHLY RESTRICTED

The Committee received updates on: the new traffic management system; the flu vaccine clinic; hybrid meeting rooms; scaffolding on the West Front; and electrical vehicle charging.

Members questioned the time it was taking for the electrical vehicle charging business case to be approved. The Finance Department was working with the Facilities Department to ensure the plans were sufficiently challenged and offered the best value for money. The Chair explained to the Committee that he had received representations

from members for alternative options to be considered. The Clerk of the Parliaments committed to providing an update at the next meeting.

The Committee was informed that it had not been possible for COVID booster vaccinations to be provided alongside flu vaccinations at the on-site clinic. The take up of the flu vaccine for members and House staff had been good, with only a small number of on-site doses remaining for the last two days of the clinic and over 60% of vouchers for the vaccine claimed.

4. COVID-19 Update S/21-22/30 UNRESTRICTED

The Commission had met on Tuesday and discussed the ways in which it may respond to changing pressures as a result of COVID over the winter. The Commission discussed how it could take decisions more quickly if required and what the key triggers for those decisions would be. It was agreed that the Chair of Services would be kept up to date on the risk supply chain problems had on the provision of services. He would also take decisions, in consultation with Black Rod's Departments and the COVID group, on requests from members who wished to bring more than six guests onto the estate.

Member attendance on the estate continued to increase, with an average of around 450 members on-site over the last week. There had been positive test results on the estate; the Committee was reassured this was to be expected and levels reflected the national picture. The COVID group remained confident in the measures in place on the estate and their effectiveness in limiting transmission.

5. Restoration and Renewal: Survey Progress Update and Ground Investigation Survey Proposal S/21-22/31 RESTRICTED

The Committee was informed that to date over 30 Restoration and Renewal (R&R) surveys had taken place, the majority of which had been visual-only surveys. The survey work was critical to the production of a detailed and costed plan that would form the business case due to be put before both Houses in 2023.

The further surveys set out in the paper would be procured using the R&R Surveys Framework, which would continue to be used for further surveys throughout the life of the project.

The Ground Investigations Surveys would be used to find out what makes up the land under the palace including soil types, ground water and gas, possible ground contamination, the state of the foundations and possible ground movement. The work would inform planning consents and improve cost information. Each borehole would take two to three weeks but could be made good in 24 hours if required. The timing and location of works would be agreed with House Authorities. Boreholes had recently been used by the Victoria Tower project and learnings were expected to be shared with the R&R team.

The Committee took note of the update and endorsed the Ground Investigation Survey proposal.

6. Restoration and Renewal: Parliamentary and Public Engagement Update S/21-22/32 RESTRICTED

The paper set out the results of the summer engagement with members and passholders, and the wider public. It was planned that further engagement would take place with members during November, with exhibitions in a number of locations on the estate. On 3, 8, 9, and 10 November there would be an exhibition in Royal Gallery. It would provide an overview of the scope of the programme and the proposed timescales, considerations in the sympathetic renovation of the palace and improvements to accessibility. Private briefings would also be available, as well as a virtual exhibition for those members not on site.

The Chair noted that with the Services Committee's responsibility for member services it would want to continue to engage with the programme on all matters that would impact on the delivery of member services.

It was confirmed that this would not be the only point of engagement and members would continue to be able to feed in ideas beyond this round of engagement, including after the January design baseline. The design would continue to develop for a number of years to come. The programme had worked with internal communications teams to ensure the times and locations of the exhibitions would be widely publicised to members.

Following a question from a member it was confirmed that the programme had no remit for exploring locations outside London and it was working towards delivering the restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster for both Houses.

It was agreed that an opportunity would be arranged for members to see the exhibition before it was open to the wider membership.

7. Archives Relocation Programme Update S/21-22/33 RESTRICTED

Iterations of the Archives Relocation Programme had been around since 2015. The current SRO took over in 2019 and set out to define and agree the programme mandate. The Accounting Officers agreed the mandate of the programme: to reduce the risk to the collection and people; move the collection out of the Victoria Tower by summer 2025 for Restoration and Renewal (R&R); and to enable continued access to the collection during that time. Additionally, the programme would consider long term solutions for the location of the Archive and how to increase its usage.

As part of the Outline Business Case process the programme considered various options for owned and leased facilities and the option of partnerships. When assessed the highest scoring option was a partnership with the National Archives in Kew. The partnership would make the collection more accessible to the public and allow exhibitions to be held both in the Palace and at Kew. The option would provide career progression options for staff who would be transferred to the National Archives under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. The ownership of the collection would remain with Parliament to allow the Clerk of the Parliaments to continue to discharge their statutory duties.

Following discussion with senior political office holders the programme had looked at the options for retaining a small on-site collection. The paper set out three options to do so and asked for the Committee's steer. It was not within the gift of the programme to deliver any of the options, but it proposed to recommend an option to the Chair of the R&R Sponsor Body.

The Committee was supportive of the partnership with the National Archives and felt that the collection was best kept together in one place with the option of holding exhibitions in the Palace, leaving any decision on the future use of the Victoria Tower to be part of the R&R process. The Chair thanked the SRO for all his work to get the programme to where it was.

8. Off Site Screening and Consolidation Centre Contract Renewal S/21-22/34 RESTRICTED

The Off Site Screening and Consolidation Centre (OSCC) received all deliveries destined for the estate, it was here that items could be screen and then sent on to parliament. This system was not only important for safety but reduced the number of vehicles that visited the estate. The services of the OSCC were also used by other organisations with a similar security profile, bringing in a source of revenue. Costs and revenues were split 70:30 between the Commons and the Lords.

The original contract had been in place since November 2010 and had been extended to November 2022. Ahead of the contract ending a procurement process was due to take place. The Crown Commercial Service Framework would be used and the tender would include changes to future proof the service, including the use of a fleet of electric vehicles.

9. Fire Safety Awareness Training completion figures S/21-22/35 RESTRICTED

Due to the nature of the estate and particularly the Palace it was important that all members completed their fire safety training annually. The module had now been available for over a year meaning members who had completed it last year were no longer certified if they had not re-taken the module.

The Chair agreed to ensure communications went out to all members to encourage them to complete the training. He also undertook to contact non-affiliated members directly.

10. Estates Works Update S/21-22/36 UNRESTRICTED

The Committee took note of the update. The Director of Facilities requested that the whips and convenor put forward members for the User Groups in Millbank House and Old Palace Yard.

11. Oral briefing on summer flooding

On both 25 July and 5 October Millbank House Basement had flooded along with a number of other buildings on the estate. On both occasions the flooding was caused by excessive rainfall over a short period of time. As a result In House Services and Estates had commissioned a technical report into the flood risk of all parliamentary buildings.

Following previous flooding in Millbank House, flood mitigation measures had been designed and agreed and the work was due to begin in November, it would mean that the basement and Café would not be accessible until at least March.

12. Forward Work Programme S/21-22/37 UNRESTRICTED

The Committee took note of the update.

13. AOB

Members of the Committee would be contacted next week to provide views on how the Committee would meet and receive its circulations in future.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 18 November at 1pm.

Jen Mills
Clerk

HLServicesCommittee@parliament.uk