



## HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

### Minutes

Tuesday 16 November 2021, 11:30am

#### Attendance

- Lord Speaker (Chair)
- Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Deputy Chair)
- 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

Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments, was in attendance.

#### 1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Commission **agreed** the record of discussion of the meeting on 19 October.

#### 2. Support for Members in declining health

Carl Woodall, Director of Facilities  
C/21-22/43 with Annex; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Carl Woodall presented the paper, which arose out of recommendations in the Ellenbogen Report (published in July 2019) and the Steering Group for Change's Ellenbogen Review Report (published in June 2021). The paper proposed that the occupational health function within the Parliamentary Health & Wellbeing Service (PHWS) should be used to provide guidance to and support for members in declining health. Awareness of the services the PHWS provided should be raised, and access to the PHWS should be made more transparent to encourage self-referral by those who might benefit from the services it offered. The paper noted that the PHWS would only discuss a member's health with the member themselves.

The paper invited the Commission to provide feedback, and then a further paper would follow. Commission members welcomed the paper and supported the proposal to build on the PHWS' services and to provide training on how to deal with difficult situations that could arise. The Commission also supported a proposal to explore referral routes directly to local NHS services. Progress with promoting the PHWS' services, the provision of training for supportive conversations, and the impact on outcomes would be reviewed every three months.

### 3. R&R Quarter 2 Report C/21-22/44; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

#### **R&R: Business Case Assessment Approach**

Amanda Colledge, Business Case Director, R&R Sponsor Body  
C/21-22/45; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Sarah Johnson, Chief Executive Officer of the R&R Sponsor Body, presented the Q2 report covering July to September 2021. She noted the busy period ahead: in January the Commission would see the Sponsor Body's first draft assessment of the Programme's emerging cost and schedule, in terms of potential ranges based on an 'essential' scheme with a full decant from the Palace, and would consider the Sponsor Body's assessment of the option of keeping a 'continued presence' in the Palace during the works. The Commission would be provided in December with more information on options for the House of Lords decant venue, and the Programme's estimate for the next financial year would come to the Commission in February.

*[Restricted Access – More Information].*

Commission members commented and asked questions.

- Ms Johnson confirmed that the Do Minimum Option (Option 0) for the Lords decant venue, which was unviable and would no longer be considered, did not include any provision that could be considered non-essential.
- A Commission member queried how delays to the completion of intrusive surveys in the Palace would impact on the accuracy of the emerging cost and schedule.
- The creation of the new joint R&R Steering Group was noted, although one Commission member was concerned that it might not be able to speak authoritatively for the Houses.
- Commission members expressed frustration with programme language which they found insufficiently clear.
- A Commission member asked about the balance between permanent cost savings, and savings which resulted from delays.
- *[Restricted Access – More Information].*

The Commission expressed that it was anxious to proceed with the Programme and concerned about any actions which could delay the works beginning on site, such as any delays that could be incurred through further discussions about the 'continued presence' option. Action needed to be taken before an accident occurred.

Amanda Colledge, Business Case Director of the R&R Sponsor Body, presented the paper on the business case assessment approach. The paper set out what evidence would be brought to the Sponsor Body and the Houses to support the selection of a scheme option. Elements to be included would cover how far the options met the strategic objectives and requirements agreed by the Commissions, the benefits that each would provide, the risks associated with each, and the financial consequences of the two schemes, including the financial impact on the two Houses going forward. The Programme would only value direct financial benefits, and not for example seek to put a value on the benefit of the Palace remaining the home of Parliament. Being clear about this methodology was important so that the Houses understood the basis on which the business case was being developed.

A Commission member argued that there were elements of the Palace scheme options which would need to be approached with a full benefit risk cost assessment; Ms Colledge noted that there would need to be clarity about the additional cost of interventions above the 'do essential' requirements.

Members of the Commission had found the paper difficult to understand and were not comfortable to approve it (and thereby note the assessment approach and endorse the benefits principles); instead they **noted** the paper and requested that a clearer precis should follow to allow the paper to be approved by correspondence.

#### 4. **Archives Relocation Programme Update**

Patrick M Vollmer, Director of Library Services and Senior Responsible Owner for the Programme

C/21-22/46 with 3 Annexes; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Patrick Vollmer presented the paper. The Programme's purpose was to reduce the risk to the Parliamentary Archives, and the Archive's staff and visitors, from fire, water, failure of environmental controls or security incidents. The Archives were housed in a 98.5m stone tower with no disaster recovery lift. To reduce the risk, and increase the use of the Archives, it was proposed that Parliament should enter into a partnership with The National Archives (TNA) which would see the collection relocated to TNA's facility at Kew. The proposals were supported by the domestic committees of both Houses.

Mr Vollmer had appeared at the House of Commons Commission the previous day. The Commons Commission had supported the partnership, and requested that Mr Vollmer should recommend to the R&R Sponsor Body that a space be readied in the Victoria Tower to return a proportion or the entirety of the original Acts to the Victoria Tower after R&R, depending on the extent to which risks from fire, water, failure of environmental controls and security could be mitigated. Mr Vollmer noted that the question of the future use of the Victoria Tower was not for him to determine: if the Lords Commission was in agreement with the Commons Commission he would write to the Sponsor Body to ask them to draw up plans and explain how the risks could be managed, but decisions would follow later.

Commission members expressed strong support for the relocation of the Archives, emphasising the need for better safety for and better public access to the collection. The Commission thanked the Programme for finding such a sensible solution. The Commission **endorsed** the partnership with TNA and the relocation of the Archives, and **noted** the request made by the House of Commons Commission.

#### 5. **EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly**

Lord Kinnoull, Chair, European Affairs Committee, and Jake Vaughan, Reading Clerk and Head of the Overseas Office

C/21-22/47; RESTRICTED

The Commission **noted** the progress in establishing the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, and **endorsed** Lords participation in the Assembly subject to the

agreement of the House. A motion would be brought forward in the House, accompanied by a short report from the Commission based on the paper. The Commission **agreed** to add the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly to the list of Parliamentary delegations in the *Guide to Financial Support for Members*, and **noted** the funding that would be necessary to support the work of the Lords delegation. The Commission **confirmed** that its endorsement was required for the Lords to help form and participate in any new international inter-parliamentary body.

**6. Update on the work of the Services Committee**

Lord Touhig, Chair of the Services Committee  
C/21-22/48; HIGHLY RESTRICTED

Lord Touhig presented the paper. He noted the challenges caused to the Catering and Retail Services team by recent COVID-19 mitigation measures. The Commission **noted** the update.

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

Lord Vaux provided an oral update on the work of the Finance Committee, including its planned work on R&R funding.

The Lord Speaker noted that he had been in touch with a number of the Commission's members, and chairs of each of the main groups in the House, regarding the allowances system. This followed representations and suggestions for change that had been made to him by members of the House. He reported back to the Commission that while there was a recognition that the current arrangements presented difficulties for some members, in those discussions the view had been unanimous that it was not an opportune time for a substantive review of the system and that no further consideration of the allowances system should be undertaken at this point.

The Commission discussed the 20% reduction in bookable room capacities that was being applied due to COVID-19. The reduction did not apply to the Chamber, Grand Committee and Committees, and the Commission **agreed** that it also did not apply to party/group meetings.

A Commission member raised a letter from the Chair of the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee about the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (Designated Sites under Section 128) Order 2021 (SI 2021/1022). The Home Office would be asked to respond to the Committee Chair.

The next meeting was scheduled for 14 December.

Also circulated for information:

- **Clerk of the Parliaments' Monthly Update**  
Simon Burton, Clerk of the Parliaments  
C/21-22/49; RESTRICTED

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