



## **ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

**PUBLIC NOTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 JUNE 2007 AT 3.45 PM  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 16**

### **Members present:**

Mr Frank Doran, in the Chair

Janet Anderson  
Mr Simon Burns  
Mr Brian H Donohoe  
Helen Jones

Mr Greg Knight  
David Lepper  
Mr Andrew Robathan  
John Thurso

Apologies: Mr Bob Ainsworth, Mr Christopher Chope, Derek Conway, Frank Dobson, Mr Neil Gerrard, Mr Kevan Jones, Pete Wishart.

In attendance: Malcolm Jack, Clerk of the House and Chief Executive of the House Service (for item 3)  
Joan Miller, Director of PICT, and Matthew Taylor, Director of Operations, PICT (for item 4)  
Bob Twigger, Office of the Clerk (for items 3 to 6)

### **1. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT AGENDA**

**The Committee agreed to the draft agenda.**

### **2. INFORMAL NOTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**The Committee agreed the informal notes of the meeting on 22 May.**

The Chairman reported that he and other Members had visited a pilot of the new access control system.

### 3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Committee held a discussion with Malcolm Jack, Clerk of the House of Commons and Chief Executive of the House of Commons Service, considered the outcome of the 2007 survey of services and, pursuant to their decision of 13th March, considered Members' priority access to services.

#### Survey of services

Issues arising during discussion on the survey of services included:

- the good response rate to the survey that had been achieved from Members and their staff
- the courtesy of staff and contractors, and the need to ensure equal treatment of male and female Members
- cleaning standards (Members felt that these had improved recently in most locations.)
- the bureaucracy involved in handling Members' allowances and expenses
- internal processes for investigating leaks to the media
- access control between public and private areas of the Palace
- arrangements for vehicles leaving the Estate through the Carriage Gates.

The Clerk said that he was pleased to be establishing a rapport with the Committee, which he was keen to sustain through regular communication. The Board of Management had already begun to implement a programme of learning from the survey, which held no surprises but nevertheless raised matters of real concern to Members. An initiative he had introduced was under way to share best practice between those parts of the House service which had regular contact with Members and which were praised in the survey for their customer service, and those parts which had less regular contact of this kind. **The Committee noted the 2007 survey of services.**

#### Members' priority access to services

The Committee considered options for extending Members' priority access to services around the Estate. Issues arising during the discussion included:

- the time wasted by Members in waiting for services which could have been used instead to pursue parliamentary duties
- the growing numbers of Officers of the House, of other House staff and of Members' staff, with whom facilities were being shared
- the inadequate enforcement of current regulations on access to facilities such as the Members-only lift and telephone cubicles
- the fact that existing Members' priority services, such as the taxi queue and Members' priority till in the souvenir shop, appeared to operate without difficulty
- the layout of the Despatch Box coffee kiosk as a key factor in its overcrowding
- the general culture of Portcullis House.

The Clerk informed the Committee that all Officers of the House had been reminded that access to facilities shared with Members was provided so they could carry out their duties, and that they should use these facilities with discretion. He would also be taking up detailed points raised at the meeting with relevant Heads of Department.

On a proposal from Mr Burns, **the Committee agreed to recommend to the Speaker:**

- **that Members, given the pressure on their diaries, should have the opportunity to take priority over other customers at all service points throughout the Commons part of the Estate.**
- **that signage at service points should make it clear that Members had priority over other customers at all times, and**
- **that existing access regulations should be better enforced by security staff.**

**The Committee agreed to send a notice to all Members to remind them of their responsibility for making sure their own staff abide by the access regulations.**

#### **4. PARLIAMENTARY ICT**

The Committee considered plans to open a PICT drop-in centre in Norman Shaw South. Joan Miller and Matthew Taylor described this face-to-face service for Members and their staff, which would open on 2 July, and which would be widely publicised. **The Committee welcomed the plans, and asked the clerk to arrange a visit to the new facility before it opened.**

Other issues raised during a more general discussion included Members' mailbox size, online petitioning (an issue being considered by the Procedure Committee), and a new PICT newsletter for Members.

#### **5. USE OF PORTCULLIS HOUSE ATRIUM**

The Chairman considered two requests for use of the Portcullis House atrium for dance performances. The Chairman declared an interest as secretary of the All-Party Parliamentary Dance Group. He noted that musical and dance events had been allowed in the past, although advice from the Serjeant at Arms was that any event should have a parliamentary connection. Issues raised included:

- the need to avoid causing disruption to those working in Portcullis House, including those using the atrium for meetings. This would mean that performances should normally be limited to outside working hours.
- the need to set guidelines for how often the atrium might be used for performances.

**The Committee agreed to ask the Serjeant at Arms to draft guidance for the use of the Portcullis House atrium for performances, for consideration at a future meeting. The Committee also agreed to recommend to the Speaker that a proposed performance with a fixed date in July should be allowed to take place, but only outside working hours.**

## **6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman reported that a Member had put a written parliamentary question to the House of Commons Commission asking if the House would be participating in 'Lights Out London', an event inviting households and organisations across London to turn off all lights and non-essential appliances between 9 and 10 pm on Thursday 21st June. Officials were considering what could safely be done without causing inconvenience to those on the Estate during the event.

## **7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

**The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on Tuesday 26 June 2007 at 3.30pm in Committee Room 16.**