



HOUSE OF LORDS COMMISSION

MINUTES

Wednesday 12 July 2017

ATTENDANCE

- Lord Speaker (Chairman)
- Baroness Doocey
- Baroness Evans of Bowes Park
- Liz Hewitt (external member)
- Lord Hope of Craighead
- Lord Laming
- Lord McFall of Alcluith
- Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall
- Lord Newby
- Baroness Smith of Basildon
- Lord Wakeham

Ed Ollard, Clerk of the Parliaments, was in attendance. Apologies were received from Mathew Duncan (external member).

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Lord Speaker welcomed the members of the Commission to the second meeting of the Parliament.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 28 JUNE

The Commission **agreed** the record of discussions from the meeting of the House of Lords Commission on 28 June.

3. FIRE SAFETY

Note from the Director General of the House of Commons
C/17-19/03 RESERVED

Ian Ailles, the Director General of the House of Commons and Senior Responsible Owner for R&R, presented his paper on Fire Safety (C/17-19/03 RESERVED).

Ian Ailles explained that Fire Safety work was at the heart of the Restoration and Renewal programme and that it had a renewed significance in the light of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. He also explained that lots of work was talking place to improve fire safety in the basements. Members of the Commission discussed fire exit signage, the need to improve access to and from the building for those who are disabled and the possibility of refusing access to visitors to the Palace. Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall asked for an update from the Government on their position with regard to the Restoration and Renewal programme and Baroness Evans of Bowes Park undertook to provide an oral update at the next Commission meeting.

Lord Laming explained that the Services Committee would be examining a more in-depth paper on fire safety and fire drills in the near future and it was agreed that this paper should also come to the Commission.

[More information – Restricted Access]

The Commission **took note** of the paper.

4. UPDATE FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Presentation from Liz Hewitt, Chair of the Audit Committee
C/17–19/04 RESERVED

Liz Hewitt, Chair of the Audit Committee, gave an Audit Committee progress report presentation.

Liz Hewitt explained that the annual maintenance budget is £18m and that the Audit Committee conducts regular audits of works projects and makes recommendations. She expressed frustration that following one such audit, when asked about actions against the vast majority of recommendations contained in a report which had not been completed, an official had replied that they would have to ‘get back to her’. She added that the official in question had agreed to provide a more substantive update by Friday.

The Commission discussed the wider issues associated with the estates department and Liz said that in her opinion, the main issues were performance management of staff and talent retention. She also said that these problems did not present a compelling case for the continuance and success of the Restoration and Renewal programme.

Liz explained that both the House of Commons Audit Committee and the House of Lords Audit Committee should have a role in continued works until the Delivery Authority is established. The Clerk of the Parliaments explained that the amount spent on estates has increased threefold in recent times and acknowledged that there is a concern about our ability to manage larger projects.

Baroness Smith of Basildon said that the Commission was failing in its duty if things do not improve with regard to the performance of the estates department. Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall said that ‘fire-fighting’ is not good enough and the Commission was in agreement that things needed to improve. Lord McFall of Alcluith suggested that Matthew Duncan be asked to meet officials from the estates department to investigate how things could be improved. The Lord Speaker suggested that he should first meet with Matthew Duncan and Liz Hewitt to discuss the matter further. The Commission agreed with this course of action.

The Commission **took note** of the paper.

5. MEMBERS FINANCE SCHEME

Paper from Jonathan Smith, Head of Finance
C/17-19/05 RESERVED

Jonathan Smith, Head of Finance, presented his paper on proposed changes to the Members' Finance Scheme. He explained that the proposals were as follows:

- to agree that appearing as a witness before a committee does constitute a qualifying attendance;
- for the Peers in Schools programme, to agree that the Lord Speaker's Office is able to approve each travel expense requests on their own merit after considering the locations, directness of route, duration and cost; and
- to agree to a pilot regarding Members being able to claim the Reduced Daily Allowance for work relating to the Education Service when the House is not sitting.

The Commission discussed the proposals and the wider issues of members being able to claim travel expenses for parliamentary-related work in recesses and the fact that members are only able to claim the reduced daily allowance for visits or meetings away from Westminster.

[More information – Restricted Access]

The Commission **took note** of the paper and **agreed** all three proposed changes.

6. CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

Paper and presentation from Rob Grieg, Director of the Parliamentary Digital Service
C/17-19/06 RESERVED

Rob Grieg, Director of the Parliamentary Digital Service, and Paul Chichester, Director of Cyber Operations, National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), gave a presentation on Cyber Security.

[More information – Restricted Access]

The Lord Speaker thanked Rob Grieg for his work and on behalf of the Commission wished him all the best for the future.

The Commission **took note** of the paper and presentation

7. SECURITY REVIEWS UPDATE

Oral update from the Clerk of the Parliaments

[More information – Restricted Access]

8. COMMISSION FORWARD PLAN

The Commission **took note** of the forward plan.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A question was asked about members not wearing a tie in the chamber and the Lord Speaker explained that there were no formal rules relating to this practice. The Clerk of the Parliaments undertook to provide more information to the Party leaders on this matter.

Baroness Smith of Basildon questioned the second meeting in December and the Secretary explained its relevance in the financial planning cycle.

The Lord Speaker informed the Commission that the next meeting would be on **Wednesday 13 September at 10.30 am in Committee Room G.**

12 July 2017

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