



HOUSE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

17 November 2015

Present:

L. Campbell-Savours
L. Cope of Berkeley
L. Hope of Craighead
B. D'Souza (Chairman)
L. Laming
B. McDonagh
B. Smith of Basildon
B. Stowell of Beeston
L. Wakeham
L. Wallace of Tankerness

Liz Hewitt (acting Chair of the Audit Committee)

together with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

The Finance Director and the Director of Public Information were in attendance.

Apologies:

B. Manzoor
L. Stirrup

BRIEFING ON RISK REPORTING

Liz Hewitt, acting Chairman of the Audit Committee, briefed the Committee on the House of Lords system of risk management and answered questions.

1. MINUTES OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE 2015-16 SESSION AND MATTERS ARISING

Baroness McDonagh asked that the minutes record the request for a paper at a future meeting on House of Lords branding.

The Committee **agreed** the minutes of the meeting.

2. UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Liz Hewitt, acting Chairman of the Audit Committee, gave a presentation on the work of the Audit Committee.

The following points were made in discussion:

- An external review had been carried out on the work and role of the Audit Committee in line with public sector best practice.
- The Committee had raised concerns about the management of contractors on the Estate following a number of incidents. The Committee had supported the work of the Administration to improve the management of contractors. The new Estates Director had a good track record in this area and was making progress.

- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents had carried out an inspection and report on the safety of children using the Education Centre and walking across Black Rod's Garden to access the line of route. This had been considered by the Management Board, but was not directly considered by the Audit Committee.

The Committee **took note** of the update.

3. FURTHER STEPS TOWARD THE FINANCIAL PLAN

Rob Greig, Director of the Parliamentary Digital Service, Martina Hunter, Deputy Head of Finance, and Jonathan Smith, Head of Finance, attended for this item.

Rob Greig gave a presentation on the budget bid for the Parliamentary Digital Service (PDS), in particular on cyber security work.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion on ICT:

- There was support for redesigning the Parliamentary website to “tell the story” of what happened in the House of Lords more effectively.
- PDS was learning that it needed to adapt its approach to suit different types of users. For example, password rules needed to be appropriate to user requirements, including ability to remember passwords.
- PDS needed to be clearer on what support was provided by the ICT helpdesk and what was not, in particular in relation to supporting Members away from the Estate.

The Committee discussed the financial remit. The Leader said that the House should keep within the financial remit of no increase in the resource budget in real terms compared to the financial year 2010/11 and that savings should be sought where possible. The Finance Director explained that the beyond-remit increase in the 2017/18 resource budget was because of the expected accountancy adjustment for the revaluation of Millbank House. Technical adjustments had previously been excluded from comparison of the budget with the resource control total and without this adjustment, the budget for 2017/18 was well within the remit.

The Committee **endorsed** the increase in the complement of security staff and **agreed** to dispense with the requirement to agree changes to the complement in future.

The Committee **took note** of the strategic shifts in spending, which would be incorporated into the final version of the Financial Plan to be agreed at the next meeting.

The Committee **confirmed** the remit of not increasing the resource budget in real terms compared with 2010/11, subject to the need to maintain the ability of the House and its Members to carry out their parliamentary functions in changing circumstances including increased attendance.

The Committee **agreed** that the cost of the International Relations Committee should be considered as having been offset by savings already identified. The Committee had previously agreed to set aside resources for an additional unit of Committee activity if this was required.

4. AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' LENGTH OF TERM

The Committee **agreed** an extension of each Audit Committee member's maximum term from four to six years.

5. USE OF ROYAL GALLERY FOR COMMERCIAL BANQUETING

The Committee **agreed** that the business case for the use of the Royal Gallery for banqueting events should not be pursued further at this stage. The Committee noted that the proposal would be revisited in future if further work was desired.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Rob Whiteway
Clerk of the House Committee
November 2015