

Management Board

Staff Accommodation

Paper from the Director General, Facilities.

Background

1. There are three currently three pressing reasons for considering the future accommodation of House staff:
 - The Administration Committee has recommended three feasibility studies related to accommodation (see appendix) that have potential implications for staff accommodation.
 - The acquisition of additional office accommodation in 14 Tothill Street.
 - The realignment of the House departments.
2. Planning is being undertaken on the following assumptions (all subject to the outcome of feasibility studies):
 - i) 1 Derby Gate will become offices for Members and their staff,
 - ii) the Upper Committee Corridors will be remodelled to provide 30 Member's offices all with windows, and
 - iii) the Lower Secretaries Floor, including the Travel Office, and with part of the Lower Ministerial Floor above, should be converted to form enhanced education facilities.

Conclusions and decisions

3. This paper asks the Board to note and approve the direction of the current studies; costed options will be brought back to the Board at a later date.

Scope of the proposed studies

Department of Information Services

4. Derby Gate is occupied by 155 ex-Library staff and has some 3km of shelving. The latter is a major constraint in terms of both length of shelving and load. Prior to the reorganisation the Library commissioned a report based on the assumption that 45 staff from the Norman Shaw buildings and the Palace should move with their colleagues to any new location. The re-organisation of departments has added another 60 staff, although not all of these will need to be located with their new colleagues.
5. A major objective in any move for the Library was co-location with the Committee Office to give effect to the Tebbit recommendation for an even closer working relationship. This recommendation has now been accepted in principal by the Commission. It applies particularly to the Research Directorate, which, for internal efficiency, should remain with the Information Management Directorate. Relocation of these to 7 Millbank

with the Committee Office would be the simplest solution. The alternative of moving to 4 Millbank is not possible because of floor loading restrictions.

6. The proposed study would consider the extent to which the Department of Information Services should move to 7 Millbank, taking account of operational needs both within the Department and with other Departments and including the challenge of relocating its books. It will look on the same basis at which of the existing occupants could move to other buildings.

7. Facilities Department

8. Following acceptance of the Tebbit proposal to create the Parliamentary Directorate of Estates, the external adviser working on the implementation plan saw great merit in co-locating Works and Estates to foster closer working relationships. At present they are located on four floors. A transfer to 14 Tothill Street would require at least two floors. These are no more than shells requiring significant ingoing works. With the Lords in occupation much of this could be undertaken only "out of hours" or in a recess, giving a 2009 occupation date. Alternatively 4 Millbank could be used. A preliminary exercise indicated that PDE could be accommodated on the 5th floor. It is believed that there is space too for the other elements of Facilities – Accommodation Services, Finance and HR Units and Catering management and support staff. Much of the written material is already in off-site storage so floor loading is not an issue. It is proposed therefore to extend the previous floor planning exercise to include the other sections of the Department, and subject to the approval of the business case, to work to establish the Facilities Department in 4 Millbank this summer.

Other issues

9. In its report into accommodation (HC1279) the Administration Committee stated:

"We and our predecessors have taken the consistent view that members should have priority over office accommodation in the Palace above those staff with no clear business need to be there."

and that

"The House Service must recognise that it is in its own interests to occupy no more space than is needed to do its work."

10. In its further response to the Report (HC516) the House of Commons Commission indicated that when additional accommodation was available for staff of the House: "some House staff, who do not need face-to-face contact with Members, to be relocated from the Palace and northern outbuildings. A detailed plan for this will be part of the Estates Strategy."

11. Since the Committee's report was published it has been possible to provide three offices under the Speaker's House for conversion to Ministerial suites, office accommodation for the Lord Chancellor and an additional office in Norman Shaw South. However, the distribution of offices in the Palace remains an issue of continuing concern to Members.
12. The Administration Committee requires a third report on the availability of the Turret Room (Hansard), the Lobby Briefing Room and Committee Office to be submitted with the results of the studies on Derby Gate and for an Education Centre. This represents but the tip of the continuing pressure from the Whips offices to maximise the number of Members' offices in the Palace. There is a further link in that the Education Centre proposals involve taking over Ministerial accommodation so further pressure is unavoidable with an adverse impact on the relationship with Members. The Board will need to consider how it wishes to respond to these pressures.

Timescale

13. The Committee's report on accommodation recommended that the windowless offices should have been removed by the end of the current Parliament. This is too optimistic though the anticipated exclusion of Canon Row from the strategy is helpful. 2011 seems the likeliest earliest date.
14. More immediately the plan had been to report the results of the studies at Easter. This is doubtful but the aim still is to at least consult the Board and then the Commission before the summer recess to avoid the break in momentum that would then inevitably occur.

Sue Harrison
Director General, Facilities
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Appendix

The Administration Committee's Deliberations

Background

1. The Committee's Third Report 2005-06 (HC1279) recommended and it was accepted that:
 - no Member or mainly desk-bound staff should occupy windowless offices,
 - no Member should be required to share an office with another,
 - the offices should be in the secure area of the Estate,
 - 12.5m² is adequate for a Member with 7.5m² for Member's staff, and
 - Members with larger offices must expect to share with their staff.
2. The windowless offices were identified as being in the:
 - Upper Committee Corridors – 80 offices half of which are without windows and most are less than 12.5m²,
 - Lower Ministers Floor – 6 offices
 - Lower Secretaries Floor – 43 staff desks.
3. At its meeting on 27 November the Committee the Committee recommended:
 - A feasibility study be undertaken into pursuing Option A to remodel offices on the upper committee corridor, and that the potential for use as Members' accommodation of three areas in the Palace occupied by staff of the House should be investigated.
 - A feasibility study be undertaken into Option A, the use of the Lower Secretaries Floor as the location for an Education facility, subject to the provision of alternative accommodation for six ministerial workstations and the large ministerial conference room. The Committee would return to look in more detail at further options if concerns remained.
 - A feasibility study be undertaken into the refurbishment of Derby Gate to provide office accommodation for Members.

Potential Impact of the Committee's Deliberations

4. To achieve offices with windows the number in the Upper Committee Corridors would be reduced from 80 to 30, albeit 20 of these would also accommodate staff. Natural light cannot be introduced into either the Lower Ministers or Lower Secretaries Floors. The net requirement is therefore for 56 Members' offices and 23 staff desks.
5. The only buildings within the secure boundary offering sizeable amounts of accommodation not already occupied by Members are Derby Gate and Canon Row.
6. A desk study has shown that Derby Gate should have sufficient space to provide all the replacement offices. This is now being established in the

costed options study recommended by the Committee. Taking Canon Row out of the action plan has a significant benefit in that it avoids the need to find an alternative location for the Security Control Room and Pass Office while the building is refurbished for occupation by Members shortening the programme by at least two years.