

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**PROVIDING ACCEPTABLE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION – PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTING THE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS****PURPOSE**

1. The Committee’s Third Report of 2005-6: House of Commons Accommodation (HC1279) made recommendations aimed at providing all Members and their staff with acceptable office accommodation. This paper reports progress to date and seeks advice on which options should be pursued regarding the Upper Committee Corridor.

BACKGROUND

2. The Committee recommended that:

no Member or mainly desk-bound staff should be in windowless offices,

no Member should have to share an office with another,

the offices should be within the secure area of the Parliamentary estate,

12.5m² per Member is adequate with 7.5m² for Member’s staff, and

Members with larger offices must expect to share the room with their staff but should not expect to be able to accommodate more than two staff on the estate.

3. The Committee accepted too the need for decant accommodation to be preserved to allow major projects to progress outside recesses.

4 The remaining windowless offices are in the:

Upper Committee Corridors –80 offices for Members, 40 of which have only a skylight. 55 of the offices are occupied by Members, the others by Member’s staff.

Lower Ministers Floor – 6 offices

Lower Secretaries Floor– 43 desk spaces.

5. The House has leased No14 Tothill Street to accommodate staff to facilitate implementation of the recommendations. It provides 2,800m² of office space. There is also 2,100m² available in No 4 Millbank.

IMPLICATIONS OF REMOVING THE WINDOWLESS OFFICES

6. **Upper Committee Corridors.** There are three options:

a) redesign the accommodation to provide offices with windows. A feasibility study in 2001 found that, because of the pattern of the fenestration and the width of the floorplate, the number of offices would be reduced from 80 to 30. Although lower space standards have been introduced, the nature of the constraints is such that the conclusions of the earlier study remain valid. The new offices would be designated for a Member and at least one member of staff, or

b) retain the windowless offices for other uses thus halving the number of Member's offices to 40 all of which would be for a Member only. At 11m² most would remain below the minimum standard (12.5m²). The windowless offices might be used, for example, as television control/apparatus room, telephone exchange or storage. They are not suited for use as meeting rooms, or

c) do nothing leaving Members and staff in rooms without windows.

7. The **Lower Secretaries Floor** is open plan with limited natural light at the perimeter. The width of the floorplan and basement location precludes any improvement. The area is being considered for the Enhanced Education Facility to meet the recommendation in the Committee's 1st Report of 2006-7: Improving Facilities for Educational Visitors to Parliament (HC434).

8. The 6 **Lower Ministerial Floor** offices are situated below the Chamber within a racetrack corridor. Natural light cannot be introduced. They too are being considered for the Enhanced Education Facility project.

9. Depending on the option recommended by the Committee for the Upper Committee Corridor, the total number of offices/desks to be reprovided would be:

a) 56 Member's offices + 23 staff desk (20 having been provided in the new Upper Committee Corridors offices)

b) 46 Member's offices + 43 staff desk spaces

c) 43 desk spaces

PROVIDING NEW ACCOMMODATION FOR MEMBERS + THEIR STAFF

10. Providing new offices for Members in Tothill Street or 4 Millbank is not an option. They are outside the secure boundary and the distance from the division lobbies would be a problem. The buildings could be used for Member's staff desk spaces. With open plan floors they lend themselves to this use, but distance from the House is not ideal.

11. No viable scope has been identified for providing a new office block within the Palace.

12. Only the Derby Gate and Canon Row buildings can provide appropriate space in any quantity within the secure boundary.

13. **Derby Gate** (Grade II listed) was refurbished for the Library in 1991. Without any alterations, it could provide 45 offices; 30 of which would be suitable for a Member + one or 2 staff. A desk study has shown, however, that with limited intervention to the fabric and services the number of Member's offices could be increased to 53 with space for 41 staff.

14. There are also 6 "fine rooms" available in Derby Gate of between 43m² and 89m².

15. **Canon Row** (Grade II*) was refurbished in 1989 for use by support staff and is now in need of major work. It houses the Metropolitan Police, the main Pass Office, the Parcel Office, the commercially operated gymnasium and the Works/Estates organisation some of whom would need to return after the refurbishment work is complete. As currently configured the building could provide offices for 31 Members and 16 staff. The desk study has shown that there is little scope to increase these numbers assuming the Police, Pass Office and Parcel Office return properly accommodated.

16. Consideration will have to be given to on the impact on the circulation routes, eg the Portcullis House escalator, and on catering facilities of moving more Members onto the northern part of the estate.

17. Subject to confirmation by a full feasibility study it appears that Derby Gate could provide replacement offices for Members and staff from the Upper Committee Corridor with the fine rooms providing any space needed to replace the remaining desks from the Lower Secretaries Floor. Alternatively, the desk spaces could be located in Canon Row along with temporary decant accommodation. The table attached summarises the proposals.

COSTS AND PROGRAMME

18. Based on the 2001 feasibility study the cost of converting the Upper Committee Corridor to 30 Member + staff offices would now be some £6m. The cost of the other options and consequential projects mentioned above would emerge from further feasibility studies should the Committee so recommend.

19. The costs would include significant major maintenance work that will have to be undertaken whether or not the projected moves take place.

20. The projects will form part of the 25 year estate strategy. Business cases will need to be approved and funding secured in the House's budget.

21. The starting point for the programme would be to fit out new accommodation in Millbank and Tothill Street for the staff decanted from Canon Row and Derby Gate; then refurbish these buildings for the Members before replanning the Upper Committee Corridor and Lower Secretaries Floor.

The feasibility studies would address the timetable but it is thought that refurbishing Canon Row might take 18 months and the Upper Committee Corridors two summer recesses.

ACTION REQUIRED

22. The Committee is invited to

select which of the options should be pursued for the Upper Committee Corridor (paragraph 6),

endorse the proposals to vacate the Lower Secretaries Floor and the windowless area of the Lower Ministerial Floors which could be used for the Enhanced Education Facility (paragraphs 7 and 8).

Serjeant at Arms
November 2007

ANNEX 1 - Options and solutions for windowless offices

	Current situation	Option A – redesign Upper Committee Corridors to provide offices with windows	Option B – retain windowless offices in Upper Committee Corridors for other uses	Option C – do nothing in Upper Committee Corridors
Upper Committee Corridors	80 Member’s offices	30 Member’s offices with 20 Member’s staff desk spaces	40 Member’s offices	80 Member’s offices
Lower Minister’s Floor	6 Member’s windowless offices			
Lower Secretaries Floor	43 Member’s staff desk spaces			
Solution – space reallocation		53 Member’s offices in Derby Gate (50 remaining from Upper Committee Corridors PLUS 3 from Lower Minister’s floor) 3 Member’s offices in Canon Row (3 remaining from Lower Minister’s floor) 23 Member’s staff desk spaces in Derby Gate (20 having been provided in new Upper Committee Corridors) with room for more	46 Member’s offices in Derby Gate (40 remaining from Upper Committee Corridors PLUS 6 from Lower Minister’s floor) with room for 7 additional offices 43 Member’s staff desk spaces in Derby Gate with room for more	6 Member offices in Canon Row 43 Member’s staff desks in Canon Row with room for more
Total number of Members offices and desk space for Member’s staff	86 Member’s offices 43 Member’s staff desk	86 Member’s offices 43 Member’s staff desk	86 Member’s offices (with room for 7 additional offices) 43 Member’s staff desk	86 Member’s offices 43 Member’s staff desk

	<i>spaces</i>	<i>spaces (with room for more)</i>	<i>spaces (with room for many more)</i>	<i>spaces</i>
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