



Twenty-ninth report of the House of Commons Commission

Financial Year 2006/07





House of Commons Commission

Twenty-ninth report

Financial Year 2006/07

Report presented to the House of Commons in pursuance of section 1(3)
of the House of Commons Administration Act 1978

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 18 June 2007

Contents

	Page
Introduction by the Speaker	3
How the House of Commons is governed	5
In Focus	
Education and Visitor Services	16
Environmental Management	20
HAIS	23
Primary Objective 1: Providing advice and services to the House and its committees	27
Primary Objective 2: Providing advice and services to individual Members and their staff	43
Primary Objective 3: Promoting public knowledge and understanding of the work and role of Parliament	51
Supporting task i: Human resources	59
Supporting task ii: A healthy, safe and secure physical environment	69
Supporting task iii: Planning and management	79
Supporting task iv: Heritage	83
Supporting task v: Information management	89
Supporting task vi: Working with others	93
Annex 1: data tables	95
Annex 2: departmental organograms	100
Administration Estimate Audit Committee Annual Report 2006/07	107
Index	111

Introduction by The Speaker



It is a pleasure to introduce the Commission's twenty-ninth annual report – the seventh since I became Speaker. Whether in the Chamber or around the House, I never cease to be impressed with the scale and variety of the activities necessary to make Parliament work. This report describes those activities in the financial year ending on 31 March 2007. It is full of examples of the many ways in which some 1,700 staff support the House and its Members.

Running the House is a complex business. We have to provide the framework within which legislation is passed and the Government held to account. There also need to be facilities for 646 Members to work, each with their own priorities and needs. This old and historic building, designed for a different era, must be maintained and repaired. We want to be as open as possible to the public but live in a world where security concerns are great. While we are all now much more conscious of the environment, we are working in a building not planned for energy efficiency.

Changes are occurring on every front. This year the House has introduced better working methods for the scrutiny of new laws by evidence-taking public bill committees, which started in early 2007. Greater expectations from the public have led us, in 2006/07, to send out a New Voters Guide to 18 year olds and employ a new team of Visitor Assistants to welcome those coming to the building. Demands for better services have caused the Administration Committee to review the provision of office accommodation and computers.

Our environmental record was highlighted in a special section of the last annual report. There have been really positive developments this year:

- all of the House's electricity has come from renewable sources since February 2007 – the full year effect will be to cut our carbon emissions from energy by 70 per cent, equivalent to an annual reduction of 3,400 tonnes of carbon.
- 40 per cent of our waste (equivalent to 850 tonnes) was recycled in 2006/07 – up from 37 per cent in the previous year, and
- we reduced the total amount of water used on the estate by 15 per cent from the previous financial year (equivalent to more than 83,000 cubic metres).

As the report shows, it cost £228 million pounds to run the House in 2006/07 – not counting separate spending of £147 million on Members' salaries and allowances. Quite properly the House is not dependent for its funding on the Government it holds to account. The independence of parliaments is recognised throughout the world as a measure of how democratic a country is. But the Commission does have to be conscious of costs and wherever possible seek value for money. Spending on the House administration operates under a medium term financial strategy which allows for only inflation increases from year to year. Leaving aside exceptional spending on security and new scrutiny methods, the House's spending in 2006/07 showed no real growth from 2002/03.

During this year, the Commission appointed Sir Kevin Tebbit to conduct a review of the management of House services. This follows earlier reviews in 1990 and 1999. The recommendations of that review will be considered in the coming year. We will also have the benefit of the survey of Members and their staff in February and March 2007. This attracted a good response rate and showed which services are operating well and indicated some areas where improvements are needed. They will be given priority in the year ahead.

Last September saw the retirement of Sir Roger Sands after four years as Clerk of the House and Chief Executive. The tributes paid to him in the House on 25 July 2006 reflected not just on his long and distinguished service. They also demonstrated how much Members value the dedicated service we receive from all the staff. This report shows how the House of Commons Service, under the leadership of Malcolm Jack, the new Clerk of the House and Chief Executive, enables the House to function effectively and in a more open, modern style .

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues on the Commission who bring their experience as busy Members to bear on our work, and especially Nick Harvey for answering questions and debates on behalf of the Commission and generally acting as a very good spokesman.



Michael J. Martin MP
Chairman of the House of Commons Commission



How the House of Commons is governed



The House of Commons Commission (From left: Malcolm Jack, Clerk of the House; Sir Stuart Bell MP; Nick Harvey MP; Rt Hon Theresa May MP; Rt Hon David Maclean MP; Rt Hon Jack Straw MP; Rt Hon Michael J Martin MP, The Speaker (Chairman)).

The House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978

1. The framework for the governance of the House of Commons was established by the House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978 which set up the House of Commons Commission. The Commission employs the staff of the House, ensures that their terms and conditions remain broadly in line with those of civil servants, appoints an accounting officer, lays the Estimate (budget) for House of Commons services and determines the structure and functions of the departments of the House.¹ It is also required by the Act to publish this annual report. Members of the Commission are also members of the Members Estimate Committee, which is responsible for oversight of expenditure on Members' salaries and allowances and for which a separate report and accounts are published.

Commission membership and secretariat

2. The membership of the House of Commons Commission is composed according to section 1(2) of the House of Commons (Administration) Act. At the start of the financial year 2006/07 the membership was as follows:

- The Speaker The Rt Hon Michael J Martin MP, (*by virtue of his office*) (Chairman)
- The Leader of the House, The Rt Hon Geoffrey Hoon MP (*by virtue of his office*)
- The Rt Hon Mrs Theresa May MP (Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, nominated by the Leader of the Opposition)
- Sir Stuart Bell MP (also Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee)
- Nick Harvey MP (Commission Spokesman)
- Rt Hon David Maclean MP

¹ The governance structure of the House administration is shown on page 14; the internal organisation of each department is shown in annex 2

3. Rt Hon Jack Straw MP replaced Rt Hon Geoffrey Hoon MP as Leader of the House in May 2006 and was therefore a member of the Commission from its second meeting of the financial year onwards.

4. The Commission is attended by the Clerk of the House who is Accounting Officer and also Chief Executive of the House of Commons Service. Roger Sands² served in this capacity until his retirement on 30 September 2006, when Malcolm Jack assumed these functions. For the first half of the year, David Natzler was the Secretary to the Commission and Geoffrey Farrar the Assistant Secretary. In the second half of the year Andrew Kennon acted as the Secretary and Jenny McCullough was the Assistant Secretary.

Activities of the Commission

5. The Commission met on nine occasions during the year. Minutes of Commission meetings are available through the Commission's pages on the Parliament website at http://www.parliament.uk/about_commons/house_of_commons_commission_.cfm Early in the year the Commission agreed the contents of the New Voters Guide – the “Voting Times”, which, from July 2006, was sent personally addressed to young people on their 18th birthday. This was an important part of the House's plans for connecting with the public. Over 265,000 copies were distributed in the nine months to March 2007.

6. In accordance with a recommendation of the Braithwaite report and in line with views expressed by Members in the previous debates on the Commission annual report, the Commission established a further review of the House's administration, under the leadership of Sir Kevin Tebbit KCB CMG, with the following terms of reference:

To review the implementation of the recommendations of the report of Mr Michael Braithwaite (HC 745, 1998-99) on the management and services of the House of Commons and his subsequent report of July 2000 on the Serjeant at Arms' Department, and in particular to assess:

- whether the expected benefits have been realised;
- what further actions are required for the House Service to achieve the objectives laid down in the Outline Strategic Plan for the House of Commons Administration 2006-2011;
- whether, in particular, the organisational and staffing arrangements currently in place are adequate to realise the objectives laid down in the Resolution of the House of 26th January 2005 relating to Connecting Parliament with the Public.

7. In March 2007 the Commission agreed to Sir Kevin's first recommendations on re-merging the estates and works functions into one directorate based in the Serjeant at Arms' Department. The new directorate will be responsible to the Serjeant at Arms and Black Rod for delivery of services. Sir Kevin is expected to complete his report in the middle of 2007.

8. In the second half of the year the Commission has monitored the delays in completing the Visitor Reception Building on Cromwell Green (for more information see paragraph 229) and investigated the causes of those delays. It has also monitored progress on devising a new access control system for the parliamentary estate, which should be implemented in the coming year.

9. The Commission has carefully considered the recommendations of the Administration Committee on accommodation and approved both a response and a follow-up report to the Committee. It has also discussed the early stages of a new 25 year estate strategy.

² Sir Roger Sands KCB from the Queen's Birthday Honours June 2006

10. Both the Commission and the Members Estimate Committee have discussed rules for House stationery (including pre-paid envelopes) and the new Communications Allowance. The latter was agreed by the House in principle on 1 November 2006 and approved in detail on 28 March 2007. The first report from the Members Estimate Committee sets out the background, scope and broad principles.³



Nick Harvey MP, Commission spokesman, replies to the debate on the 2005/06 Annual Report.

Questions to the Commission

11. Parliamentary questions addressed to the Commission are answered by Nick Harvey. During the year he replied to nine questions orally and gave 282 written answers. On 19 October 2006 there was a debate in Government time in Westminster Hall on the 2005/06 Annual Report of the Commission, the third such debate on the annual report.⁴

Finance and Services Committee

12. The Finance and Services Committee of the House of Commons is established under Standing Order No. 144. It has responsibility for detailed scrutiny of the draft budgets for the House administration and advises the Commission on the financial and administrative implications of the recommendations by the domestic committees. The Committee is chaired by a member of the Commission and has 10 other members, including the chairman of the Administration Committee. The Committee's principal business has been considering regular reports on works, security-related expenditure and catering finances, as well as the annual cycle of reviewing spending plans and outturn.

³HC 319 2006-07

⁴HC Deb 19 October 2006 cc 331-348WH

Administration Committee

13. The Administration Committee provides advice to the Commission and serves as a channel for the views of Members of Parliament at large about the services provided by the House administration. In 2006/07 the Committee produced a report on accommodation and followed up reports from the previous year on post-election services and refreshment department services. The Committee also worked with the House of Lords Information Committee to examine options for a possible parliamentary visitor and information centre.

Board of Management

14. The following were members of the Board of Management at the beginning of the financial year:

Roger Sands, *Clerk of the House, Chief Executive, Chairman of the Board of Management*

Peter Grant Peterkin CB OBE, *Serjeant at Arms*

Sue Harrison, *Director of Catering Services*

Helen Irwin, *Clerk of Committees*

Joan Miller, *Director of the Parliamentary ICT Service*

John Pullinger, *Librarian*

Lorraine Sutherland, *Editor of the Official Report*

Andrew Walker, *Director of Finance and Administration*



The Board of Management (Back row, from left: Andrew Walker; Peter Grant Peterkin CB OBE; Helen Irwin; John Pullinger; Lorraine Sutherland. Front row, from left: Joan Miller; Malcolm Jack; Sue Harrison)

15. In October 2006, following the retirement of Sir Roger Sands, Malcolm Jack became Chairman of the Board of Management following his appointment as Clerk of the House and Chief Executive.

House of Commons staff

16. The Board exercises the functions of employer of House staff on behalf of the Commission⁵ and is responsible for ensuring that conditions of service conform to the requirements of the House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978. Negotiations on pay and conditions of service, and consultations on personnel issues, were conducted during the year through the recognised unions, the Whitley Committee and its sub-committees.

17. During 2006/07 the average number of staff employed in the House service was 1,606 full-time equivalents. Further details of how this figure was made up, by department, may be found on page 61. The number of individuals on the payroll is approximately 300 higher, which takes account of the fact that the House employs part-time staff in many posts, supporting its commitment to diversity, fairness and best practice. Details of the number of individuals employed by departments can be found in the organograms beginning on page 100.

House of Commons expenditure

18. The House of Commons Commission is responsible for the House of Commons Administration Estimate (but not for Members' salaries and allowances, which are paid from the House of Commons Members Estimate, nor for Members' pensions). The total resource expenditure across both Estimates for 2006/07 was £365 million of which £210 million was attributable to the Administration Estimate.

19. The resource accounts for the House of Commons Administration Estimate for the year ending 31 March 2006 were prepared in accordance with the House of Commons Administration Act 1978 as amended by the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000 and received a clean audit opinion from the National Audit Office. They were published in July 2006, in line with the Treasury's desire for faster closing of public sector accounts.⁶

20. The Estimate for 2007/08 was presented to the House by the Speaker on 30 April 2007.⁷

Administration Estimate Audit Committee

21. The Commission appoints the members of the Administration Estimate Audit Committee and approves its terms of reference. The Committee's annual report appears on pages 107 to 110.

Joint working with the House of Lords

22. In many areas of activity the House of Commons administration works closely with that of the House of Lords. Two of the Directorates managed by the Serjeant at Arms, Estates and Works Services, provide services to both Houses. The new cross-House Parliamentary ICT Service (PICT), created in January 2006, is currently a Commons Department, pending completion of the passage of the Parliament (Joint Departments) Bill. More information on IS/IT governance can be found at paragraphs 24 to 25.

⁵With the exception of a small number of specified posts and subject to the procedures agreed by both sides of the Whitley Committee

⁶ HC 1453 2005-06

⁷ HC 448 2006-07

23. There are a number of smaller units which are based in one House or the other, but provide services to both by agreement: the Parliamentary Archives (formerly known as the House of Lords Record Office), the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, the Parliamentary Education Service, the Parliamentary Recording Unit, the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Service, the Central Tours Office and the Travel Office. The Department of the Official Report in the Commons provides a pagination service for House of Lords Hansard. There is also a long-standing formal and informal collaboration between the Serjeant and Black Rod over ceremonial (especially in respect of Westminster Hall), security and contingency planning.



The Speaker leads Members of the House of Commons to hear the Queen's Speech in the House of Lords at the State Opening of Parliament, November 2006.

Parliamentary ICT Services and IS/IT Governance

24. Last year's report recorded the establishment of PICT, the cross-House ICT Service, on 1 January 2006. PICT continues to be a Commons department on an interim basis, with IS/IT staff from the House of Lords loaned to it. The Parliament (Joint Departments) Bill, introduced in the House of Lords in January 2007 and now passing through the Commons will, when enacted, provide the legal framework for the first truly joint House function. Although further joint departments are not currently planned, the Bill is drafted to provide that they would be possible without the need for further legislation. In 2007/08 work to establish human resources and budgetary policies consistent with the legal framework of the Bill will be a priority for PICT and the two Houses' management boards.

25. The work of PICT is overseen by the Joint Business Systems Board (JBSB), which consists of senior officials from both Houses and an external non-executive member. It is informed by the PICT Forum, a monthly meeting of nominated staff across both Houses which advises PICT on future development priorities. The Director of the Parliamentary ICT Service, Joan Miller, participates in the work of both Houses' management boards, and attends Committees of both Houses as required. Further information on PICT is given in paragraphs 135 to 141 and 294 to 295 below.

Mr Speaker unveils a painting commissioned by the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art for the Palace of Westminster Collection.



Strategic planning

26. In 2006/07 business planning was guided by the outline strategic plan for 2006-11 adopted by the House of Commons Commission in July 2005. The plan, which is summarised on page 13, classifies the aims of the House Administration into three primary objectives (supporting the House, supporting Members and informing the public) and six supporting tasks. This annual report is organised to reflect this structure. The strategic plan also identifies six priority areas for the planning period (accommodation & works, human resources, information for the public, information management & ICT, planning & management and security) and indicates that, subject to decisions of the House, the Board of Management aims to manage core services at a level of expenditure no higher than the ceiling previously agreed for 2006/07, adjusted for inflation.

27. There is now an established, top-down, business planning cycle. This starts in the autumn when the Board of Management issues a Corporate Business Plan. The 2007 plan – covering 2007/08 to 2009/10 – was published in December 2006 with a summary version for all staff being distributed in January 2007. (The full Corporate Plan is available on the Parliament website at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/CorporateBusinessPlan2007.pdf>.)

The Corporate Business Plan concentrates on House-wide issues and, in particular, how the Board is addressing the six priority areas identified in the strategic plan. Each of the seven House departments is then required to produce a departmental plan that shows its planned activities and how these help to deliver the corporate objectives. Draft departmental plans are subject to a “friendly challenge” by members of the Business Planning Group before the final plans are formally signed off by the Board of Management in March.

28. The review of the management of the House Service led by Sir Kevin Tebbit is due to be published in summer 2007. It is anticipated that consideration and implementation of the recommendations will represent a significant management task for the second half of 2007/08.

Outline Strategic Plan for the House of Commons Administration 2006-2011

(As adopted by the House of Commons Commission on 18 July 2005)

Purpose

The House of Commons Service supports, informs and records the work of the House of Commons as an elected parliamentary chamber in accordance with the decisions of the House and the House of Commons Commission. It makes its work and information about that work widely accessible to the general public and contributes to parliamentary democracy by sharing its knowledge with parliaments and assemblies worldwide. It also maintains the heritage of parliamentary buildings and documents in trust for the public and future generations.

Values

The House of Commons Service seeks to serve the House of Commons, its Committees and Members, and the public, with honesty, probity and political impartiality; strives to achieve high ethical standards, value for money and professional excellence in all that it does; and seeks to be responsive to changing requirements. As an employer, the House of Commons Commission is committed to maximising the personal development of House staff, to valuing diversity and the contribution of all individuals, and to equality of opportunity.

Primary objectives

The House Service's primary objectives (in order of priority) are:

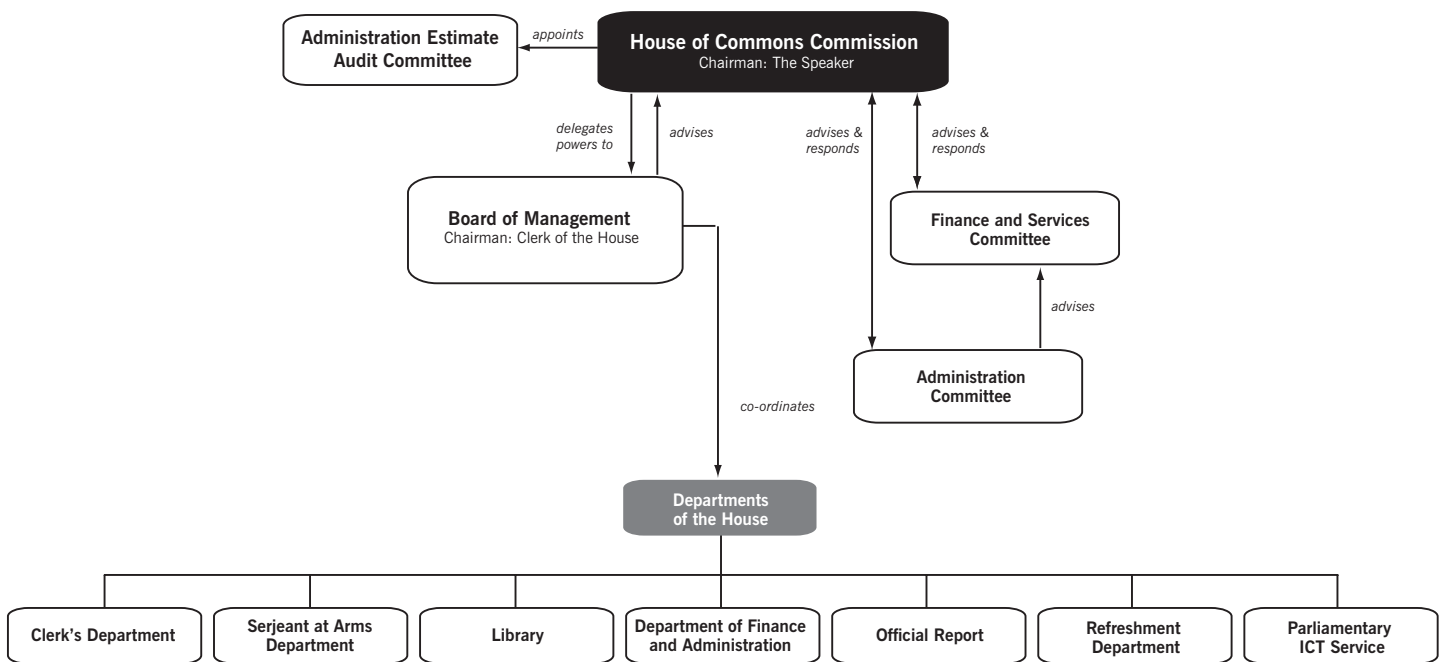
- To provide the advice and services that enable the House and its committees to conduct their business effectively.
- To provide the advice and services that enable individual Members (and their staff) to perform their parliamentary duties effectively.
- To promote public knowledge and understanding of the work and role of Parliament through the provision of information and access.

Supporting tasks

In support of the primary objectives the House Service also seeks:

- To provide a skilled and motivated workforce; giving recognition and reward for achievement and ensuring that all staff realise their full potential regardless of level or background; and promoting diversity.
- To provide a healthy, safe and secure physical environment in which the business of the House can be effectively conducted; this includes accommodation, office services, catering and security.
- To plan and manage all of the House's resources to a high standard, achieving value for money and matching current public service standards including in the areas of risk and change management and environmental protection.
- To maintain the heritage and integrity of the Palace of Westminster and other buildings, objects and documents for the benefit of future generations.
- To ensure that information is well-managed in pursuit of the primary objectives, in part by exploiting technology effectively.
- To maintain a good working relationship with the House of Lords, particularly in the provision of shared services; and to share information and best practice with other parliaments and assemblies, and to co-operate with other organisations that can assist the House Service in its work.

The governance structure of the House of Commons administration





In Focus:
Education and Visitor Services
Environmental Management
House Administrative Information System (HAIS)

Education and Visitor Services

Introduction

29. One of the Commission's priority areas for the period 2006-2011 is promoting public knowledge of the work and role of Parliament. Many thousands of people visit Parliament each year, and we seek to make their visit a worthwhile and memorable experience; on the other hand there are many people who are unable to visit the House of Commons in person, and the outreach work led by the Parliamentary Education Service aims to ensure that they too are able to connect with Parliament effectively.



For younger children, learning through role-play is an important part of their visit to the House of Commons.

Education Service

30. The Parliamentary Education Service is based in the House of Commons Library, but provides services to both Houses. It consists of 9.5 full time equivalent staff, including two outreach officers. During term-time the Education Service hosts three visits a day, with a maximum of 32 students per group. A visit normally consists of a classroom session and a tour of the Palace or gallery visit. A variety of interactive sessions are available, tailored to the needs of primary and secondary school groups, including mock elections, making laws, dressing up and role play, using a timeline to find out when important parliamentary reforms took place and "have your say" debates. MPs and Peers also give talks and attend sessions when possible. Lesson plans and supporting resources are made available to teachers to continue the learning experience after a visit. Ten times a year "Pupil Parliaments" are held at Westminster. Each session involves 64 secondary school age children from four different schools; resource packs are sent to teachers in advance to prepare the children for their visit.

31. Just under 10,900 students and teachers visited Parliament in 2006/07 via organised education sessions, up from 8,000 in 2005/06, an increase of one-third. The aim for 2007/08 is to raise this to 22,000. There is currently a waiting list two terms in advance for school groups wishing to visit. The Education Service also worked with approximately 2,700 students visiting Westminster in groups organised by Members.

32. During 2006/07 a two member outreach team began working with those unable to visit Parliament. Its aim is to support Members in their work with local education authorities, schools and community groups and to offer an appropriate range of education activities for those unable to visit Westminster. 2,000 students participated in educational sessions, and specially tailored sessions were delivered to nearly 1,400 teachers, community and other groups.

33. To support the “citizenship” strand of the national curriculum, new educational films for both primary and secondary school children have been produced and since July 2006 have been made available at no charge to both those schools who have visited and those who are unable to visit Westminster. Up to March 2007 13,000 copies had been requested. A third film was produced for use with groups at Westminster, and made available on the Parliament website. Together the films have won both domestic and international awards, a notable achievement.

34. The Education Service also produces free publications and lesson plans, and maintains the part of the Parliamentary website dedicated to young people and teachers: “Explore Parliament”.

35. In addition to its core work, the Education Service collaborates with and develops learning strands for other initiatives happening in Parliament. In May 2006 the Education Service and Visitor Assistants (see paragraph 38 below) worked together to provide school sessions for a “junior Open House event”, which coincided with Portcullis House being opened to the public as part of the national “Open House Weekend” scheme. In 2007/08 a writer in residence will work with school groups as part of the exhibition to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery.



Educational visits include an introduction to the traditions and customs of the House.

36. During 2006/07 two other new educational events were held for the first time. The 2006 State Opening of Parliament provided the first opportunity for collaboration between the Education Service and colleagues in the Education Unit based at Buckingham Palace. An educational visit entitled “Uncovering the State Opening of Parliament” was devised, and allowed two classes of Year 4 primary school children the opportunity to understand the significance of the State Opening through visits to both Parliament and the Palace in the same day. At Parliament the pupils were each assigned a character who has special significance in the day, and with guidance undertook role-play to recreate the event, followed by a tour of both Houses. At Buckingham Palace the children visited the Royal Mews to understand the preparation undertaken there for the State Opening, then visited the Queen’s horses and carriages, including the Gold State Coach. As the final activity of the day, the pupils wrote their own Queen’s speeches for the State Opening.

37. In October, as part of an on-going programme run in conjunction with the Academy of Culinary Arts designed to develop children’s appreciation of “taste” and encourage them to appreciate that food should not be judged on appearance alone, a class of primary school children and their teachers spent the day at the House of Commons. A tour of the Palace of Westminster was followed by a practical cookery lesson in one of the Refreshment Department’s kitchens. Before they visited Westminster, two chefs from the House of Commons had visited the pupils’ school to give a presentation on food, and how to use all five senses and the four different types of taste, in a sampling session.



Older children learn about Parliament through debating current affairs.

Enhancing the visitor experience

38. Visitor Assistants, who are uniformed to make them clearly identifiable, were first appointed in 2005. Their role is to provide information and a welcome for all visitors even before they enter the Parliamentary Estate, managing visitor expectations and helping them to decide whether they are in the right place and wish to enter the building. The Visitor Assistants work closely with the Police and security staff to manage the queuing system both outside and inside St Stephen’s entrance, aiming to ensure that visitors reach their destination in the most time effective way. Visitor Assistants inside and outside the building keep in radio contact to ensure that the flow of visitors is controlled and up-to-date information on waiting times for the public gallery of each House is available to them. Once visitors are inside St Stephen’s entrance, they enter an internal queue: if there is time the Visitor Assistants will provide interpretation for visitors about the history around them and

what the visitors can expect to see once they enter the gallery. These measures enhance the experience of those members of the public who visit Parliament.



Visitor Assistants welcome visitors and answer queries outside the House of Commons.

39. As well as queue management and information provision, the Visitor Assistants are trained to provide guided tours of both Houses. Three of the seventeen Visitor Assistants posts are funded by the Education Service, and the Visitor Assistants take it in turns to guide school groups. In addition a high proportion of tours sponsored by Members and booked through the Central Tours Office are actually schools groups.

40. During the summer recess of 2006 the House of Commons Information Office piloted a series of talks for groups visiting Westminster through their Member of Parliament. The pilot trialled the structure and content of the lectures and assessed the types of question a general audience would be likely to ask. Following evaluation of the trial a dedicated post has been created, to further develop and test a series of seminars and supporting material.

41. Future developments include further refinement of a proposal for a parliamentary outreach programme, based on a “detached outreach” model and drawing on research commissioned from the Hansard Society and reported in their publication “Reaching the public: an examination of options for parliamentary outreach”. A detailed business case will be presented to the relevant Committees during 2007/08. A sub-committee of the Administration Committee, in co-operation with the House of Lords Information Committee, has been conducting an inquiry into facilities in Westminster for visitors and education, and reported its findings in April 2007.⁸

⁸ HC 434 2006-07

Environmental Management

Introduction

42. The Commission and the Board of Management remain committed to good environmental practice, and are committed to the House meeting or exceeding public sector environmental targets. During 2006/07 work has been undertaken on reducing the carbon footprint of the House, both in terms of official parliamentary travel (see paragraph 146) and in terms of energy consumption on the Parliamentary Estate (see paragraph 44).

Policies

43. Energy consumption per square metre for the Parliamentary Estate during 2006/07 was 366kWh, approximately equal to the 1999/2000 base year figure. This was achieved despite the installation of comfort cooling in one of the Parliamentary outbuildings during the previous year and the demands of a hot summer. The current target for energy consumption is a 15 per cent reduction on the base year figure by the year 2010/11. The House Service continues to work to meet the targets set by the Energy and Water Saving Policy and the Waste Management Policy adopted in autumn 2005 (see paragraph 46 of last year's report). These targets will be reviewed later in 2007 within the context of the Sustainable Operations Targets launched for Government departments in June 2006 by the Prime Minister.

44. To date it has proved difficult to reduce energy consumption per square metre in the face of increased usage of IT equipment and air conditioning, and increasing Estate occupancy. However, energy consumption has been held at broadly 1999/2000 levels. More progress has been made in understanding and reducing the primary carbon emissions of the Parliamentary Estate. From February 2007 all electricity has been purchased from renewable sources, which is expected to lead to a 60 per cent reduction in primary carbon emissions.

Waste and recycling

45. The proportion of waste recycled in 2006/07 was 40 per cent, against a target of 39 per cent, and up from 36.5 per cent in 2005/06. Waste materials currently recycled are cardboard, paper, glass, wood, metal, cooking oil, light fittings, fluorescent and sodium lamps, glass and plastic drinks bottles and drinks cans, unwanted office files and binders, printer and photocopier toner cartridges, batteries, television monitors, fridges, small electronic equipment and computer hardware.



Special events are used to promote environmental awareness among occupants of the Parliamentary Estate.

The House of Commons exceeded its target for recycling in 2006/07.



46. Following the success of the pilot recycling scheme discussed in last year's annual report (see paragraph 52) bins for collecting glass bottles, plastic bottles and metal drinks cans have been introduced in all Refreshment Department cafeterias as well as in other key locations across the Parliamentary Estate, such as photocopying rooms and lift lobbies, and more waste paper bins located in offices. Throughout the year an information campaign has sought to raise awareness of the availability and location of recycling bins.

Raising awareness

47. Ensuring that those who work in Parliament are aware of environmental issues and their part in improving our environmental performance is an on-going priority. Two staff groups meet regularly to discuss environmental matters, the Energy Savers Group and the Waste Management Steering Group.

48. During the year a number of events open to all have been held to increase awareness of environmental issues. Dick Strawbridge, the inventor and television presenter, gave a presentation relating how he and his family had bought a farmhouse in Cornwall and undertaken various projects to generate their own power and food. A showing of the film "An Inconvenient Truth" was arranged by the Energy Savers Group. A number of articles on environmental matters have also appeared in the staff magazine "inHouse".

New initiatives

49. During 2006/07 a portable energy data logger was purchased and monitoring and targeting software ordered. This will be delivered early in 2007/08. Various energy efficiency projects were completed, including the installation of low energy lamps, refrigerator motor controls and lighting controls. These projects are expected to produce simple payback periods of less than three years each. The SavaWatt control system is currently being installed to kitchen refrigeration equipment with estimated savings on electricity to the kitchens based in Portcullis House of 32 per cent for the year and 45 per cent for the main House of Commons kitchen. A dedicated budget for future sustainability works has been agreed for future years.

50. In Christmas 2006, for the first time, three Christmas trees on the Parliamentary Estate, located in New Palace Yard, Westminster Hall and Black Rod's Garden, were lit by low energy long-life lamps. These new lights consisted of 1 Watt LED lamps as compared to the 25 Watt incandescent lamps used previously. As a further energy reduction measure the lights were controlled by a timer switch instead of being left on all the time; this achieved a 98 per cent reduction in energy usage. The energy cost reduction was calculated, at 2006 prices, at £3,760. The energy consumption reduction each Christmas is calculated to be 46,956kWh. Although the LED lights are more expensive, they are more robust and are expected to last at least 10 years, considerably longer than incandescent bulbs.

51. Energy efficiency projects planned for 2007/08 include draught proofing and the installation of further water saving devices, more low energy lighting projects and refrigerator motor controls. A report has been produced on renewable energy projects which would be suitable for the Palace of Westminster and it is intended for similar reports to be produced soon for all the other buildings on the Parliamentary Estate. Renewable energy projects will be considered for implementation but in general it is more cost effective to complete energy efficiency projects first.

52. During 2007/08 the Board of Management will consider options for adopting an environmental management standard across the Commons parts of the Estate and how this might be coordinated with similar initiatives in the House of Lords. This will be informed by the emerging recommendations of an internal audit relating to the House of Commons' performance against the existing environmental targets set for the public sector.



Installing low-energy lamps on Christmas trees reduced energy consumption by 98 per cent compared to previous years.

HAIS

Introduction

53. The first phase of the House Administrative Information System (HAIS) introduced a new system to support core finance and personnel functions in the Department of Finance and Administration and Serjeant at Arms' Department. A second phase – HAIS 2 – was established in 2004/05, aimed at improving the way human resource, finance and procurement services were conducted throughout the House Service. The three-year programme closed at the end of April 2007 on time and on budget.

54. In September 2003 the Board of Management decided that it needed to rationalise the way human resources and finance functions were managed in the House of Commons. This stemmed partly from a recommendation in the Braithwaite report (1999) to develop a more corporate approach to finance and human resource services, with a view to increasing their efficiency and effectiveness. The Board considered a variety of options for managing these functions, deciding on a “delegated model” as the one most able to deliver what was required. This model retains local as well as central human resource and finance teams, to ensure they can respond to local needs, but makes explicit the responsibilities and limits of authority of each. The HAIS programme was a means of defining and implementing the delegated model, while improving the quality of administrative information on which to base business decisions.

55. In brief the aim of HAIS 2 was to create “a single version of the truth”. Early signs are that this aim is on the way to being realised, with financial, human resource, payroll and purchasing data now entered into, processed, and extracted from a single corporate information system. This has required major business change, both to processes and ways of thinking about the organisation, involving staff from across the House of Commons Service.

56. The programme has made a significant contribution to two of the House's supporting tasks: planning and managing the House's resources to a high standard (supporting task iii) and ensuring information is well managed in pursuit of the primary objectives (supporting task v). Although the programme focussed on improving back-office administrative functions, the effectiveness of these functions is critical to the delivery of administrative services to Members, for example by providing a quicker overall process for managing expenses incurred by Members on committee visits and a single mechanism for settling debts on account.

Aims of the programme

57. The primary aims and objectives of HAIS 2, as set out in the business case, state the expected benefits of the programme:

“The primary objectives of HAIS 2 are:

- To define and implement the “delegated model” for human resource and finance services in the House of Commons, achieving greater consistency between departments.
- To achieve efficiency gains over time, as defined in the investment appraisal, thereby achieving demonstrable value for money in delivering administrative services.

In achieving these objectives, HAIS 2 also aims:

- To improve the quality (accuracy, timeliness and consistency) of data relating to finance, human resources, purchasing and procurement and payroll, aiming for a “single version of the truth”.
- To reduce duplication between the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) and departments, and within departments, in producing, reporting and verifying data, thereby aiming to increase speed, reduce errors and eliminate non-value effort.
- To clarify levels of authority and responsibility between DFA and departments, achieving greater clarity and accountability.”

Benefits realised

58. There is always a time lag between implementation and full benefits realisation, but some efficiency gains and reductions in duplication are beginning to be reported and mechanisms for ensuring they are fully realised and sustained are largely in place. Savings of an average of £1.5m a year (over the 5 year life span of the investment appraisal) were agreed and have been “top sliced” from departmental budgets, more than paying for the cost of the programme. Work will continue over the coming years to ensure the benefits are fully realised and sustained. Benefits to date have been:

Target Outcome	Current status: as at the end of HAIS 2
Define and implement the delegated model	<p>A documented delegated model has been defined and agreed by the Board of Management and has been implemented through the 17 workstreams of the HAIS programme.</p> <p>Heads of departments have signed off their responsibilities under the delegated model, acknowledging their implications for their ways of working.</p> <p>Evidence from workstream reviews and “stocktakes” indicate that the delegated model is currently being followed.</p>
Achieve efficiency gains over time	<p>Target savings have been agreed by Board of Management and have been “top sliced” from budgets.</p> <p>Single data source for financial information across the House now in place.</p> <p>Management accounts now produced within 5 working days of the month end compared with 9 days previously.</p> <p>Turnaround for year end accounts is approximately one month compared with several months previously.</p> <p>Sick absence reports to Board of Management now provided on consistent, corporate basis.</p> <p>Training courses now co-ordinated across the House.</p> <p>HR and financial planning more closely aligned, reducing extent of reconciliation needed.</p>

59. There have been additional benefits of the programme:

- Staff working on similar administrative functions have been brought together, and share a better understanding of work across departments.
- Seven in-house staff were trained to deliver HAIS training to their colleagues, acquiring a formal Group Training Certificate. These staff now provide a pool of qualified trainers for other projects.

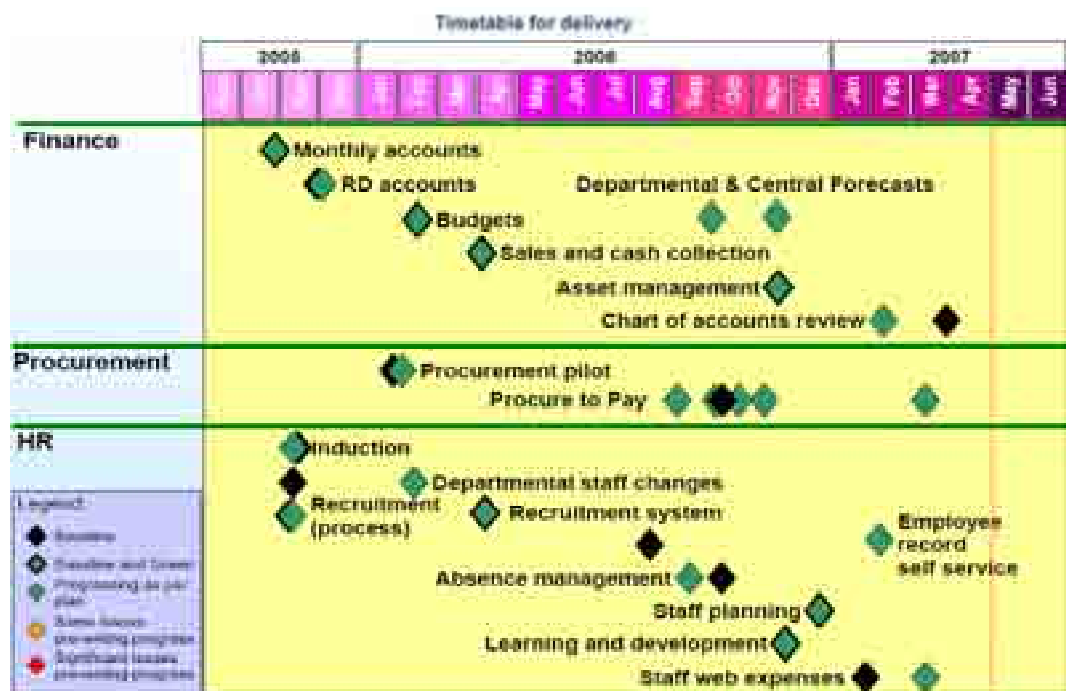


Staff from across the House Service attended HAIS training courses.

60. Some departments are reporting a growth in administrative work as a result of HAIS, although this is largely as a direct result of responsibilities being passed to them through the delegated model, or because they are now exercising better control over managing their resources. Some of this extra work may be transitional as staff get used to new processes and a new system. The situation will be assessed as part of the planned benefits reviews.

Project management and lessons learnt

61. The programme delivered on time overall within the three years. Year one focussed on business case development and strategic positioning, which proved an essential foundation for achieving the intended outcome. Years two and three focussed on implementation, with the 17 workstreams going live over 18 months. This was a demanding programme for the House Service but all milestones were achieved within the planned window, even allowing for some movement against individual dates.



62. The programme was delivered within agreed costs, although the profile of costs varied somewhat from what was originally predicted, with some costs being incurred later than forecast. The savings targets over the period of the business case will be achieved, given the top-slicing approach agreed by the Board of Management, with work to deliver procurement savings being a particular focus for 2007/08. The profile of savings has changed from that in the investment appraisal, with savings starting later but the overall figure increasing slightly.

63. Strict project management disciplines, including proper documentation and change control, were used on the programme, with an experienced team drawn from inside and outside the House Service. This mix of skills and knowledge proved valuable in delivering a successful programme. The Programme Board has reviewed the lessons learned, and identified the following five as of particular significance:

- Clear ownership by the project board is essential, with members who know their roles and take appropriate responsibility for their agreed actions. External challenge helps.
- Focus on users and involve them at all stages – this takes time and effort on all sides.
- Firm project management disciplines are essential. This includes providing the right information to the project board, at the right time, to facilitate decision making.
- Secure adequate resources with the right skills, experience and attitude.
- Involve ICT staff during the project as they are the ones who will need to provide support after project closure.

64. These lessons learned are being incorporated into project guidance to ensure that they are actively applied to future programmes and projects in Parliament.

A foundation for the future

65. Although the HAIS programme has been completed successfully and the project closed, there is much further work required to exploit the foundation that HAIS provides. In 2007/08 an assessment will be made as to whether web access to the system would be of use to Members in managing their allowances, for example in having access to their budget statements or in submitting claims electronically. Limited self-service functions for expenses, learning and development and personal details have been made available to staff of the House, by way of a pilot for future developments, although more development work would be needed to make web services fit for Members' use.

66. The HAIS system now contains a wealth of management information that, if harnessed and used, will be valuable to senior managers in decision-making. Effort will now be put into designing further tailored reports to help manage the organisation's performance. The programme bequeathed a strong foundation for future development and provided valuable lessons for future projects and programmes in the House of Commons.

2006

Crossrail

A
B I L L
TO

Make provision for a railway transport system running from the County of Berkshire, and Heathrow Airport, in the Hillingdon, through central London to Shenfield, in the Abbey Wood, in the London Borough of Greenwich; and

Providing advice and services to the House and its Committees

Introduction

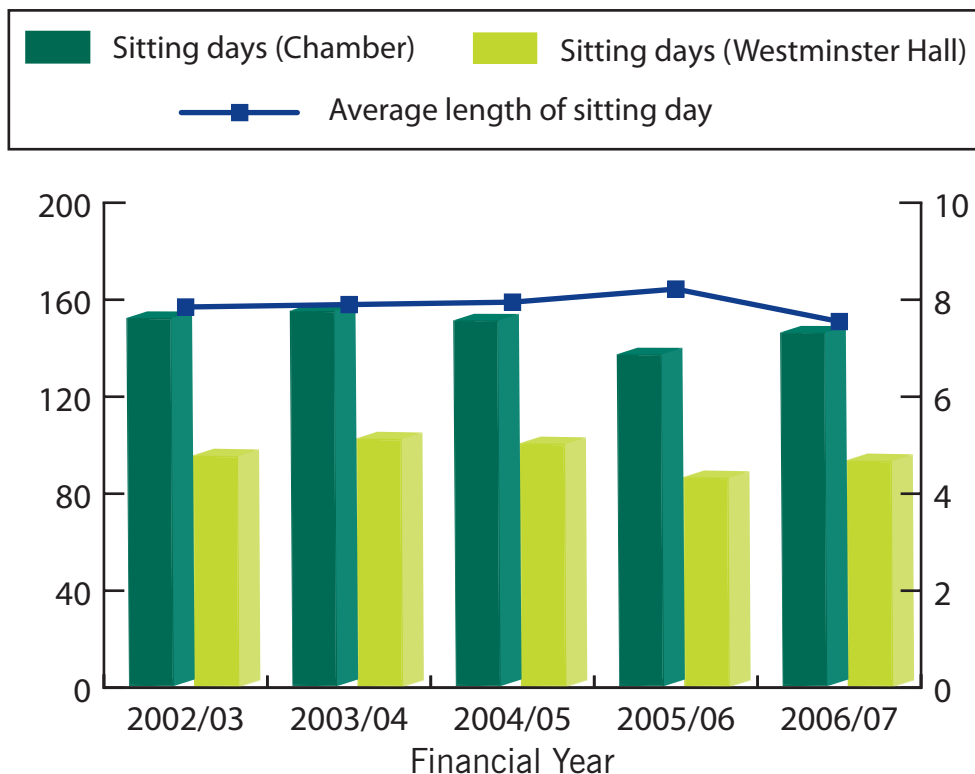
67. The principal functions of the House of Commons are to examine proposed legislation, scrutinise government policy and administration, and debate major issues of the day. In order to support this work the key objective of the House Service must be to provide high quality advice and services that enable the House and its committees to carry out these tasks effectively. This includes procedural and administrative support for the Chamber and committees, reporting of proceedings of the House and the provision of procedural documents and briefing. The principal departments which provide these services are the Clerk's Department, the Library and the Department of the Official Report.

68. These services must be provided to high and exacting standards and be responsive to the needs and requirements of the House. Indicators of the House Service's success in this area are the satisfaction of the House, in particular as expressed by the Speaker and his deputies, the Commission, Select Committee chairmen and the Chairman's Panel, and the accuracy timeliness and fitness for purpose of key outputs such as the Order Paper, Hansard, committee reports and Library briefing papers.

Sittings of the House

69. The chart below gives information about the number of sitting days and their average duration in each of the last five years:

Sittings of the House



70. Further information about the business of the House and its committees can be found in the annual Sessional Return, the most recent of which covers the 2005-06 session.⁹

71. In 2006 the House agreed, for the first time, to provide for the tabling and answering of written questions during the summer recess. Over 730 questions were tabled on the three specified days in the first half of September. On 1 November 2006 the House agreed to a motion welcoming the introduction of this procedure and giving the opinion that this practice should continue in lieu of September sittings.¹⁰ A Standing Order putting these arrangements on a permanent basis was agreed to on 28 March 2007 (for more information on questions see paragraph 75 below).¹¹

Reporting proceedings of the House

72. Edited verbatim reports of proceedings in the House and Westminster Hall – the Official Report or Hansard – are printed overnight and made available in hard copy by 7.30am, and on the internet by 8am, the following day. As mentioned in last year's report, in 2005/06 the Department of the Official Report improved access to reports of proceedings in the Chamber by making them available on the parliamentary website within three to four hours of a speech being made: in 2006/07 this service was extended to reports of proceedings in Westminster Hall. From February 2007 reports of proceedings in General Committees have been made available online on the same day on which they are produced, which in most cases means on the day on which the Committee sat.¹² On a trial basis the Department has provided the facility for Members to have their speeches emailed to them before publication. This will be introduced permanently in 2007/08.

73. In 2006/07 a total of 47,712 pages of reports of proceedings in the Chamber, Westminster Hall and General Committees, as well as written ministerial statements and written answers, were published. The production of significantly increased numbers of written answers has been achieved by the Department of the Official Report within existing resources through the efficient deployment of staff and technology.



The Official Report, "Hansard", is delivered to the House of Commons by 7.30am each morning.

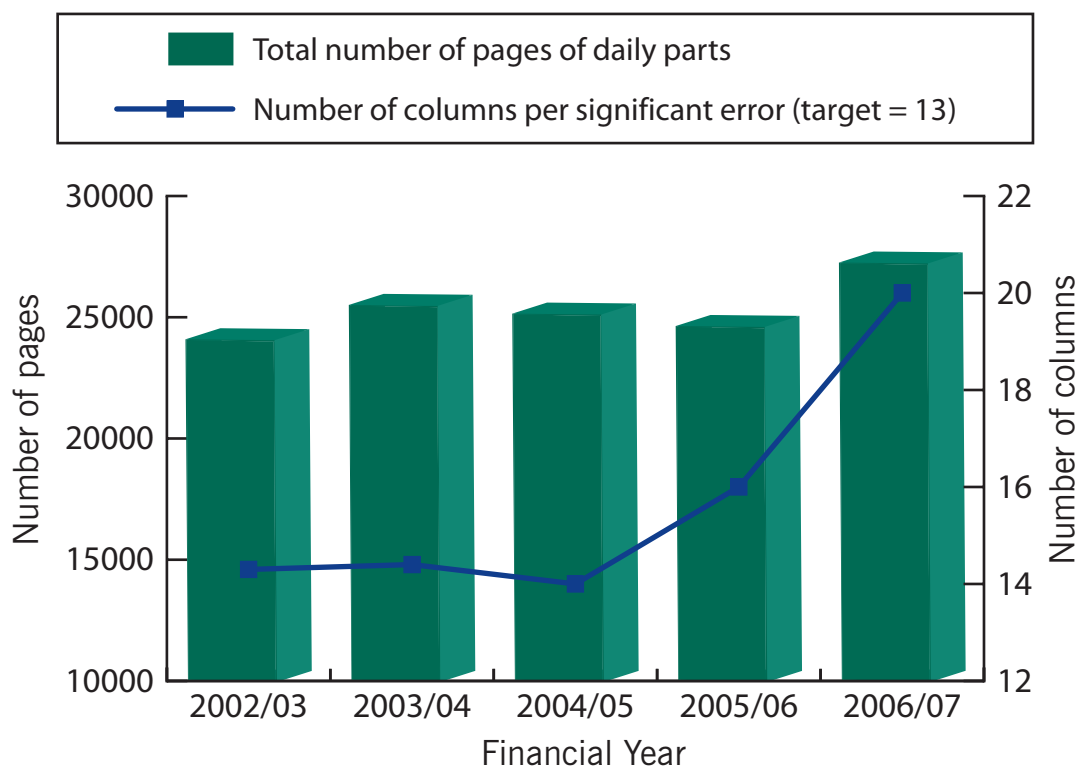
⁹ HC 1 2006-07

¹⁰ HC Deb c418

¹¹ HC Deb c1552

¹² General Committees is a term that has replaced Standing Committee, and includes Public Bill Committees, Delegated Legislation Committees, Grand Committees and European Standing Committees. For more information on this change see paragraph 83.

Reporting of Proceedings in the House: Activity Levels and Performance



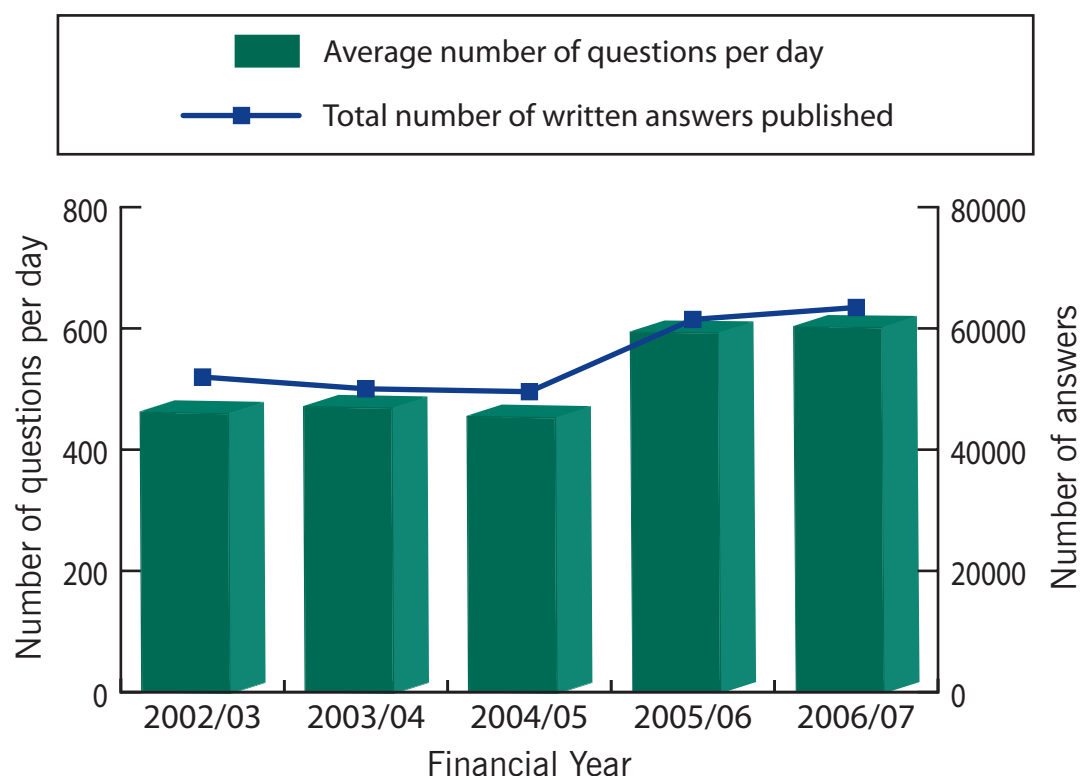
74. The Hansard Production Unit (see paragraph 73 of last year's report) started full production of all House of Commons and House of Lords Hansard reports in May 2006. There have been a number of benefits of bringing this pagination work in-house, including the business continuity benefits of reducing dependency on the print contractor, and cost savings on the printing contract. Also more written answers are now processed overnight than was the case before.

Parliamentary Questions and EDMs

75. Notices of questions and Early Day Motions (EDMs) are received and processed by the Table Office, part of the Clerk's Department, which also advises Members on their content, prepares the daily Order Paper and advises the Clerks at the Table during sittings. The Office of the Editorial Supervisor of the Vote, also part of the Clerk's Department, produces ready-to-print files for nightly electronic transmission to the printer. Answers to questions are published by the Department of the Official Report, and questions and EDMs are indexed by staff of the Library.

76. After the unprecedented rise in the numbers of parliamentary questions and EDMs reported in last year's report (see paragraphs 76 and 77), both remained at historically high levels in 2006/07. More than 74,600 written and 6,340 oral questions were tabled. This represented a marked increase, of 20 per cent, of the number of written questions tabled compared to the previous financial year, which was partially offset by a reduction in the number of questions tabled for oral answer.

Questions and Answers



77. There were similar increases in EDM activity. 2,218 motions were tabled in 2006/07, the equivalent of 76 every sitting week, and 12 per cent more than in 2005/06. Added names, at 127,623, were more than 15,000 up overall, and at 4,345 per sitting week were three per cent up on 2005/06.

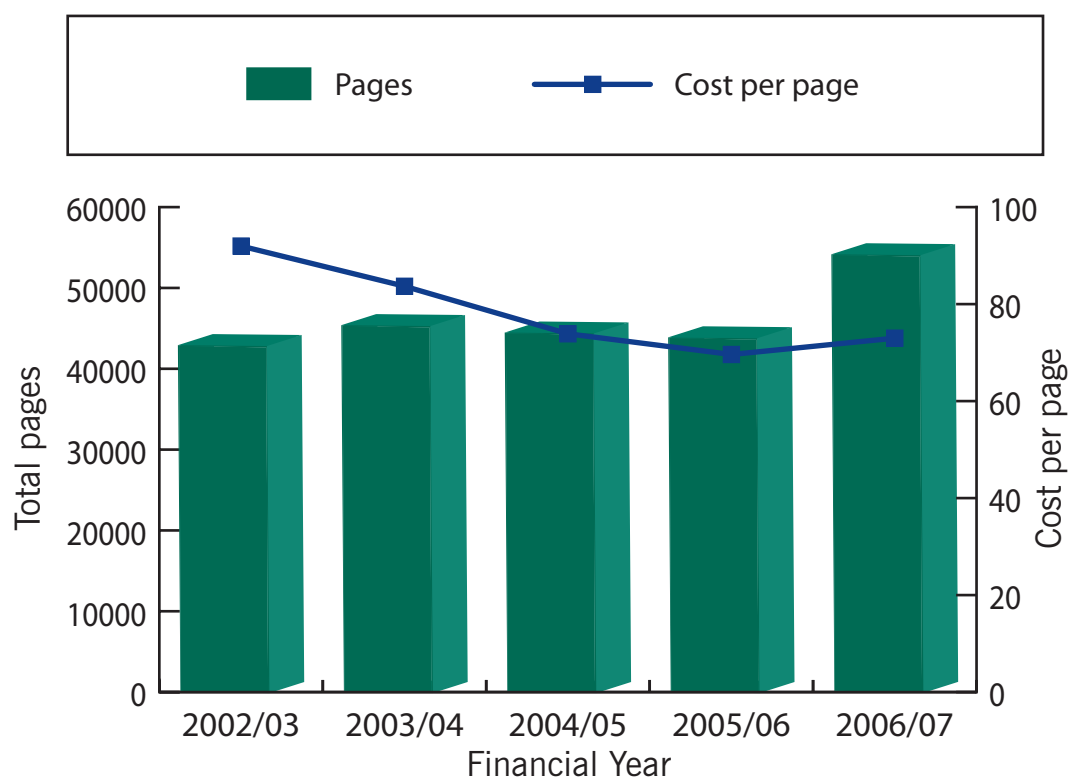
78. By the end of the year almost half of all written questions were being submitted electronically. 334 Members are now registered for the e-tabling system; some 185 were using it regularly as at 31 March 2007.

79. During 2006/07 House officials continued to explore the possibility of electronic delivery of answers to written questions with the E-Government Unit. The House jointly funded a consultancy with the government to review the operation of the Electronic Parliamentary Community current questions and answers system. The report recommended a way forward which, if taken up by government, would allow e-delivery of answers to commence. Discussions are ongoing with the Leader of the House's Office with a view to putting in place a pilot project in the second half of 2007/08.

80. A number of recent and ongoing reviews relate to the core work of the Table Office. The Procedure Committee is expected to report on Public Petitions and EDMs in May 2007.¹³ In December 2006 it also commenced an inquiry into Written Questions. An internal audit review of parliamentary questions, concentrating on the mechanics of the system as a whole and the integration of the handling of questions and answers, is underway.

81. In 2006/07 54,268 Vote Bundle pages were printed, at a cost of £72.98 per page. The Vote Bundle project, to bring in-house the typesetting and pagination of all papers in the Vote Bundle including the Order of Business, questions, EDMs and amendments to bills, was concluded at the end of 2005/06. Information on savings realised from the project are discussed at paragraph 119 below.

Vote Bundle Costs



Legislation

Introduction

82. The Legislation Service, part of the Clerk's Department, is comprised of the Public Bill Office, Private Bill Office, Ways and Means Office and Delegated Legislation Office, and supports the work of the House and its Committees in considering public and private bills, statutory instruments, EU documents, human rights matters and regulatory reform proposals. Staff based in the Legislation Service also provide advice and support to the Chairman of Ways and Means and the other Deputy Speakers, members of the Chairmen's Panel and staff the National Parliament Office in Brussels.

¹³ HC 513 2006-07

83. The most significant developments for the Legislation Service in 2006/07 were the results of the implications of the report of the Modernisation Committee concerning the legislative process.¹⁴ Standing committees have been replaced by a new class of committees, general committees. Within this class a new form of committee is the public bill committee. Unlike standing committees on bills which they replace, they have the power to take written and oral evidence from witnesses before beginning clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. The purpose of this part of the proceedings is to enable the committee to understand the impact that specific provisions of the bill will have on individuals, organisations and the public at large. Other changes resulting from the Committee's report include enhanced information on the passage of legislation on the Parliament website, and the production of additional Library briefings for Members (see paragraph 110).



A Public Bill Committee takes evidence from witnesses in advance of clause-by-clause consideration of a bill.

Bills

84. The Public and Private Bill Offices support the work of the House and its Committees in considering public and private bills and statutory instruments. There was a 33 per cent increase in general committee sittings over the previous year and a continued need to service meetings of the Select Committee on the Crossrail Bill. The number of Government bills fell from 49 in 2005/06 to 38 in 2006/07, while the number of Private Members bills, 86, was virtually unchanged. The average number of amendments, new clauses and new schedules tabled per sitting day during 2006/07 showed a marked increase with 53 per day in 2006/07 compared to 40 per day in 2005/06, an election year, and 49 per day in 2004/05.

85. As noted in paragraph 83 the advent of public bill committees has resulted in significant changes in working practices. Where a committee decides to take either written or oral evidence clerks from the Public Bill Office work in co-operation with colleagues from the Scrutiny Unit to provide assistance and briefing (see paragraph 102 for more information on the Scrutiny Unit).

86. Private Bill activity continued at a low level, with five private bills introduced in November 2006: two in the Commons and three in the Lords. Due to the previous year's private bills making slow progress, during the period under review nine bills in total were considered by one or other of the two Houses, six of which had some of their stages in the Commons. However, for those involved in private bill work, the year was dominated by proceedings on the hybrid Crossrail Bill.

¹⁴ HC 1097 2005-06

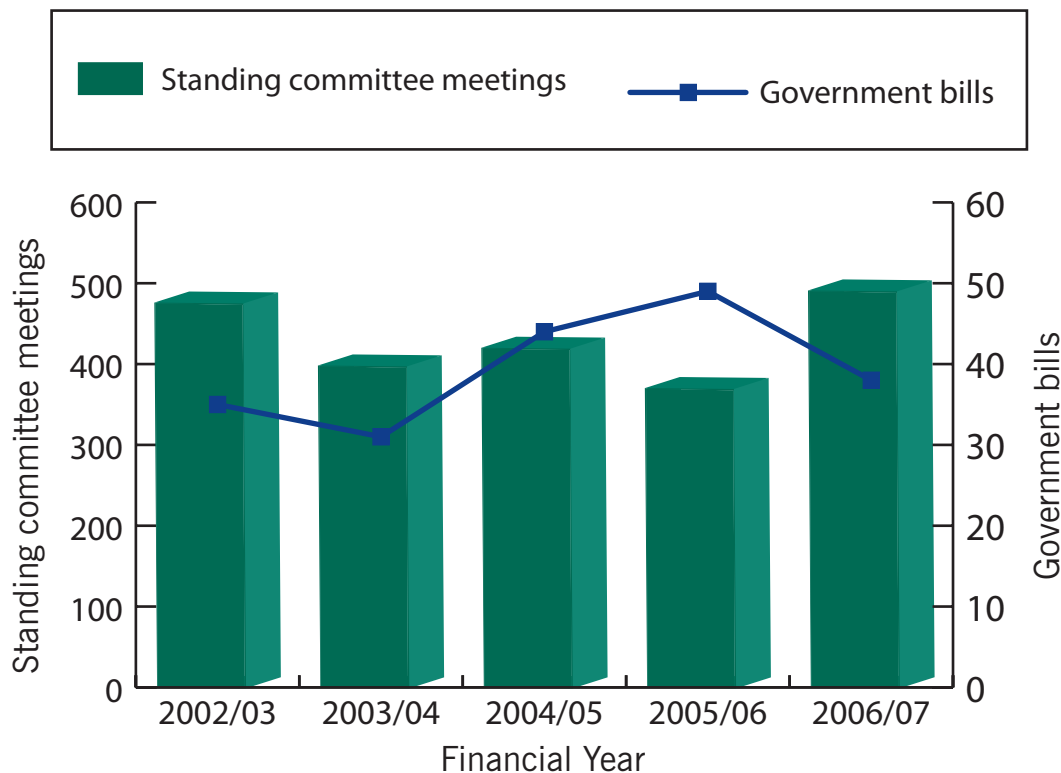
87. During 2006/07 the Select Committee on the Crossrail Bill held 103 public meetings and made five site visits. The Committee concluded hearing cases based on the 457 petitions lodged against the Bill and the three sets of Additional Provisions (amendments the Government will ask the Committee to make to the Bill). A fourth set of Additional Provisions was deposited in the Private Bill Office in May 2007, and the Committee will sit later in 2007 to consider any petitions deposited against these amendments to the bill. During 2006/07, the Committee received over 300 memoranda during the evidence sessions. Most of these exhibits were displayed on personal computer screens to Committee, via the PaSS System (Parliamentary Support System). The Committee have seen over 2,200 documents through this system.



The Select Committee on the Crossrail Bill continued to sit during 2006/07.

88. The following chart provides an indication of the work of the Public and Private Bill Offices in the last five years.

Public bills: Activity Measures



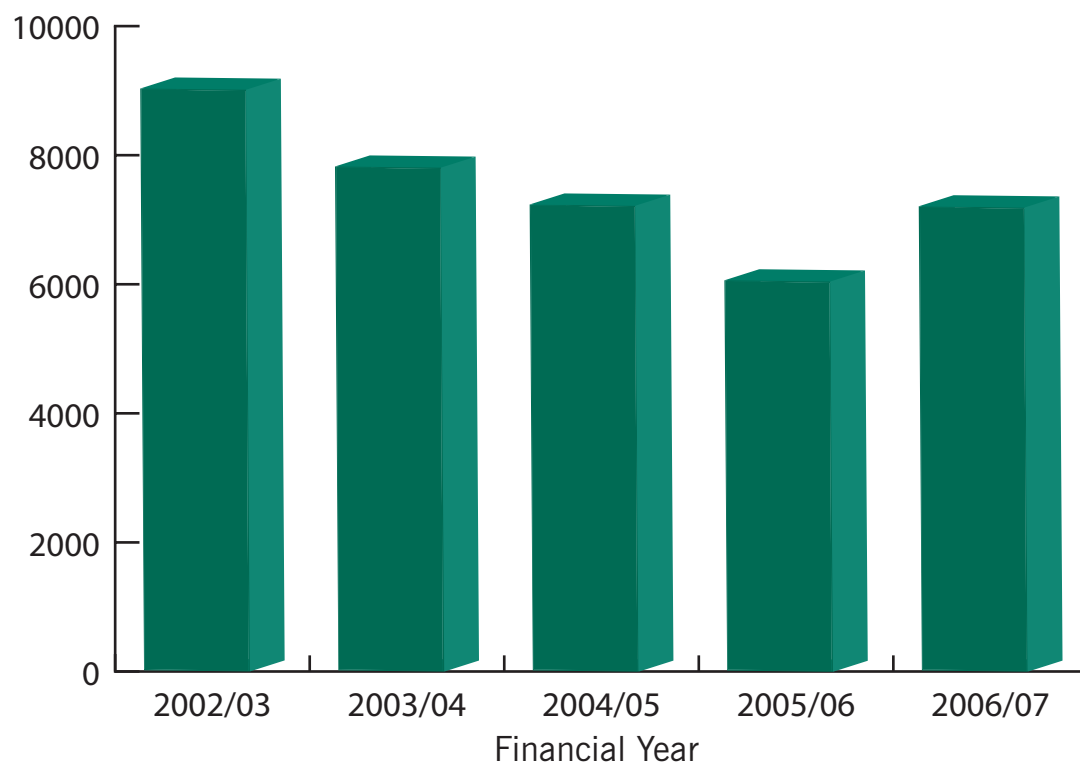
89. The project to digitise the Private Acts has now been completed, and has been received in cd-rom format by the Private Bill Office. The Acts were digitised in order to preserve the degrading quality of the Private Act collection, and to provide easier reference and access by the Private Bill Office to Acts as and when required. This proved to be a challenging task, however the scanned quality of each Act is as good as the original and in some cases better and the project concluded within budget. Sets of disks have been made available to Parliamentary Archives and the Libraries of both Houses. The Private Bill Office has had positive feedback indicating that this resource is useful. Online publication of these digitised Acts would be desirable in the longer term and this view has been presented to the Digitisation Steering Group for their consideration.

90. Further information regarding the work of the Public and Private Bill Offices, in relation to amendments and the drafting of bills, is contained in paragraph 122.

Reporting of general committees

91. As discussed in paragraphs 72 and 83 above, the family of committees previously known as standing committees were renamed general committees during the year. The total number of debates in these committees published in the past five years is shown in the chart below:

Reporting of General Committees: Activity Levels



Delegated legislation and European scrutiny

92. Information about the volume of scrutiny work undertaken by the European Scrutiny Committee, the Joint and Select Committees on Statutory Instruments, the Regulatory Reform Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights is contained in annex 1.

93. Following on from the conclusion of the passage of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill, the Regulatory Reform Committee considered the draft versions of the new standing orders required to handle the procedures contained within the Act. The Committee staff held detailed discussions with the Cabinet Office and with the House of Commons Legal Services Office and Clerk of Delegated Legislation, and the Committee produced two Special Reports on revised new Standing Orders in the financial year to March 2007.¹⁵ The first Orders are expected to be presented under the new Act in 2007/08.

94. Proposals contained in the Modernisation Committee's report of 2004-05 on European Scrutiny have not yet been considered by the House.¹⁶ If implemented they could have significant implications for the nature and the volume of the European Scrutiny Committee's work.

National Parliament Office

95. The UK National Parliament Office (NPO) was established in 1999. It comprises one Commons Clerk, working with a locally-engaged assistant, and one Lords Clerk. It is located at the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels. The European Parliament provides office space and ancillary services free of charge to the NPO, as it does to the twenty-one other national parliaments or chambers now represented directly in Brussels. It also provides office space to the small secretariat of the Conference of EU Affairs Committees of national parliaments of the Member States (COSAC).

96. The two Commons staff of the NPO monitor activities in the EU institutions which are relevant to the House's scrutiny of EU business, attending meetings of European Parliament committees and its plenary sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels, and monitoring other key events such as weekly Commission meetings and meetings of the European Council and the Council of Ministers. They report each week on current events in the EU institutions via a briefing paper for the European Scrutiny Committee. The staff of the office also provide support and assistance to individual Members and Committees or delegations of Members of both Houses attending EU-related meetings in Brussels as required.

97. In 2006/07 the NPO increased its efforts to achieve improved understanding of the processes of Westminster within the European Parliament, the Commission and other EU bodies, and of those bodies within Westminster. To this end, the NPO is developing a weekly information sheet, to provide MEPs, their staff and other interested parties in Brussels with relevant information on European Scrutiny Committee reports and other EU-related select committee activity. This service will be launched early in the financial year 2007/08.

Select committees

98. Select committees are serviced by staff in the Clerk's Department, mainly based in the Committee Office. After the substantial break in scrutiny by select committees in the last financial year due to the general election, when a major programme of staff training was undertaken, in 2006/07 select committee activity returned to its former high level with 1,173 select committee meetings and 203 reports from departmental select committees.

¹⁵HC 160 2006-07 and HC 385 2006-07

¹⁶ HC 465 2004-05

99. Select committees are increasingly using a variety of innovative working methods, which have been commended by the Liaison Committee. 2006/07 saw e-consultation exercises; the use of committee rapporteurs in addition to the traditional formats for taking evidence; formal evidence-taking away from Westminster; and increased use of seminars and other informal proceedings. Examples include a “Science Question Time” session hosted by the Science and Technology Committee; the Education and Skills Committee utilising Teachers’ TV to publicise a call for evidence; and the visit of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee to the Royal Agricultural Show both to take formal evidence – with readers of “Farmers Weekly” being invited to apply to give oral evidence to the Committee in advance of the show – and members of the Committee offering informal one-to-one conversations. In 2007/08 moderated e-forums for certain select committee inquiries will be available via the Parliamentary website.



Members of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee attended, and took evidence at, the Royal Agricultural Show.

100. It is one of the objectives of the Committee Office to promote public knowledge of select committees. During 2006/07 each Visitor Assistant shadowed the work of a select committee so that they had first hand experience which they could describe to the public (for more information on the work of Visitor Assistants see paragraph 38). Other activities by select committees were specifically focussed on increasing engagement with the public via the media, including wholly new departures such as involvement with “You and Yours” on BBC Radio 4, where several Committee Chairmen took part in panel discussions and live on-air phone-ins relating to specific committee reports. A priority for 2007/08 will be the further development of media coverage of individual select committees, with a particular focus beyond national news.

101. During 2006/07 the Clerk of the House instituted a review of the resources available to select committees, to help inform decisions about the balance of resources needed by each committee. The review, which is being led by a Director of the National Audit Office, follows up a review in 2002/03 which led to increased staff for most select committees. The review will also examine the role of the Scrutiny Unit and other sources of support for committees.

Scrutiny Unit

102. The Scrutiny Unit, based in the Clerk’s Department, provides specialist advice to select committees on expenditure and draft legislation, develops and shares good working practices, and assists public bill committees. Most of the staff in the Unit come from outside the House Service, from a variety of organisations including the National Audit Office, the Audit Commission, government departments and private companies, on period secondments.

103. In 2006/07 the Unit has facilitated the financial scrutiny of Government by select committees, including assessment of departmental spending plan reports. It has also provided the main support for pre-legislative scrutiny of draft bills and managed the briefing for public bill committees, in co-operation with colleagues in departmental committee teams and in the Library. At the request of the Clerk of the House, in his role as Accounting Officer, the Unit has begun a review of the House's internal audit function (see paragraph 264).

Delegations to Overseas Assemblies

104. The European Section of the Overseas Office in the House of Commons supports Members of both Houses appointed to the delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Assembly of the Western European Union (AWEU), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA) and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA). At the end of 2006/07 60 Members of the House of Commons and 13 Peers served on the delegations. Delegates attended 10 plenary sessions and over 220 committee meetings during the year. Members also took part in five election observation missions.

105. During the year British Members chaired three AWEU committees, seven acted as vice-chairs and six acted as rapporteurs in relation to committee reports. Two PACE committees had British vice-chairs and British Members acted as rapporteurs on 10 occasions. Five Members on the UK delegation to the NATO PA acted as either Chairmen or Vice-Chairmen of its committees, and three acted as rapporteurs.

106. The European Section made the arrangements for visits to the UK by the Migration, Refugees and Population committee of PACE, the Presidential Committee of the AWEU and a sub-committee of the Science and Technology committee of the NATO PA.

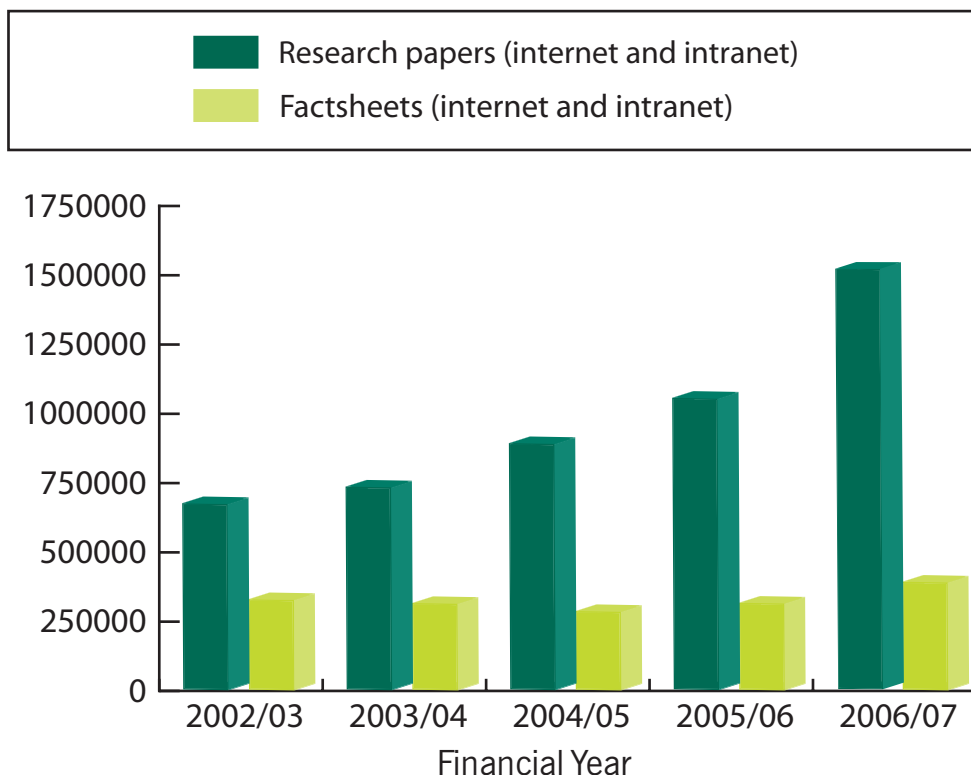
107. In May 2006 the House of Commons Commission agreed to a proposal from the UK delegation to the NATO PA that the UK Parliament should host the 2009 annual session of the NATO PA. The European Section has begun the process of making arrangements for the session, which is likely to be attended by over 700 delegates from across Europe and North America. These arrangements are being overseen by a project board chaired by Rt. Hon Bruce George MP, leader of the UK delegation, and consisting of officials from both Houses and representatives from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the NATO PA secretariat.

Providing information for the House and its committees

House of Commons Library

108. The Library provides a range of pre-prepared briefings to assist Members in carrying out their duties both in the Chamber and in committees. These include research papers, shorter "Standard Notes" and "Debate Packs". During the year, 80 research papers were published, providing background and commentary on bills and other topical issues along with regular statistical bulletins. These included papers produced before the Commons second reading of all major bills. Research papers are available on the Parliament website as well as internally; during the year such papers were downloaded on just under 1.5 million occasions. The chart below shows how the number of Library publications accessed from both the Parliament website and intranet has increased considerably in recent years.

Library: on-line material accessed



109. Standard notes are more informal briefings, held primarily in electronic form and made available on the parliamentary intranet. They have proved popular with Members and their staff as they can be easily updated and generally address issues of current interest. By the end of the year 2,813 standard notes were available on the intranet and had been accessed 289,000 times during 2006/07. Standard notes on parliamentary topics are also available to the public via the Parliament website. Debate Packs are collections of readily available material (such as newspaper articles, parliamentary questions, and standard notes) relevant to non-legislative debates taking place in either the Chamber or Westminster Hall. During the year 178 separate debate packs were produced.

110. During 2006/07, following the report of the Modernisation Committee on the legislative process, the Library made a new commitment to produce research papers after the Committee Stage on government bills. These new research papers have been successfully piloted, and extra staff posts have been approved to support this work and other new briefing on legislation.

Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology

111. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) operates as an independent unit providing both Houses of Parliament with objective analysis of public policy issues relating to science and technology. Both Houses have asked POST to keep them informed on public dialogue activities in science and technology. The work of POST is overseen by a Parliamentary Board, comprised of Members of both Houses, leading non-Parliamentarians from the science community and senior Parliamentary officials. POST is funded from the Administration Estimate, with 30 per cent of the cost being recovered from the House of Lords.

112. POST provides a wide range of support to Members of both Houses and select committees on request and on its own initiative. Its regular publication programme also feeds into committee activity, including stimulating decisions to hold an inquiry. In 2006/07 POST conducted separate pieces of work for a total of 12 Lords and Commons committees. POST also published 16 “POSTnotes” (Parliamentary briefings) on a wide range of subjects.

113. POST also organises discussions to promote wider awareness of Parliament’s role in scientific and technological fields. The latter part of the reporting period saw POST heavily involved in organising a parliamentary event to mark International Polar Year, and to raise awareness of polar research amongst Parliamentarians. Attendance more than filled the Members Dining Room – making it one of the best patronised events POST has ever organised.

114. POST has continued to conduct its fellowship and internship schemes, supported by many of the UK’s research councils and learned societies, who sponsor postgraduate students and post-doctoral researchers to work under supervision on a specific publication or on select committee support. In 2007, POST is facilitating a job-swap with the environment section of the Parliamentary Library Research Service (Australia) which it is hoped will benefit both the UK and Australian Parliaments.



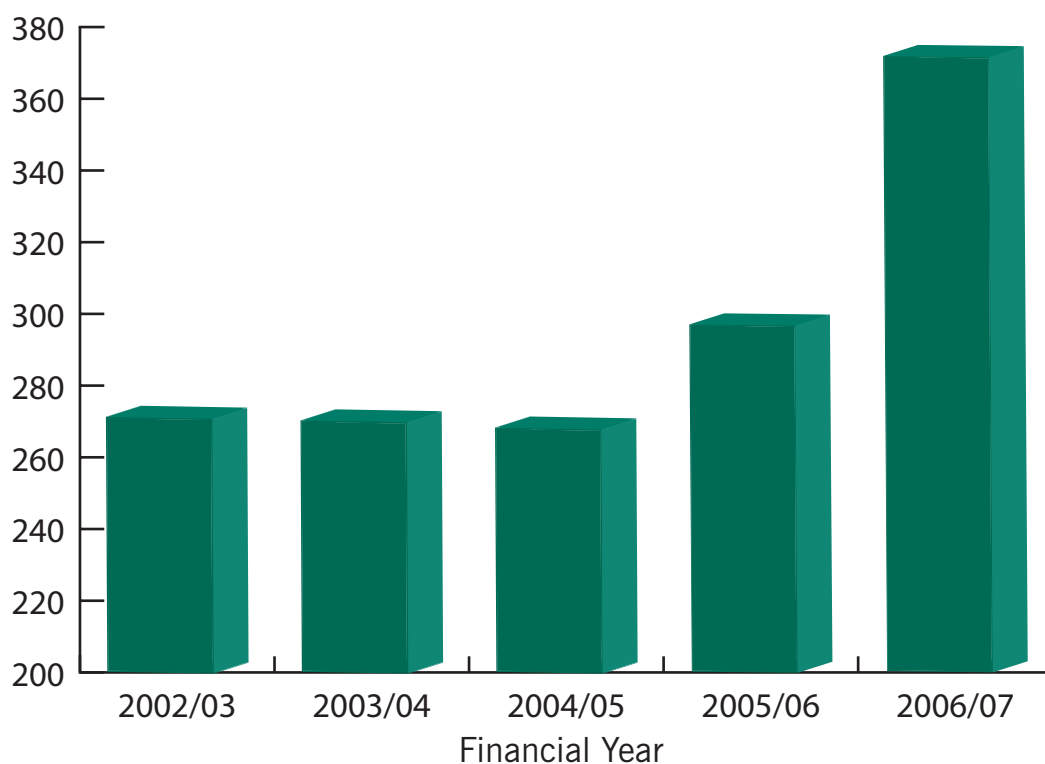
Vote Office staff take delivery of the day’s Parliamentary Papers.

Vote Office

115. The Vote Office provides the House with the papers required for the conduct of its business, obtains other official papers required by Members for their parliamentary duties and co-ordinates the House’s printing and publishing under the direction of the Printing and Publishing Management Group. The Vote Office also includes Print Services (see paragraph 118) and the Parliamentary Bookshop (see paragraph 169).

116. Page volumes for House papers have continued to rise, with 54,268 vote bundle pages produced in 2006/07, a 10 per cent increase over 2005/06. The increase in the volume of papers was largely attributable to an increase in the number of questions and EDMs, with eight per cent more business papers and seven per cent more EDM papers produced in 2006/07 than previously. Expenditure on printing in the year was just under £10m and whole House costs of printing, publishing and purchasing documents was £12.6m.

Daily Vote Bundle: Average Number of Pages

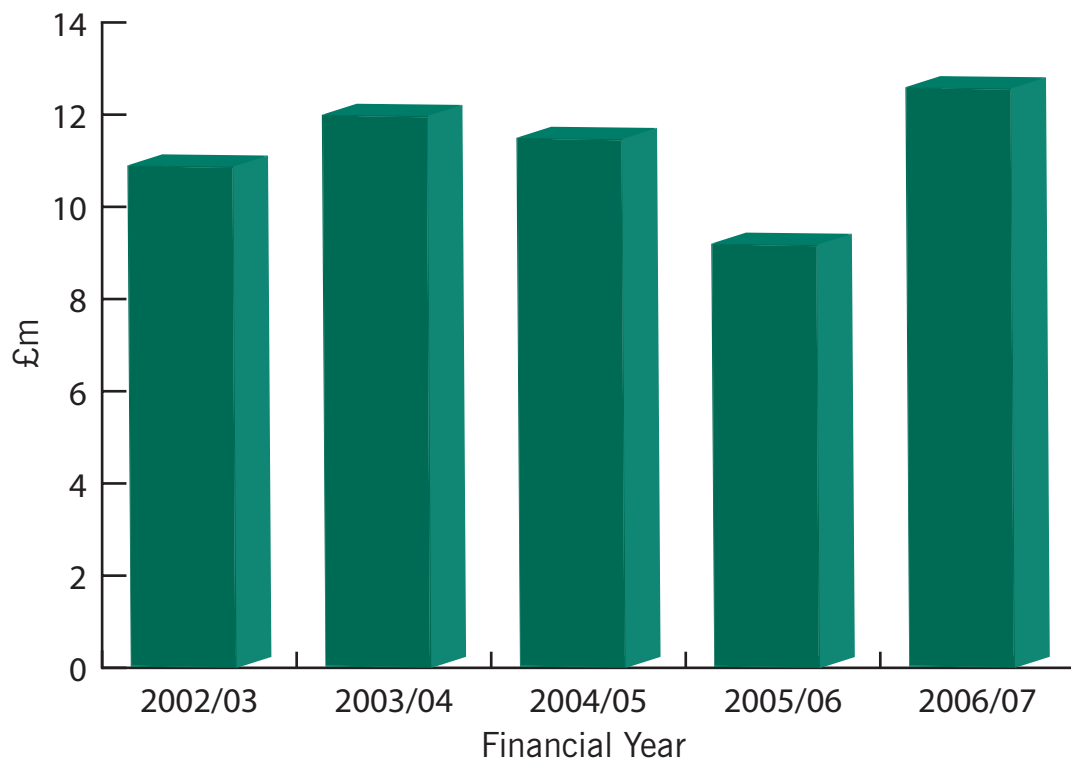


117. During 2006/07 the contract for the printing and publication of the House's papers was tendered and re-let. The contract was re-awarded to The Stationery Office (TSO). As part of the new contract the House authorities negotiated legal undertakings to protect the availability of resources required for printing parliamentary publications. These safeguards proved valuable when TSO was sold to Williams Lea at the beginning of 2007, and these instruments have been maintained with the new owners.

118. In addition to these measures the Vote Office maintains an in-House printing unit, Print Services, which forms part of the key contingency plan to ensure the availability of parliamentary papers sufficient to enable the House to sit. A useful by-product of these contingency measures is that Print Services is able to offer departments of the House an in-House design and printing facility. During 2006/07 nearly 8,000 jobs were completed and over 1 million printed pages were produced of which 1,500 required origination and only 170 needed to be outsourced. By continually improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the machinery in Print Services, the financial advantage of carrying out work in-House has continued to increase and the target of producing over £1m of equivalent work has been achieved.

119. The Vote Bundle project (discussed in paragraph 81 of last year's report) has now been completed and the final report of the project was delivered in July 2006. The project delivered the substantial savings which it set out to achieve, some £2.5m over its six year life. 97 per cent of these daily page rate savings have been retained on the re-award of the printing contract (see paragraph 117) and it is estimated that at present volumes of production of the Vote Bundle a further £12.5m of savings compared to pre-project prices will be delivered over the 10 years of the contract.

Expenditure on Publishing and Publications





**Providing advice and services to individual
Members and their staff**

Introduction

120. The House Service aims to provide individual Members and their staff with high quality advice and services which enable them to carry out their various parliamentary duties effectively. This includes providing accurate and timely procedural advice and information services, good quality office accommodation and related services, and an effective ICT infrastructure. The House Service also administers payments and services funded by the Members Estimate, including Members' pay and allowances, training and the central provision of IT equipment.

Survey of Services

121. Work was ongoing throughout 2006/07 on the once-a-Parliament "Survey of Services", led by a project board chaired by the Clerk of Committees, Helen Irwin. Janet Anderson MP, a member of Administration Committee, was also a member of the project board. The survey was sent to all 646 MPs and their paid staff, amounting to just under 3,000 questionnaire forms. A key aim of the project board was to increase participation in the survey: the previous survey held in 2003 achieved a 23 per cent response from Members and 28 per cent from their staff. To encourage greater participation there was flexibility about method of completion, with a choice between online, paper and telephone response. A communications plan sought to raise awareness of the survey, and gave information as to changes that had happened as a result of the last survey. By the time it was completed in March 2007, the survey had achieved a response rate of 45 per cent from Members and 54 per cent from their staff. Feedback was generally positive, with many of those taking part in the survey commenting specifically on the professional nature of the House services. Most people feel that, in recent times, the House services have not changed significantly (58%) and over a third of people (37%) feel that they have become more effective.¹⁷ Once analysed, the results of the survey will be used by the Board of Management to plan future services. Staff of the House Service were surveyed separately in April 2006; for more information see paragraph 191.

Procedural services

122. Government bills and Government amendments are drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel; however, a primary function of the Public Bill office is the drafting of bills and amendments for private Members, who can seldom call on professional drafting assistance. A considerable number of amendments to bills are drafted by clerks in the Public Bill Office, and, during 2006/07, the Office drafted, or made a significant input into the drafting of 29 private Members' bills on a range of topics. Three other bills introduced during the year had been drafted by the Office at an earlier date. Other procedural assistance given to individual Members includes advice regarding petitions and statutory instruments from clerks in the Journal Office and regarding questions and Early Day Motions from clerks in the Table Office.

Research and information services

123. The Library provides an information and research service for Members and their staff, covering all subjects within the scope of parliamentary activity. This includes responding to specific questions and requests for briefing, in addition to the research papers and standard notes described in paragraph 108. A wide range of briefing material is also available to Members and their staff via the intranet, including subject-specific links to parliamentary and other material and useful external websites; an increasing number of constituency and other local-area statistics; 'bill gateways'; and other databases.

¹⁷ The results can be found on the Parliament website at: <http://www.parliament.uk/surveyofservices/>

124. The total number of enquiries for written and oral briefings answered by the research service in 2006/07 was some 12,300. The Library aims to respond to all these enquiries within the stated deadline or, for those requests without a deadline, within two weeks. In 2006/07, 98 per cent of research enquiries for which a deadline was specified were answered within that deadline; and 99 per cent of other enquiries were answered within two weeks. In addition, the Library answered many thousands of 'quick' questions that are not formally recorded.

125. The reading rooms in the Members Library (primarily for Members' use) and in Derby Gate and the e-Library in Portcullis House (primarily for Members' staff) continue to provide a valued service. The number of book loans in 2006/07 was 3,446. The proportion of loans from Library stock was 82 per cent, with the remainder being obtained through the inter-library loans scheme.

126. In November 2006 the House of Commons held the first open day for constituency-based staff aimed at Members' staff based outside Westminster, to inform them of the services available, especially Library research services, but also to highlight procedural and administrative services and training opportunities. A tour of both Houses was followed by an introduction from Malcolm Jack, Chief Executive of the House Service, emphasising the link between Members' Westminster and constituency activities, and talks on a number of topics. The day ended with an exhibition of services available to constituency-based staff, giving the opportunity for more informal interaction. Very positive feedback was received from those who participated in the day, and in 2007/08 the House Service will hold another event for constituency-based staff and one for Westminster-based staff.

127. The Library is keen to ensure that its services continue to adapt to meet the changing needs of Members and their staff. To that end, Members and their offices are being invited to meet with Library staff as part of a contact officer scheme to discuss existing Library services and potential enhancements in the future. This scheme was initiated after the 2005 election and it is intended that all Members should be offered the opportunity of a meeting with contact officers by the end of the current Parliament. In 2006/07 37 visits took place to Members whom the Library had identified as infrequent users. This followed the visits to 46 newly-elected Members in 2005/06.



Malcolm Jack, Chief Executive of the House Service, introduces the inaugural open day for Members' constituency-based staff.

128. During the year the Library began a small pilot project to look at podcasting. One of the “Library specialists” talks was recorded and made available in MP3 format via the Intranet, with the aim of providing a new medium by which Members and their staff can access Library material – either by listening to a talk directly on their PC, or by downloading it onto an MP3 player. Since the initial recording some experiments have been made with using an edited recording rather than a verbatim one, using an interview format, and also basing a talk around a Library Standard Note. Feedback so far has been positive and the Library will consider whether to use the format more widely early in 2007/08.

Office and related services

129. Approximately 4,700 people occupy the Commons parts of the Estate, consisting of Members, their staff, staff of the House Service and other occupants such as members of the Press and staff of the Post Office. In 2006/07 the Administration Committee conducted an inquiry into accommodation and made recommendations concerning the future use of existing accommodation.¹⁸ The Commission, after consultation with the Board of Management, gave its initial response to the Committee on 18 December 2006,¹⁹ and asked the Board to undertake further work to establish future accommodation needs of Members and other occupants of the Estate to enable necessary services to be maintained and allow Members to undertake their work effectively. In March 2007 the Commission agreed a new outline accommodation strategy, which included the adoption of workplace planning standards and endorsement of the need to identify decant accommodation to facilitate the refurbishment of Members’ offices on the Estate. Work is being taken forward to deliver this as part of the 25 year Estate strategy discussed more fully in paragraphs 225 to 228.

Cycle parking

130. There are currently 143 cycle parking spaces on the House of Commons part of the Estate. Of these seven are reserved for Members only and 14 for the members of the House of Commons Cycling Club. The provision of cycle parking on the Estate for non-passholders is not currently compatible with the requirement to maintain a secure perimeter. However the House Service has continued to have discussions with Westminster City Council, Transport for London and other relevant authorities about the feasibility of providing additional cycle spaces outside in the vicinity of the Estate. Space for six additional spaces has been identified on Victoria Embankment and it is hoped that they will be installed in early 2007/08. Other potential sites for on-street cycle parking around Parliament are being investigated.

Mail Services

131. As discussed in last year’s annual report, in 2005 Royal Mail won the contract to provide mail services to both Houses of Parliament for a further three years (see paragraph 121). The contract contains the key performance targets that at least 62 per cent of mail should be delivered by 8am, 77 per cent by 10am and 100 per cent by 2pm.

132. In 2006/07 these key targets were not consistently being met. The Serjeant at Arms’ Department has worked with Royal Mail management to remedy this. Royal Mail has introduced changes to local management and altered operational processes, with the result that in the final quarter of the year the performance targets have been achieved or exceeded. The House has received rebates and reductions in service costs of around £500,000 in recognition of under performance of the contract in its early months.

¹⁸ HC 1279 2005-06

¹⁹ HC 164 2006-07

Committee and room bookings

133. The Serjeant at Arms' room booking service takes bookings for a wide variety of meetings: select committee and all party group meetings, as well as Members' private meetings and meetings of staff of the House Service conducting official business. There are 22 Committee Rooms, four multi-function rooms and 23 smaller meeting rooms available, which between them provide facilities for live television broadcasts, simultaneous translation, conferences, receptions and video conferencing.

134. As part of the wider project in Westminster Hall, discussed in paragraph 234 to 272, the Westminster Hall meeting rooms were closed in January 2006 for nine months. During this time they were fully refurbished and reopened to target on 20 November 2006. The Select Committee on the Crossrail Bill continued to sit in Committee Room 5 during 2006/07, reducing the number of available Committee Rooms by one.

Members' computing and IT support

135. Members are entitled to a set amount of loaned computer equipment, funded from the Members Estimate, and Members can also use their allowances to purchase additional computer equipment, which is configured to ensure compatibility with parliamentary systems. Responsibility for the provision of this equipment, its installation and ongoing support falls to PICT.²⁰

136. In 2006/07 the Members' IT refresh, discussed in paragraphs 126-130 of last year's report, was completed. As acknowledged in the 2005/06 report there were a number of problems with the supply of equipment to newly-elected Members, which had knock-on effects for the renewal of IT equipment of existing Members. The update of equipment was completed in November 2006.

137. A full "lessons learned" exercise was undertaken to understand the reasons for the problems encountered. One of its conclusions was that although the contract with the IT supplier offered excellent value for money in terms of the unit cost of equipment, the complexities of installation were underestimated, meaning that the project was initially under-resourced. This finding will be taken into account when this equipment is next renewed.

138. 2006/07 saw the provision of a mobile computing service to Members, in response to a desire for more support outside Westminster. A number of Members participated in a pilot scheme run by PICT to test a selection of Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's), and following business case approval all Members can now request and receive a PDA. As well as acting as a mobile telephone, PDA's allow Members access to most of the functions provided by the Parliamentary Network, such as email, calendar, internet access and word processing facilities. Members pay for the PDA's, and for data charges incurred, from their parliamentary allowances.

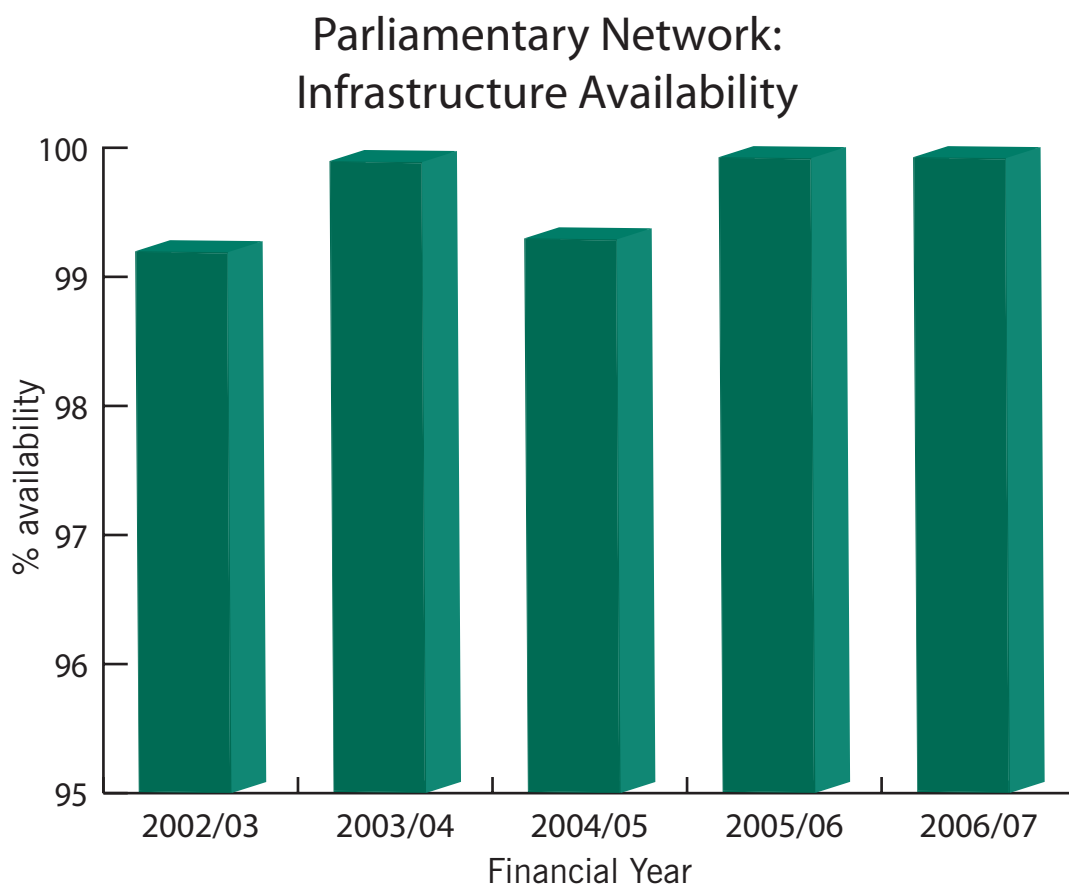
²⁰ Further information is available from the House of Commons: Members Estimate Annual Report and Resource Accounts, HC 832 2006-07

139. The Administration Committee's report into Post-Election Services²¹, recommended instituting wireless access to the Parliamentary Network on a short-term basis in the temporary accommodation used by new Members after an election; PICT is now ready to put this in place when an election is called. Establishing and extending permanent wireless coverage on the Parliamentary Estate has also been a priority for PICT in 2006/07. An interim wireless solution has been put in place for the atrium of Portcullis House, allowing Members using centrally-provided laptops full access to the Parliamentary Network from this area, and work is ongoing both to implement a permanent solution in Portcullis House and to establish other suitable areas on the Parliamentary Estate. In 2007/08 PICT also plans to install technology to enable Members with Windows XP on their own laptops to access the internet using the wireless coverage in Parliament.

140. Since October 2006 the Administration Committee has been undertaking an inquiry into IT Services for Members. The report, published in May 2007,²² and the Commission's response will be helpful in setting the context for future ICT services and support for Members, allowing PICT to plan how best to deliver them. Work regarding the extension of support to constituency offices, discussed in paragraph 131 of last year's report, will be carried forward in light of the recommendations of the Committee.

Network Performance

141. Network availability in 2006/07 was again excellent as shown in the chart below:



²¹ HC 777 2005-06

²² HC 498 2006-07

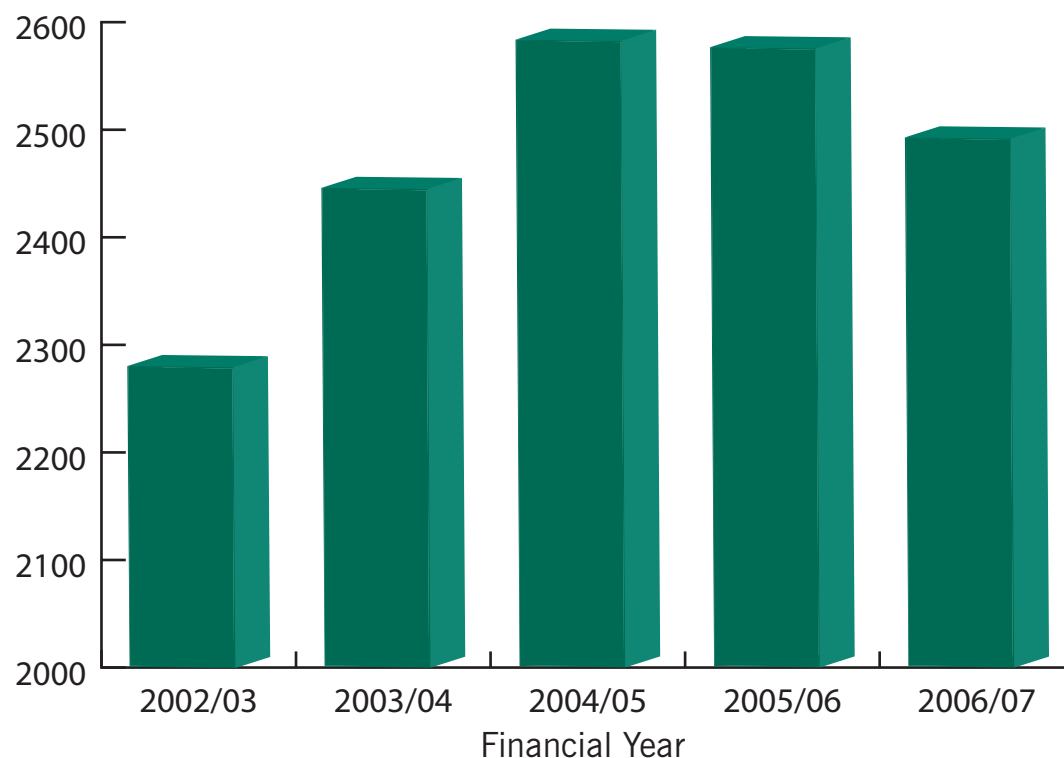
Members' salaries, allowances and pensions

142. Members' salaries, allowances and pensions are paid out of the Members Estimate and administered by the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA). The Estimate has separate governance arrangements from the House's administrative expenditure, and is reported on separately. The Members Estimate annual report and resource accounts for 2006/07 contains further information on the Members Estimate.²³

Members' staff

143. At the end of 2006/07 the number of Members' staff paid through the payroll was 2,493. The chart below shows the number of Members' staff at the end of each of the last five financial years.

Members' Staff: Number At Year End



Members' Travel

144. Carlson Wagonlit (CWT) provides a travel service to both Houses of Parliament, under a joint contract. During the year, the Travel Office handled £5.1 million of travel sales, of which £3.5 million was House of Commons business: air (73 per cent) and rail (26 per cent) account for the majority of Commons expenditure on travel. Travel volumes are closely linked to the electoral cycle and the level of select committee activity, and thus increased in 2006/07 compared to the previous year, in which a general election took place. The House has access to preferential rates for business travel negotiated by CWT and total savings of £1.1 million were achieved in 2006/07 compared to standard fares.

²³ HC 832 2006-07

145. The Travel Office sought to raise its profile in Parliament during 2006/07 by participating in events aimed at highlighting the range of services available to Members' staff. Its communications with Members and others have been reviewed and, during the year ahead, it is intended to enhance the Office's intranet presence, including a new online booking tool. Customer satisfaction with the Travel Office was systematically assessed in 2005 and again in Spring 2007 and, in the interim, smaller-scale surveys of a selection of regular customers were undertaken. These surveys have shown consistently high levels of satisfaction with the service provided by the Office. The initial three-year term of CWT's contract expires in September 2007 and a decision will be taken in early 2007/08 on whether to take up the option of an extension.

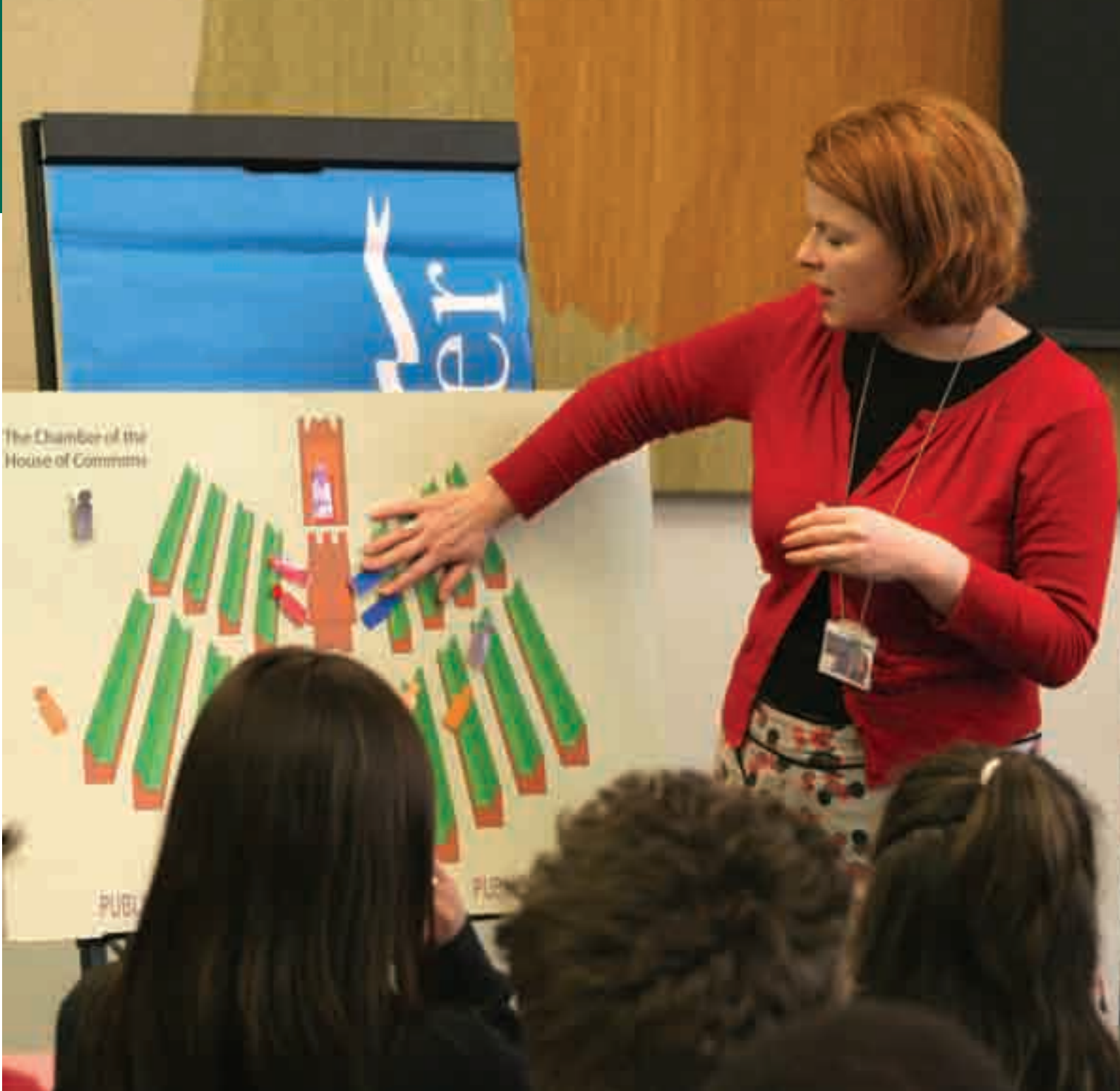
146. The Commission and the House Committee have agreed that payments should be made to offset the carbon emissions from flights on parliamentary business, including select committee travel, booked through the Travel Office. The first such payment, in respect of air travel in 2006/07, of just over £26,000,²⁴ was made to the Government Carbon Offsetting Fund. The Fund is managed by EEA Fund Management Ltd and supports a portfolio of small-scale renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in countries such as Brazil, Thailand and the Philippines.

Medical Services for Members

147. The Parliamentary Medical Panel, comprising medically-qualified Members of both Houses and senior officials, helps inform the level and nature of medical services for Members. An acute GP service is available, offering help to Members who suffer health problems and are not able to access their own GP due to their work in Parliament. The practice nurse, based in the Palace on each working day, offers minor treatments and health and lifestyle advice to Members on a drop-in basis. Members who are travelling overseas on parliamentary business are able to obtain general advice, vaccinations and medication from the travel clinic at St Thomas' Hospital.

148. During 2006/07 the Medical Panel supported a number of awareness raising activities undertaken by the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Service, including a one day "healthy living" event run in partnership with Cancer Research UK, where over 200 people had their Body Mass Index assessed and sought advice on steps to a healthier lifestyle. A "Lungs for life" promotion, in conjunction with the British Lung Foundation, also took place, encouraging people, whatever their age, to look after their lungs.

²⁴ This payment covers expenditure on both the Administration and Members Estimates



Promoting public knowledge and understanding of the work and role of Parliament

Introduction

149. Members, as the elected representatives of their constituents, are the primary link between Parliament and the public. This is supported by the impartial House Service's role in making the work and role of Parliament itself better understood.

150. Information for the public was identified as a priority area for the period 2006-2011 in the Commission's outline strategic plan. The work of the House Service is designed to complement and support the activities of individual Members in their work to strengthen parliamentary democracy. Future organisation of this work will be informed by the review of the management of the House Service, led by Sir Kevin Tebbit, which is specifically looking at whether the organisational and staffing arrangements currently in place are adequate to realise the objectives agreed by the House.

Group on Information for the Public

151. The Group on Information for the Public co-ordinates work in this area, and, in many cases, activities are planned and delivered on behalf of both Houses. A number of the initiatives discussed in the 2005/06 annual report are now fully established. In 2006/07 work continued on a radical overhaul of the Parliament website. Changes and new features are now being launched at regular intervals. This work will continue during 2007/08. Other major achievements in 2006/07 included the launch of the new voters' guide - "The Voting Times" and expansion of the Parliamentary Education Service (see paragraphs 24 to 37). Areas for further action in 2007/08 include webcasting (www.parliamentlive.tv), media coverage of committees, the welcome received by visitors and proposals for outreach.

152. A New Voters Guide, entitled the "Voting Times", aimed to be delivered to all those turning 18, was launched on 18 July 2006. Evaluation since the launch shows that it has reached just under 50 per cent of its target audience, with some 265,000 copies distributed up to the end of the financial year, and follow-up research conducted with recipients show that it has been well received, having a positive effect on those who read it, with a strong correlation between reading and action, such as discussion of the issues it raises with a family member. With the co-operation of the Electoral Commission the aim is to ensure that as many as possible of those turning 18 receive it.

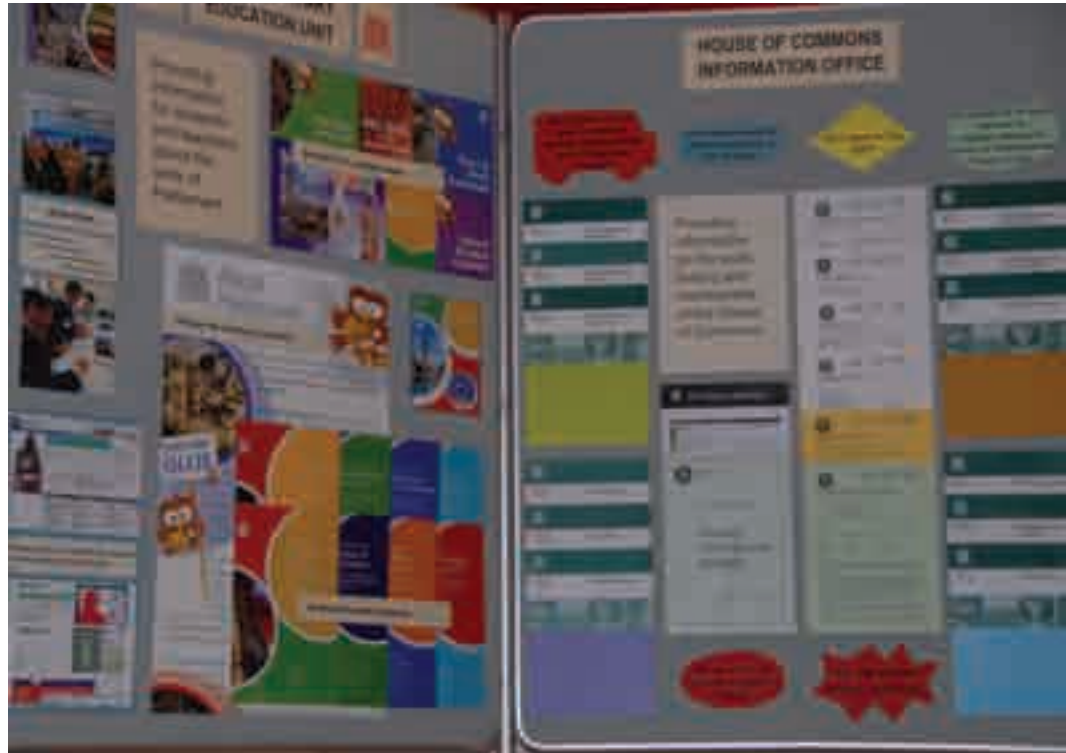
153. "Commons Knowledge" (a weekly summary of the forthcoming business in the House and its committees) was re-launched as "This Week's Business" from the beginning of the new Parliamentary session in November 2006, with an easier to read design which is consistent with the redesign of the Parliament website.

Parliamentary website

154. During 2006/07 a project to update and modernise the presentation of the Parliamentary website began. The improvements to the website encompass technical, design and content changes with the overall aim of improving navigability and comprehension. The project is looking at both the technical aspects of the website and content, with staff from all Commons departments involved in the major exercise of rewriting and updating of content to make it more user friendly.

155. A new navigational structure aims to improve usability, and a revised "About Parliament" section of the website, comprising over 100 new pages explaining how Parliament works, is now available, together with 75 high-quality images of Parliament which are available to download at no charge. Improved online information relating to bills currently before Parliament, with a tracking index and links to key documents and Parliamentary debates, links to work being undertaken jointly by the Library and the Clerk's Department to improve information on bills (see paragraphs 85 and 110).

A range of information for all ages is produced by the Education Service and the House of Commons Information Office.



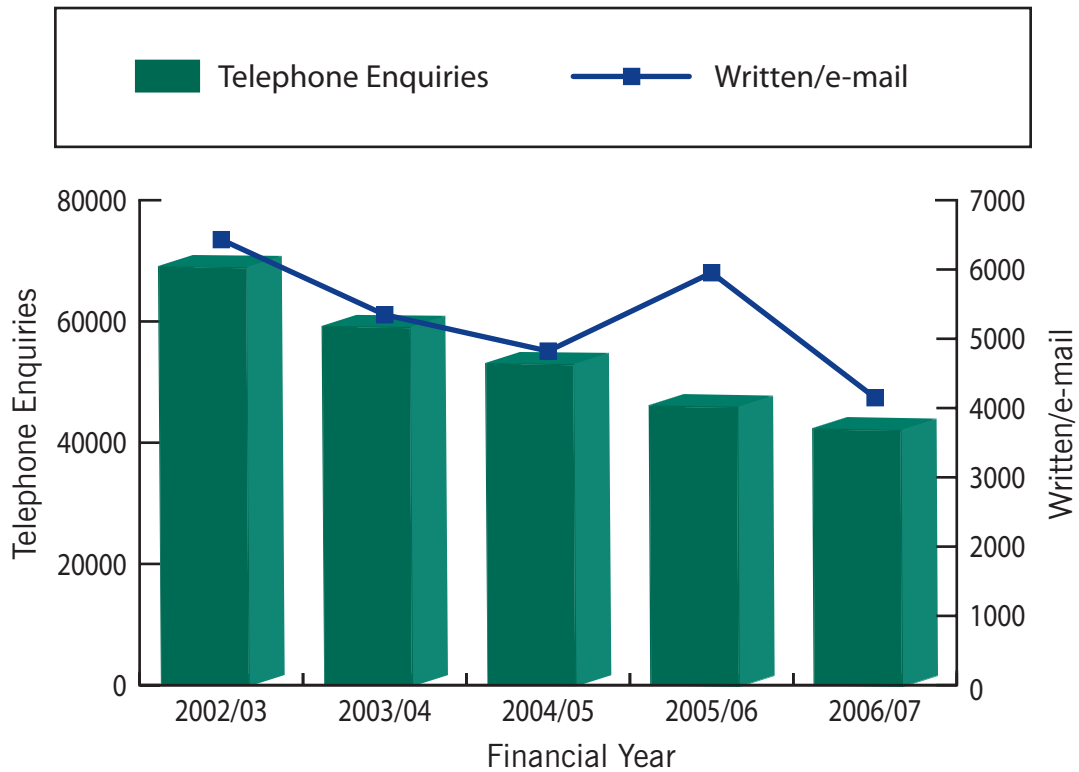
House of Commons Information Office

156. During 2006/07 the House of Commons Information Office (HCIO) has worked with colleagues in PICT on the new “About Parliament” pages (for more information see paragraph 155), with the aim of providing easier access to information provided by the HCIO on the website. The “Weekly Information Bulletin”, containing information on current and future business in Parliament, is now available in pdf format in addition to html via the Parliament website. During the year approximately 386,000 factsheets were accessed via the website.

157. The “Constituency Locata” service was replaced in June 2006 by a new “Find Your MP” service on the Parliamentary website. This also provides details of other elected representatives in the search area, including MEPs and councillors. Over 650,000 searches had been made using the new service by the end of the financial year.

158. The Information Office provides a substantial amount of interpretative material on the Parliamentary website. The amount of material on the website and its accessibility has been improved by the new “About Parliament” webpages. This explains the reduction in enquiries via the traditional route of letter or telephone call.

Information Office: Number of Enquiries



Freedom of Information

159. In 2006/07 the House Service received an average of three requests per week that required formal handling under the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act, down from an average of four requests per week in 2005/06. The vast majority of information continued to be provided as part of normal activity, with the House's Information Office (HCIO) handling over 100 written requests a week.

160. During the year, the House Service received 172 Freedom of Information (FoI) requests. Of these, 18 responses, or just over 10 per cent, were followed by a request for an internal review, down from 14 per cent in 2005/06. The House Service has continued to have a good record of responding to requests for information within the statutory timeframe, with 98 per cent of all requests meeting the 20 day limit. This compares to a central government average of 77 per cent.²⁵

161. The House's Freedom of Information Officer is based in the Department of Finance and Administration, and consequently the majority of requests, some 65 per cent, were dealt with by that department. The second busiest department in FoI terms was the Clerk's Department (17 per cent). The Parliamentary ICT Service received eight per cent of requests, while the Serjeant at Arms Department and the Library (including HCIO) experienced a considerable drop in requests as compared to the previous year, dealing with five per cent and two per cent respectively. Requests related to a wide range of subjects, with Members' allowances being of particular interest, and a number of requests for access to closed Clerk's Department files being received.

²⁵ Source: Freedom of Information Annual Report 2005, Department of Constitutional Affairs

162. The House of Commons' publication scheme, showing information that will routinely be published, is available on the Parliament website and in hard copy on request. Records management has continued to be of fundamental importance for both FoI and Data Protection implementation (see paragraphs 298 to 300 for more information regarding data protection). The application of FoI legislation continues to result in the disclosure of a number of previously closed files held in the Parliamentary Archives.

Broadcasting

163. The arrangements for televising House proceedings, a partnership between Parliament and the major domestic broadcasters, guarantee "gavel-to-gavel" coverage of both Chambers and of sittings of the House in Westminster Hall. In October 2006 the rules on broadcasting proceedings of the House and on filming and photography in the precincts were altered on a trial basis. A greater variety of shots of proceedings in the Chamber was allowed, including more use of reaction shots in order to illustrate the mood of the House, and the provision of a low level atmospheric sound feed during divisions rather than complete silence. Two new interview points were also identified within the precincts. In December 2006, Frank Doran MP, Chairman of the Administration Committee, announced to the House that Mr Speaker had agreed to the Committee's recommendation that these changes should be made permanent.²⁶

164. BBC Parliament has also been released from the undertaking previously given to carry live Commons Chamber coverage regardless of proceedings at the same time in the House of Lords, on condition that the freedom to select proceedings in the Lords should be used only sparingly and that Mr Speaker should be consulted in such cases. A reporter voice-over is also now permitted during divisions.

165. The Parliamentary Recording Unit archived 1,283 video tape recordings of proceedings during 2006/07. The number of requests for recordings of extracts of proceedings again rose. The Unit completed 880 orders compared to 814 orders in 2005/06. The most popular requested format was DVD, with VHS requests continuing to decline.

Webcasting

166. "Parliament Live" the video and audio section of the Parliament website, carries live and archived coverage of all UK Parliament proceedings taking place in public, including debates and committee meetings of both Houses. Viewers are able to listen or watch proceedings live, or listen from the start of a session if they have missed its start. Material is also available from an on-demand archive for 28 days.

167. During 2006/07 a webcam trial took place to help establish whether automated systems could be a way to achieve full audio-visual coverage of committees that are currently available in audio only. A business case was submitted that could lead to the phased introduction of 'webcams' in all committee rooms in the coming years.

168. During 2007/08 it is planned to launch a trial site which would make archive footage available as an academic research tool with a view to the possible digitisation of all archived audio-visual coverage of proceedings in the longer term.

²⁶ HC Deb 19 Dec 06 c1795W

Parliamentary Bookshop

169. The Parliamentary Bookshop has seen a continuing reduction in regular high volume and cost sales to professional clients, but has exceeded its target for daily counter sales of material. The advent of electronic availability of papers means that it is unlikely that the Bookshop will see any significant increase in sales to professional clients, but the increase in sales to casual customers shows that the Bookshop continues to serve a public information need, as originally envisaged by the Commission when it opened.



The Parliamentary Bookshop serves the general public and outside organisations that wish to purchase Parliamentary Papers.

Visitors to Parliament

170. There were approximately 891,000 visitors to Parliament in 2006/07 (an 11 per cent increase compared to 2005/06), of which some 130,000 were conducted on tours organised by the Central Tours Office; 117,000 visited the Chamber galleries; and 17,000 students, teachers and others such as community groups attended programmes facilitated by the Education Service (for more information see paragraphs 29 to 37 above).

Visitors to the Public Gallery

171. Tickets to view proceedings in the Chamber of the House are available to guests of Members of Parliament, visitors from overseas, specialist press and members of the public who queue to attend each sitting. At any one time the galleries provide seating for 234 people. In 2006/07, 77 per cent of visitors to the galleries entered via the public queue, compared to 81 per cent in 2005/06.

Organised tours

172. The Central Tours Office (CTO) organises public access to the Palace of Westminster via Member-sponsored tours and the annual public summer opening. It is also responsible for managing the team of Visitor Assistants who manage the gallery queues and meet and greet visitors to the Palace of Westminster (for more information on the work of Visitor Assistants see paragraphs 38 to 39 above).

173. Tours can be booked by Members of both Houses of Parliament, with most bookings made by Members of the House of Commons. Staff of both Houses can also book tours where there is a business need. Visitor numbers through the CTO saw an upturn in 2006/07, with 130,000 visitors, just over 20,000 higher than in 2005/06, a year affected both by the General Election and the London bombings, and just over 15,000 higher than the number of visitors in 2004/05.

Summer opening

174. The Palace of Westminster was open to paying visitors on full and half-days between 1 August and 30 September 2006. The loss of access to Westminster Hall and its café and shop facilities (see paragraph 234) meant that the Commission decided to continue to hold ticket prices at 2003 levels. Despite these works 87,000 people visited Parliament during the summer opening a 10 per cent increase on the previous year. In 2007/08 all facilities in Parliament will be available to visitors, and ticket prices for the summer opening will increase for the first time in four years to reflect this.

175. Due to the closure of Westminster Hall an alternative shop was erected in St Stephens Hall for the sale of souvenirs to those visiting on summer tours. Despite the increase in visitor numbers, sales in the summer opening period were down seven per cent compared to summer 2005. The capture rate fell by three per cent to 27 per cent, largely due to the smaller shop area leading to crowding that deterred potential customers.

Retailing and merchandising

176. The total revenue from the sale of souvenirs to Members, staff and visitors (excluding sales in the Parliamentary Bookshop) produced a turnover of £944,000 in 2006/07, slightly up from the final outturn of £937,500 in 2005/06.

177. The works in Westminster Hall (see paragraph 234) meant that Christmas trading in the shop based in St Stephens Hall saw a 20 per cent reduction in trade compared to the same period in 2005/06. However as the shop in St Stephen's was permanently open from summer 2006 until March 2007 (when based in Westminster Hall the shop closed from Christmas until the summer opening) overall sales increased and contributed to a £34,000 increase in souvenir sales compared to 2005/06. The success of the temporary arrangements in St Stephen's Hall shows that demand exists for a publicly accessible souvenir shop year round, if a suitable site can be identified.



Due to ongoing works around Westminster Hall a temporary shop was established in St Stephen's Hall.

Visitor management

178. Given the existing security level, ensuring appropriate searching and screening of visitors is a priority. During 2006/07 a new Visitor Reception Building (VRB) has been under construction on Cromwell Green. The VRB had originally been due for completion in autumn 2006, but has been subject to a number of delays (see paragraph 229). Temporary searching and screening arrangements, based outside St Stephen's entrance, have been in place during the extended construction period.



Courtesy to visitors is an important aspect of the role of Security Officers.

179. Once the VRB is open it will increase the capacity of search facilities and will allow those queuing to enter the public galleries to do so in Westminster Hall out of the rain. A number of Visitor Assistants will also be based in Westminster Hall to give a proactive welcome to visitors, and improved signage to Committee corridor and the public galleries will help visitors to the correct location. These measures will considerably improve the quality of experience in visiting Parliament.

180. During 2006/07 the Administration Committee has worked in co-operation with the House of Lords Information Committee to consider provision for educational and other visits, for which there are currently no purpose built facilities. The Committee is expected to report in early 2007/08.



Supporting task i: Provide a skilled and motivated workforce; giving recognition and reward for achievement and ensuring that all staff realise their potential regardless of level or background; and promoting diversity

Introduction

181. Human resources is identified as a priority area in the Commission's strategic plan (see page 13) as the provision of the high quality services required by the House and its Members depends to a large degree on the availability of an appropriately skilled and motivated workforce. The aims for the period 2006/07 to 2010/11 are:

- To build up and maintain a skilled and motivated workforce, with opportunity for progress and development regardless of level or background, and recognition and reward for achievement.
- To realise the benefits of a diverse workforce, in all departments and at all levels.
- In a world where new recruits and existing staff have demanding expectations, to make the House of Commons Service an employer for whom people actively want to work, and enjoy working life, and where good employment practice is the rule.

182. Achievements in 2006/07 included:

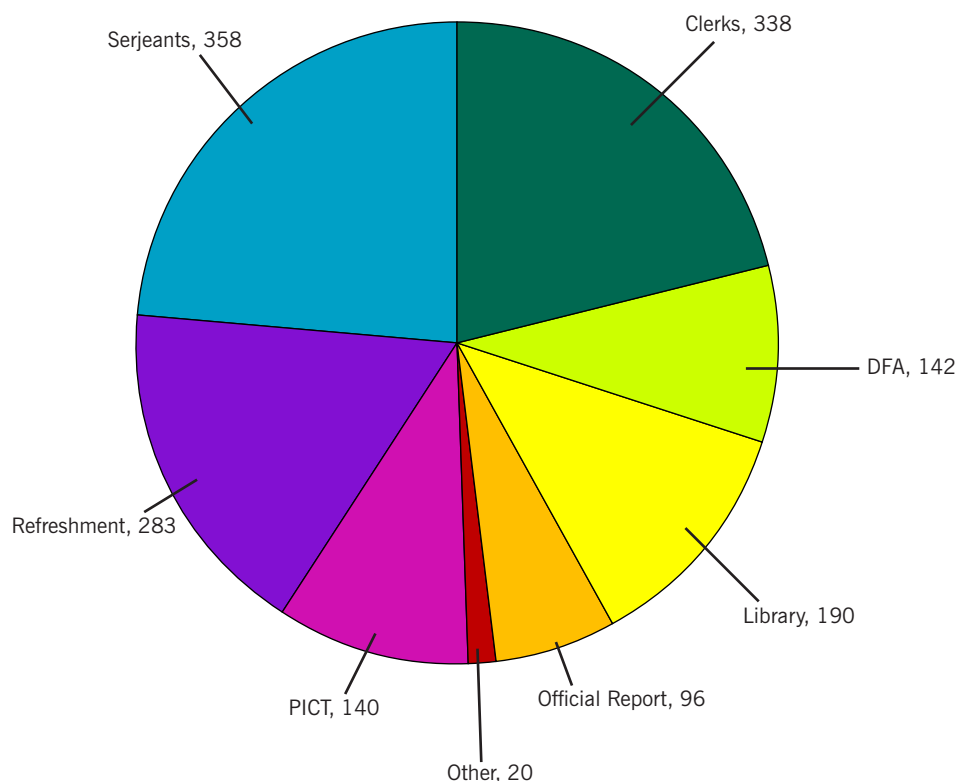
- The first House-wide staff survey was undertaken in April 2006 (see paragraph 191)
- The House was successfully re-accredited as an Investor in People (IiP) (see paragraph 192)
- A strategy for internal communications with staff was developed (see paragraph 199).
- The Board of Management now receives enhanced management information on levels of staff absence and the distribution of staff by gender and ethnicity to enable policies to be monitored more effectively.

183. Specific actions and targets for 2007/08 include:

- Introducing schemes to encourage more staff moves between departments and outward secondments to industry and Whitehall.
- Launching a management development programme for managers at Band A and below.
- Conducting a further staff survey

Staff numbers

184. During 2006/07 the House employed, on average, 1,606 full-time equivalent (fte) staff. Their distribution by department is shown in the chart below:



Pensions, Pay and HR

185. In line with the provisions of the House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978, the pension scheme for House staff operates by analogy with the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCPS), and changes to PCPS are therefore mirrored in the House scheme.

186. A significant exercise was carried out to make staff aware of the changes in pension legislation from 1 April 2006, and to deal with the implications of it. Staff who might have been affected by the legislative changes were contacted and provided with relevant information. They were also offered the opportunity of an individual meeting with staff from the Pensions Unit.

187. During 2006/07 the Government announced changes to public sector pensions for new joiners after 1 July 2007. The new scheme, which will be mirrored by the House of Commons by analogy, is classed as a defined benefits scheme and will be based on average salary throughout the employee's career. The Department of Finance and Administration have been making preparations for the new scheme, and, once its specific details have been announced by the Cabinet Office, will undertake further work to ensure all aspects of the new scheme are understood and procedures implemented in good time.

188. The extremely long time taken to reach a pay settlement for the majority of House staff in 2006/07 was regrettable, and the Board of Management is committed to working with the Trade Union Side to achieve a quicker settlement in 2007/08. During the year the Craft pay bands were assimilated into the main A-E pay band structure. Separate pay arrangements are in place for senior staff based on the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Body.

189. Recruitment activity showed a marked increase compared with previous years, with 172 internal only exercises and 98 internal/external or external only exercises. The high number of recruitment campaigns reflected the creation of the Parliamentary ICT Service and the related decision to reduce contractor costs in the ICT area through the employment of more permanent staff.

190. As mentioned under the specific targets in last year's annual report, retention rates were benchmarked in 2006/07. This revealed that the House Service has a significantly more stable workforce with eight per cent turnover in 2006/07, against a benchmark of 18 per cent for central Government Departments and 13 per cent for the public sector as a whole. Within the eight per cent figure turnover is approximately three per cent for senior managers and directors, 11 per cent for managers and professionals, 13 per cent for craft employees and 20 per cent for service and administrative employees. The Refreshment Department's turnover figure of 10.7 per cent is in marked contrast to the hotel and catering industry benchmark figure of 42 per cent.

Staff survey and Investors in People re-accreditation

191. The first dedicated survey of all staff of the House Service was carried out in April 2006, asking a range of questions designed to assess staff views on the management of the House. The survey achieved a 60 per cent response rate. The results were considered by the Board in June 2006, and an interim response given to staff that month.

192. During early 2006/07 the House Service was assessed by the Investors in People organisation. Prior to this a team of qualified Internal Assessors carried out a number of mini-reviews in departments. Four of these Internal Assessors, led by an External Assessor, carried out the re-assessment against the standard, interviewing 90 staff over three days. Re-accreditation was achieved in July 2006.

193. Both the survey and the IiP re-accreditation report revealed a high level of satisfaction amongst House staff with many aspects of their working environment but also highlighted areas where improvements were desirable. The main areas which the Board of Management wants to take action to improve are developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes of staff to their jobs through learning and experience; fostering new career paths; improving internal communications; working better with the trade unions; and benefiting from the diversity of the House Service's workforce.

194. Detailed work to follow-up the outcomes of both the staff survey and the IiP re-accreditation report was undertaken by the Human Resources Group, and turned into a plan that will guide the human resources strategy in 2007/08. An external secondment scheme, developed in co-operation with the Whitehall and Industry Group, and an internal loan scheme, encouraging staff to increase their own and colleagues' competences through short-term inter-departmental loans, will be launched. A dedicated careers adviser for staff has been appointed, and will give support and advice to help staff plan their careers, and a number of staff are being recruited to act as mentors. These initiatives will bring benefits to the House Service as a whole as well as help to ensure that each member of staff achieves their full potential. A further staff survey will be carried out in 2007/08 to check on progress made.

Staff recognition scheme

195. In April 2006 a staff recognition scheme was launched by the Board of Management, to thank and reward long-serving staff of the House Service for their contribution and achievement. The House Service has an exceptional number of loyal and dedicated staff. Staff with 20, 30 and 40 years' service are recognised under the scheme, receiving a certificate, a choice of gifts and a meal. Awards are also made to those retiring after 30 years of service. The scheme was launched with a lunch for the 64 members of staff with 30 or more years service by the then Clerk of the House, Sir Roger Sands KCB, who was himself recognised for 41 years service. This scheme has been well received by staff throughout the House Service.



Sir Roger Sands KCB welcomes staff to the lunch to recognise their long service.

Employee relations

196. Against a background of emerging changes and modernisation the Board of Management recognises the importance of consulting and informing staff and their representatives in helping shape the future. To this end Management and the Trade Union Side have agreed to work together to explore avenues for improving management/TUS relations.

197. A joint working party met throughout 2006/07 to consider: developing a framework mechanism to promote consultation and policy development supplementary to the Whitley system; forms of training and other initiatives for all those engaged in employee relations, which will enhance co-operation and negotiation; and the means of creating consistency and co-operation between the unions, departments and staff.

198. A joint workshop, facilitated by ACAS, was held in October 2006 and laid the groundwork for further discussions. Proposals will be put to the Whitley Committee General Purposes Sub-Committee in autumn 2007.

Internal communications

199. The House of Commons Internal Communications Strategy was developed in 2006 and will be implemented over the coming three years. The strategy was developed with the results of the 2006 Staff Survey and the findings of the Investors in People in mind. In addition, focus groups with a wide range of staff were also conducted to ensure that the scope of the strategy was sufficient. Some changes have already been introduced including the redesign of the staff magazine "inHouse" and the launch of an all staff e-newsletter "Around the Commons". To encourage feedback from all staff, a House-wide staff suggestion scheme will soon be established.

200. An internal audit, conducted in the latter-half of 2006, suggested the strengthening of

the Internal Communications Network (ICN) to formalise internal communications processes. The ICN is now a sub-group of the House-wide Human Resources Group, is attended by more senior representatives, and has an agreed set of terms of reference. It has been renamed the Internal Communications Group to reflect these changes.

Management conference

201. The 2006 management conference, entitled “Demystifying Change”, aimed to give participants the opportunity to learn about an external organisation’s experience of change, to acquire an overview of different change management processes and their effectiveness, and to share their own experience of change. Katherine Everett, Director of Change at the BBC, gave a key-note speech, and there were two working group discussions, one with participants split into cross-House groups and the other on a departmental basis.

Learning and Development

202. In 2006/07 the Corporate Learning and Diversity team organised and administered 120 learning events. A major focus of the year has been providing a programme of training to the large number of staff of the House Service who needed to use the House Administrative Information System (HAIS) to order or authorise goods and services (for detailed information on HAIS see paragraphs 53 to 66). Coaching skills for managers was also introduced for the first time, and proved popular, with 200 staff attending. In total just under 1,700 delegate places were allocated (not including the Senior Management Development Programme, for which see below). In addition to this, departmentally-based training teams organised a number of talks, seminars and training opportunities for staff in their departments.

203. 30 senior staff attended the first year of the Senior Management Development Programme (SMDP), which ran from October 2005 to July 2006, and all of them attended at least 80 per cent of events. The programme consisted of a blend of workshops, coaching and action learning groups, designed to address real issues that the House Service faces. Evaluation of the effect of the programme on participants will be ongoing, and further training and development opportunities will be made available to them. The second cohort of 30 senior staff entered the SMDP in October 2006, and the Board of Management has agreed to offer two further years of the SMDP, to allow all senior staff who wish to participate in the programme to do so.

204. During 2006/07 the Corporate Learning and Diversity team has worked on developing management skills programmes for both new and experienced managers in bands A to C, utilising a mixture of classroom, individual and computer-based learning. The first of these, “Managing for Excellence”, aimed at new managers, will be launched during Learning at Work Week in May 2007.

205. A cross-departmental working group has drawn on existing departmental, managerial and SMDP competences, to develop a core competence framework, a set of competences designed to provide information on the types of behaviours that the House Service values, which are applicable across all Departments, and can be used by staff as a developmental tool. These core competences will be introduced in 2007/08.

Learning and Development Group

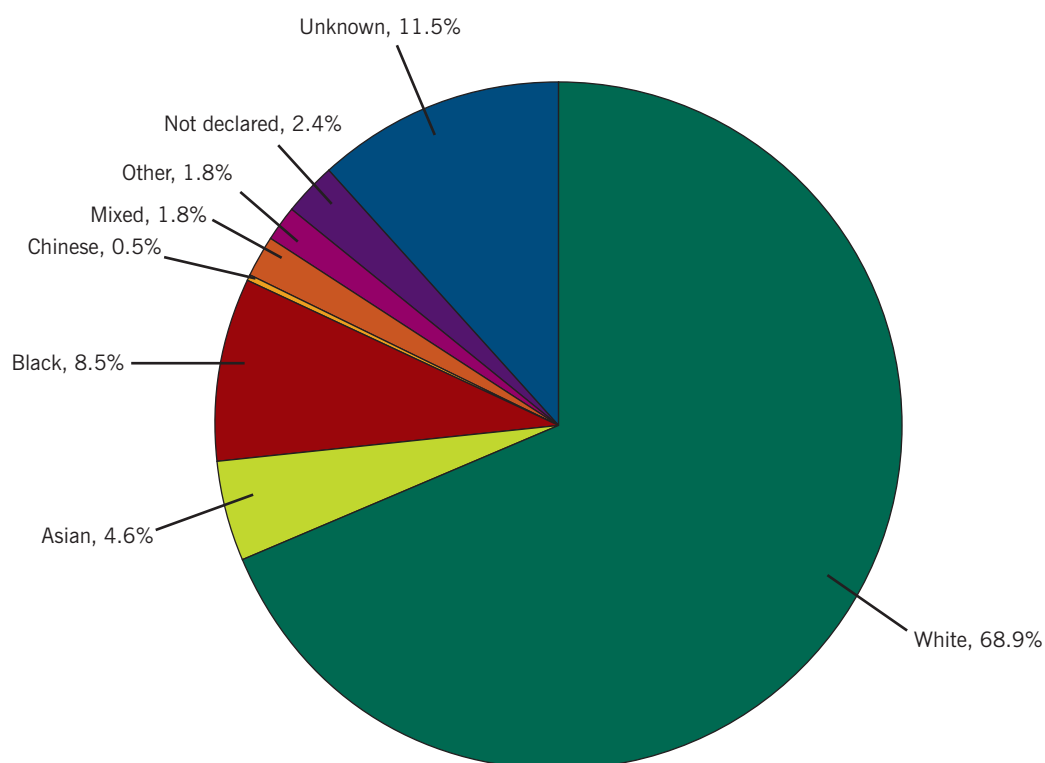
206. The house-wide Learning and Development Group is responsible to the Human Resources Group for undertaking a planned programme of initiatives and actions designed to promote, facilitate and meet the corporate learning and development requirements throughout the House of Commons Service. In 2006/07 members of the Group were involved in the design of the Learning & Development workstream of HAIS. This allows all training and development events from across the House to appear on one calendar, accessible to all staff, encouraging cross-departmental sharing of training. A number of reports can be produced from the new system including individual training records, waiting lists and evaluation.

207. The House of Commons participated in the national Learning at Work day in May

2006. The event was organised by the Learning and Development Group and included a number of information stalls from internal providers such as the Education Service, Parliamentary Archives, OHSWS and Corporate Learning and Diversity team as well as from external providers. A series of presentations and activities were held during the day. Around 300 staff attended from both Houses and the event was closed by the Clerk of the Parliaments and the Clerk of the House.

Diversity

208. The Board of Management is committed to being an inclusive employer, offering a positive working environment. According to the 2006 staff survey 59 per cent of staff believe that the House Service is fairly or very good at encouraging diversity, but the Board of Management and the House-wide Diversity Forum are aware that there is much work to be done to ensure that all staff are aware of the corporate diversity strategy and the action being taken to deliver this. To raise awareness the Diversity Forum hosted an event, entitled "Diversity Matters", which consisted of an exhibition, both of diversity action in the House Service and by outside organisations including the Commission for Racial Equality and Age Matters, and talks on a range of topics including making your workplace good for your mental health and getting involved in volunteering. The chart below shows the ethnic mix of House staff as at 31 March 2007.



209. The importance of valuing diversity and providing equality of opportunity has been “mainstreamed”, meaning that diversity messages are built into wider learning programmes, including the SMDP and Bands A-C management development programmes. The core competence framework has been framed with the ‘golden thread’ of respect for diversity underpinning it.

210. Following on from work undertaken by the Corporate Learning and Diversity team to establish baseline information on the ethnicity, gender and age of staff (which was discussed in paragraph 203 of last year’s report) information on new starters has been entered throughout the year and quarterly reports produced to inform the Human Resources Group and the Board of Management regarding the gender and ethnicity of staff across pay bands.

211. The Board is committed to supporting staff to achieve an acceptable work/life balance and recognises that flexible working opportunities play a large part in that. Ability to work flexibly can also improve the retention of valuable staff and the recruitment of the best available staff for the future. Approximately 175 staff across the House work flexibly, over 10 per cent of the total.

212. During 2006/07 effort was concentrated on analysing the questionnaires on ethnicity, age and disability which were completed by those participating in both internal only and internal/external recruitment campaigns in 2005 and 2006 to build up a picture of under-represented groups’ performance at different stages of selection. Further work will be done in 2007/08 to tackle the issue of under-representation.

213. The House Service does not ask its staff to declare formally that they have a disability, apart from to assist with interview arrangements. As part of the 2006 staff survey 33 staff, equating to just under two per cent, declared that they considered themselves to have a disability. Departmentally held information on staff disabilities is currently being collated; once this task is completed the Human Resources Group will consider whether there is a need for a House-wide disability questionnaire to improve disability monitoring.

214. Mr Speaker has asked the House Service to comply with the new disability, gender and race equality duties, and reports will be made to the Commission on a twice yearly basis from 2007/08 onwards.

215. Mr Speaker’s Young Apprentice Scheme is now in its third year, and continues to work with Southwark Guarantee Pathfinders Programme. The programme aims to train and develop young people in Southwark from all backgrounds, with different experience and skills, through a one-day-per-week placement. In 2006/07, seven apprentices worked in four departments of the House. Corporate events were added to the programme with the apprentices attending sessions on communications, health & safety and interview skills. One student from 2005/06 has now been awarded a full-time apprenticeship with SAA Craft team.

Mr Speaker presents a certificate to a young apprentice on completion of his apprenticeship.



216. Guidance booklets for the supervisors, teachers and guardians, and the students will be in place for September 2007. Departments have been asked for 'job offers' and descriptions and these have been advertised in the participating schools with interviews being planned for early June 2007. 11 places across five departments have already been pledged. Plans are being made for our supervisors to visit the students in their schools and for teachers to visit the students in their workplaces.

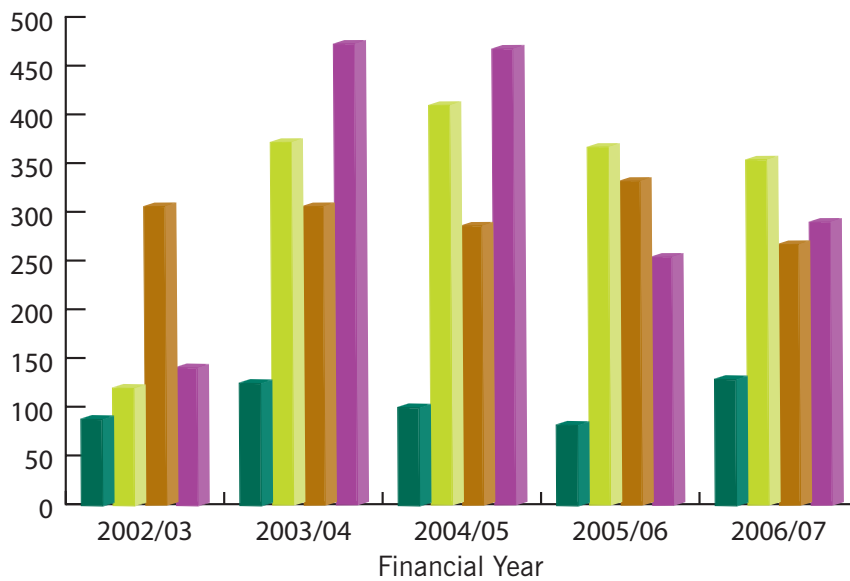
217. Following the 18-month extension granted last year, the House Service's partnership with Toucan, a local organisation which supports adults with learning difficulties to get into the workplace, continues. All Toucan employees are still in place, and the House Service is exploring the possibility of offering permanent employment.

Occupational Health

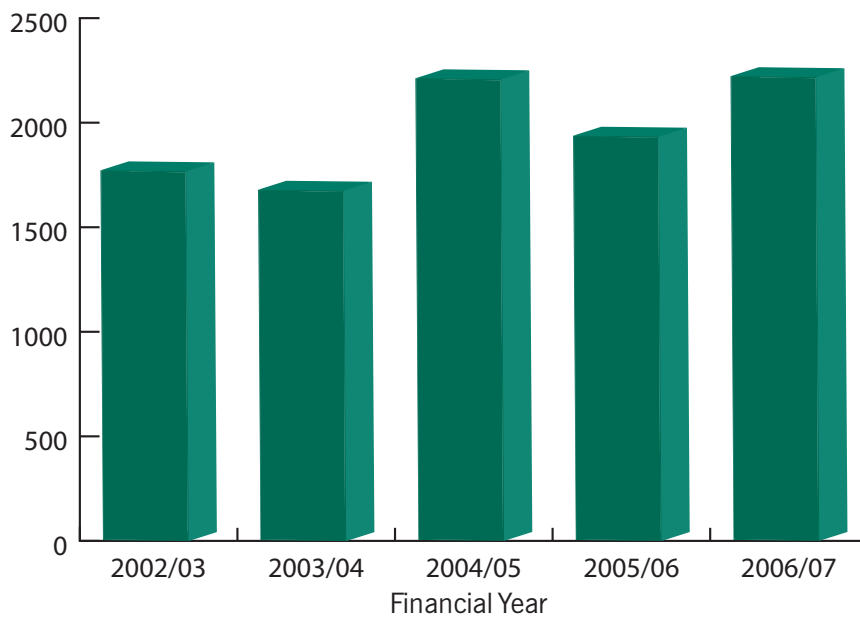
218. A range of medical services are provided by the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Service (OHSWS) in the Department of Finance and Administration, supported by physicians supplied under a contract with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, allowing both management and employee referral for departments of both Houses (for services specific to Members see paragraph 147). A range of other services where illness or injury might affect staff at work, including physiotherapy, personal training, health monitoring, health screening, workplace inspections, counselling, healthy living promotions and a walk-in minor treatment and advice service are provided. OHSWS also work with colleagues who promote health and safety in the work place (see paragraph 236).

219. Early health referral and intervention helps reduce absence, and reduce the number of short term absences which turn into long term absences. In 2005/06 49 per cent of all days lost due to absences were long term, in 2006/07 this was reduced to 43 per cent. OHSWS also has an important role in supporting and enabling staff who have been absent to return to work, including providing advice about necessary workplace or job-content alterations.

Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Service: Activity Measures (1)



Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Service: activity measures (2)



220. OHSWS provide welfare services to employees of the House Service. Confidential information, advice, support and counselling are available covering financial, health, bereavement, domestic and work-related issues, including supporting managers facing difficult staff-related issues.



Supporting task ii: Provide a healthy, safe and secure physical environment in which the business of the House can be effectively conducted; this includes accommodation, office services, catering and security

Introduction

221. Providing a safe physical environment and associated office and catering services is key to ensuring that Parliament can operate effectively, and involves a large proportion of the expenditure on the Administration Estimate.

222. Accommodation and works are identified as priority areas in the Commission's strategic plan (see page 13). Over the planning period, the aim is to maintain sufficient accommodation of an appropriate standard for all those who need to work on the House of Commons estate and to optimise its use. As part of the response to the Administration Committee's Report into House of Commons Accommodation, the Commission agreed a new outline strategy for accommodation.²⁷ Among other elements this included a commitment to moving towards workplace planning standards. A task for 2007/08 will be to develop this outline into a fully articulated accommodation strategy as part of a broader 25-year strategy for the management of the Parliamentary Estate. Progress in some areas has been slower than anticipated in last year's report. In particular, the new Visitor Reception Building is now expected to be completed in summer 2007 (see paragraph 229).

223. Security is also identified as a priority area in the Commission's plan. The aim is to ensure that security arrangements are appropriate to the assessed threat and the current Alert State. This is in the context of the need to balance the protection of the Parliamentary Estate, and those working in it, with the continuing work of the House in all its facets.

224. It had been intended to install a new access control system in 2006/07; however, following a feasibility study in early 2006, it was decided not to proceed with implementation of the system proposed by the main contractor. A new system, designed by an in-house project team, will be installed during 2007/08 with full changeover expected by February 2008. It is anticipated that there will be further enhancements to the physical barriers protecting the Parliamentary Estate during 2007/08, and options for off-site commercial vehicle searching will be considered. Completion of these projects will represent the final stages in the implementation of the recommendations of the 2004 review of security.

Accommodation and Works

225. As discussed in paragraph 222 above, during 2006/07 the Commission agreed a new outline accommodation strategy, designed to meet medium-term future accommodation needs. This strategy will be developed as part of a full 25-year Estate Strategy, which will address: accommodation planning; governance; risk mitigation; procurement and value-for-money initiatives; conservation planning, including condition surveys and asset registers; and further work relating to health and safety, fire and the environment. An external Estate Strategy Adviser worked with the House Service during the year to help develop and deliver the strategy; this work will continue in the first half of 2007/08.

226. Sir Kevin Tebbit, the leader of the team reviewing the House Service (see paragraph 6), made an interim report to the Commission at its March 2007 meeting. He recommended that the Estates and Works Services Directorates, which were split following a management review in 2000, should be remerged. The Commission acknowledged the dedication and commitment of the staff in both Directorates, but accepted that the benefits envisaged in 2000 from a client/provider split had not been delivered. In particular, the ability to plan a forward looking programme was constrained by the requirements of ongoing work and maintenance. Consequently, a Programme Office will be established as a matter of priority. The detailed work on the re-integration of the two Directorates will be undertaken by a small team and will be designed to complement the emerging 25-year Estate strategy.

²⁷ HC 1279 2005-06

227. Although work has been ongoing, a number of the specific actions which the Commission's last annual report envisaged as being completed in 2006/07 will in fact be completed in 2007/08, with the new structure for delivery of accommodation and works in place, and in conjunction with the detailed development of the Estate Strategy. Minimum space standards have been agreed by the Commission following the Administration Committee's Report and as part of the new outline accommodation strategy (see paragraph 222). More detailed accommodation and furnishing standards will be agreed in the coming year after consultation with the Administration Committee.

228. A large number of work streams to produce a robust Estate strategy are being developed. In 2006/07 priority has been given to setting the governance and financial structure, gaining agreement from stakeholders as to the strategic direction of the plan, undertaking work to understand current and future accommodation needs of occupants of the Estate, and conducting condition surveys. In 2007/08 the following are targets:

- An interim Programme Director and Programme Office to be in place by summer 2007;
- Terms of reference of all boards and groups which relate to Estates activities to be reviewed and agreed;
- Detailed 25 year strategy and five year plan developed (including identification of decant needs) and agreed, backed by financial plan;
- An asset register will be established;
- Additional resources and training to result in improvement to the timeliness and content of business cases.

Visitor Reception Building

229. The construction of the Visitor Reception Building, designed to both provide a purpose built space for the reception of visitors and to increase the capacity of searching facilities, began in early 2006 and was originally due to be completed in the autumn of that year. The project was subject to significant delay during 2006/07 and is now expected to be completed in summer 2007. A technical audit of the project was instigated by the Clerk of the House and the Clerk of the Parliaments, and the Commission was kept regularly updated on progress. A full "lessons learned" exercise will be undertaken once the project is completed.

Security

230. The provision of appropriate security arrangements for the current Alert State, and balancing this with the need to preserve democratic accessibility to Parliament, is an ongoing priority and challenge for the Commission. The Visitor Reception Building, when open, will both improve visitor reception standards and facilitate the necessary searching of those who enter the building by police and security officers. All the recommendations of the 2004 Security Review have now either been fully implemented, set aside after discussion and evaluation, or are in progress.

231. A key milestone for 2006/07 was the completion of a feasibility study on the implementation of offsite commercial vehicle searching. The study indicates that indicative running costs would be high, at over £2m per annum, but that security gains would be substantial. In 2007/08 a full business case will be produced for the project, and will be subject to decision by relevant senior officials after consultation with Committees.

232. In 2006/07 there were no serious security incidents on the Parliamentary Estate although there were a number of minor incidents. However, searches at the perimeter continued to identify items which it was not appropriate for the public to bring into Parliament.

Maintenance

233. Maintaining the fabric of the Parliamentary Estate, especially the Grade One listed World Heritage Site of the Palace of Westminster, is a full-time task and ongoing priority. In 2006/07 the floor of Westminster Hall was stabilised (for information on the heritage aspects of this work see paragraph 272); in 2007/08 planning will be undertaken for a number of major work projects, namely the renewal of the mechanical and engineering equipment in the Palace and the refurbishment of the cast iron roofs for the first time since the 1840s. These extensive projects are subject to detailed planning and business case approval.

234. A major conservation project to stabilise the floor and underpin the south steps in Westminster Hall took place during the year (for the archaeological aspects of this work see paragraph 273). 80 stone flags, identified as Crosland Hill York Stone, were carefully removed from the floor using a large suction unit. Each flag weighed approximately 750kg and was labelled so that it could be re-laid in its original location. The ground beneath the floor was strengthened by injecting a viscous grout under pressure at discrete points. The pressure compacts and strengthens the ground without disturbing any archaeological remains. The south steps have been strengthened by installing stainless steel dowels to reinforce the existing concrete slabs.



Major conservation work took place in Westminster Hall during the year.



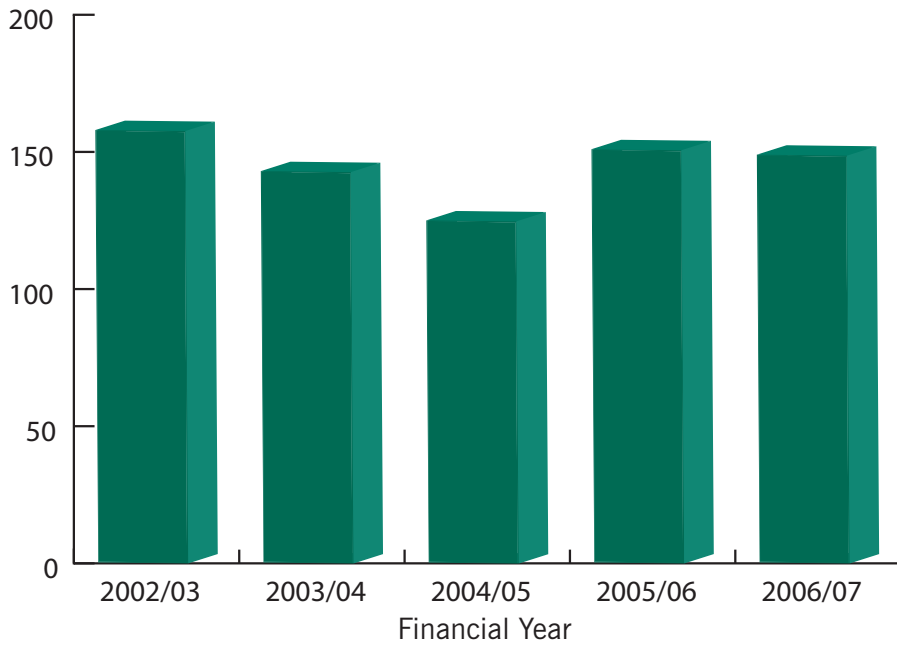
Each flagstone was relaid in its original location.

235. The other buildings which make up the Parliamentary Estate are subject to a rolling programme of refurbishment and maintenance. Historically such work has been carried out during the summer recess, often on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis to ensure completion in the time available. In 2005 the House acquired short-term decant space, allowing for refurbishment of buildings either as a whole or on a floor-by-floor basis throughout the year, making more efficient use of staff time and providing greater value for money. This decant space was utilised when comfort cooling and heating systems were installed in the building which accommodates the majority of staff of the House Service: and by the Press while the first phase of the Press Gallery refurbishment took place in 2006. PICT are also utilising some of this space during 2007.

Health and safety

236. Health and safety practitioners based in the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Service (OHSWS) provide advice, support and guidance to the departments, offices and Health and Safety Committees of both Houses on all relevant aspects of the law and good working practices. Slips and trips account for approximately 40 per cent of reported accidents on the Parliamentary Estate each year, but their causes are often relatively easy to eliminate. During the year OHSWS has run an awareness raising exercise, highlighting the steps that can be taken by passholders to reduce the number of accidents and encouraging the prompt reporting of hazards.

Accidents Causing Injury on the Parliamentary Estate



237. The general severity of accidents continues to reduce, and accident investigation procedures have improved to ensure we learn from accidents to ensure they do not recur. To help target specific hazards a number of initiatives have been taken forward including slip risk assessments for potentially hazardous floor surfaces, targeted manual handling training and risk assessments, targeted information cards and documentation and computer chair and IT equipment referral processes. All are contributing to improved standards and responsiveness where issues arise.

238. It is also important to ensure the health and safety of those contractors and consultants working on works projects on the Parliamentary Estate. The Parliamentary Work Services Directorate (PWSD) monitors accident statistics for these groups, and ensure that health and safety is discussed at design team and progress meetings. PWSD has introduced an auditing programme whereby each contractor involved in the summer works programme is audited at least once during the life of their project. The contractor achieving the best compliance is rewarded with a Parliamentary Safety Award. During 2007/08 this auditing scheme will be extended to all contractors undertaking works projects on the Estate throughout the year.

239. There are now about 200 qualified first-aiders on the Parliamentary Estate, of which about 100 are trained to use defibrillators: during 2006/07 the prompt use of a defibrillator contributed to saving a life.

Fire safety

240. Fire compartmentation work began in the Palace of Westminster in 1994, with each compartment providing sixty minutes fire resistance. Escape routes and stairs within each compartment were clad in fire resistive materials to provide secondary compartmentation of 30 minutes fire resistance. To date over £10m has been spent on the project. In advance of the greater throughput of people in Westminster Hall when the Visitors Reception Building opens, fire detection equipment in this area has been upgraded to include implementation of video smoke-detection equipment. Work to reduce still further the possibility of serious fire damage and loss of life in the Palace of Westminster, together with the upgrading of Parliament's fire detection and warning system, will be taken forward under the aegis of the Parliamentary Estate Board.

241. Appropriate fire practices and exercises have been held throughout 2006/07. An important part of fire safety is prevention of incidents through education. A programme of fire safety training has been available throughout the year, providing information and advice. Fire safety training is mandatory for staff of the House Service, and Members and their staff are strongly encouraged to attend. Attendance from staff of the House Service runs close to 100 per cent, while attendance from Members and their staff continues to be low. The Fire Safety Officer is currently investigating the feasibility of providing intranet-based training for Members and their staff, provision of which would be subject to business case approval.

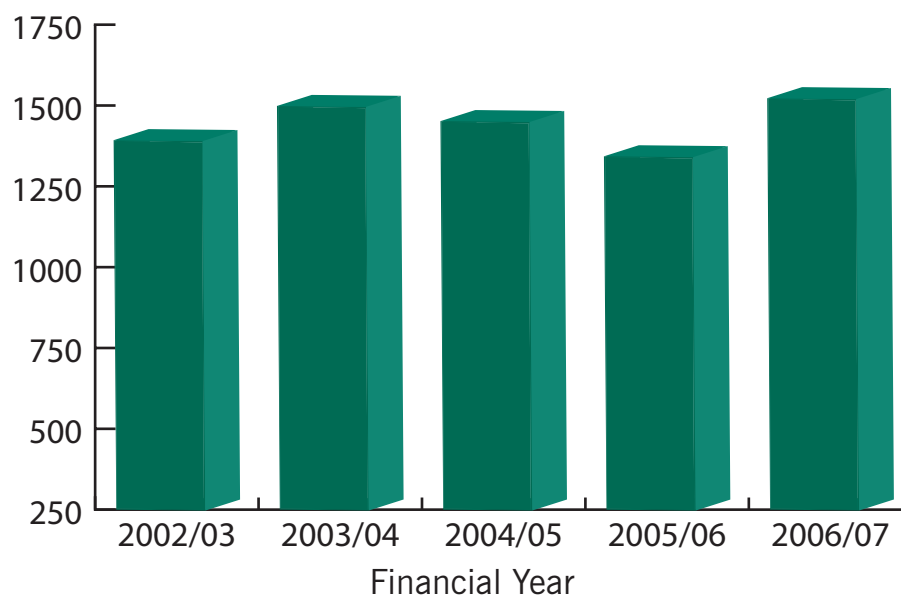


Fire safety checks are carried out year-round throughout the Parliamentary Estate.

Catering Services

242. The House of Commons Refreshment Department provides catering and retail services for Members of Parliament, staff and visitors to the parliamentary estate. Retail and merchandising activities are reported elsewhere in this report (see paragraphs 176 to 177). A wide range of catering services are located in the Palace of Westminster, Portcullis House, 1 Parliament Street and 7 Millbank, and in 2006/07 served snacks and meals to over 9,000 people a day at peak times. Facilities include the Members' Tea Room, four self-service restaurants, four table-service restaurants, three cafés/coffee bars (including the Jubilee Café, open to all visitors to Parliament), five bars and numerous hospitality rooms for private functions. The Refreshment Department also operates the catering facilities provided for press and media representatives based in the House. The House of Lords has its own Refreshment Department but Members and staff of the Lords are able to use many of the catering services provided in the House of Commons. Over 1.5 million meals were served in the year ended March 2007. This is up by 11.7 per cent compared to 2005/06, a year that was affected by a General Election, and 1.6 per cent up on the previous record level of business experienced in 2003/04.

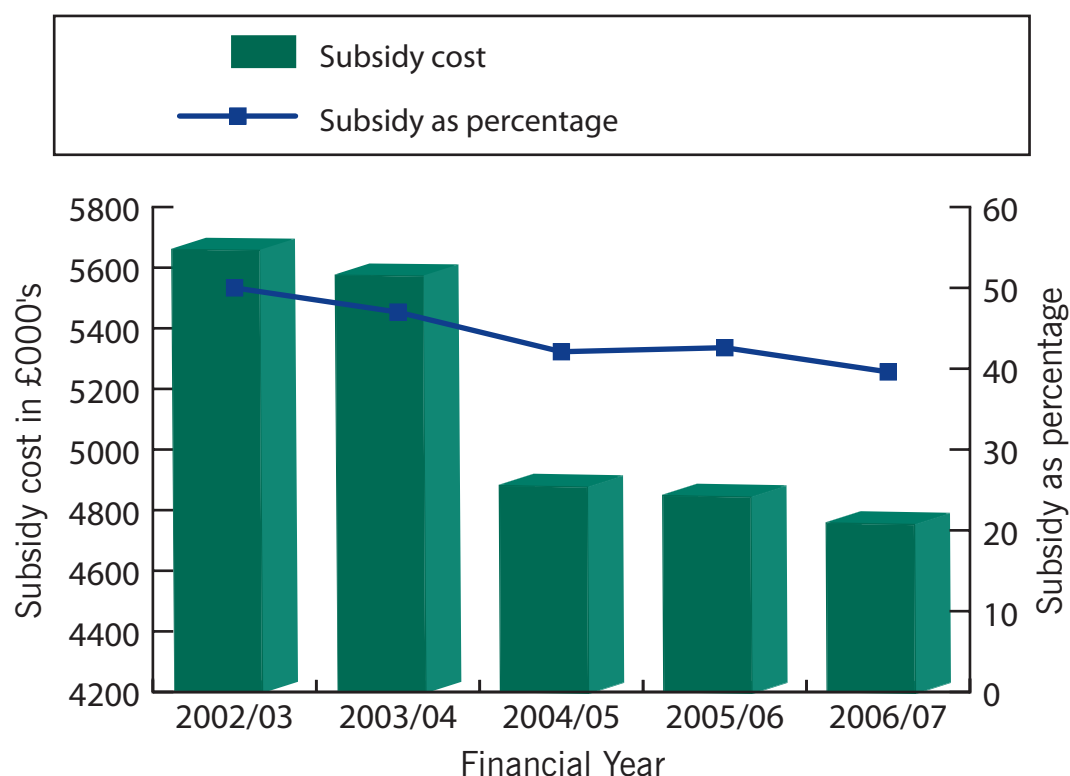
Refreshment Department: Total Annual Covers



243. Having closed at the beginning of 2006, the Jubilee Café re-opened in October following completion of the conservation work in Westminster Hall (see paragraph 234), restoring this service for visitors to Parliament. Elsewhere, temporary arrangements were made for catering services provided for journalists and media representatives based in Parliament, as their normal services were disrupted by the works project to modernise the Press Gallery accommodation. The new catering facilities, scheduled to open in the autumn of 2007, have been designed in collaboration with the members of the Press Gallery and will enable significant savings to be made on their running costs.

244. The Refreshment Department's annual operating costs (excluding pension costs) for 2006/07 was £12m against a budget of £12.1m. This is the fifth consecutive year of cost reduction since the catering subsidy was reviewed in 2003, representing a cash saving of over £2.5m over the past four years and a reduction in the proportion of the Department's costs funded from public money from 50 per cent in 2002/03 to just under 40 per cent in 2006/07.

Refreshment Department Subsidy



245. Following the publication of the Administration Committee's report on Refreshment Department Services,²⁸ and the Commission's response,²⁹ a number of key improvements were planned by the Refreshment Department in 2006/07, and have either been implemented or will be implemented in 2007/08. This has included an extension of the opening hours of the Terrace Cafeteria in recess periods, the introduction of a recycling scheme at cafeterias, and the development of a new "brasserie" style menu in the Members and Strangers Dining Rooms, which will be trialled in May 2007.

246. Also in response to the Committee's report in January 2007 the Refreshment Department launched a "Customer Service Improvement Programme" led by a Customer Service Advisor (CSA). The project involves the CSA working in all Refreshment Department venues alongside staff, coaching and mentoring them to change workplace routines and behaviours. This complements the more formal training all staff and managers received in the summer of 2006 and allows a tailored action plan to be compiled for each venue. This programme is scheduled for completion in July 2007.

²⁸ HC 733 2005-06

²⁹ HC 1146 2005-06

247. During 2006/07 the provision of healthy eating options has been improved by the introduction of at least one “healthy dish” on each menu. Identification of healthy options and options for those with food intolerances have been made easier for customers through the introduction of easily identifiable symbols. In January 2007, in conjunction with OHSWS, the Refreshment Department supported the national “Healthy Eating Week” through the introduction of new healthy eating dishes. Feedback was positive, and the most popular dishes have been retained on the cafeterias’ menu cycles. The Department continues to improve nutritional value by reducing the saturated fats and sugar content within home produced foods. Fish is steamed where possible, and grilling used where appropriate to reduce fat content. Counter lines are also chosen to provide the choice of a healthier option where possible, such as oat cakes and low-fat yoghurts.



Healthy eating options are available in the cafeterias and restaurants of the House of Commons.

248. There has also been a continued emphasis on the availability of Fairtrade products in the House of Commons catering services. All coffee served in the House of Commons’ catering outlets has been Fairtrade-approved for several years, but this has now been complemented by the introduction of a Fairtrade House of Commons coffee for sale in the souvenir shops. Other Fairtrade products consistently sold in the House of Commons catering facilities include teas, sugar, chocolate, wines, fruit juices and snack items. A number of promotions have also been run to support Britain’s national days, and promote regional food and drink. In 2007/08 the Refreshment Department will pursue its responsible purchasing agenda by working with suppliers to increase the amount of sustainable food, including local and seasonal produce, served as part of routine catering services.

*The HOUSE of
COMMONS:
Administration
Resource Accounts
2005-06*

Main Supply Estim

2007-08

for the year ending 31 March 20

**Supply Estima
Commons: Adr**

*The Speaker of
Commons C
of Comm
of Comm*

Supporting task iii: Plan and manage all of the House's resources to a high standard, achieving value for money and matching current public service standards including in the areas of risk and change management and environmental protection

Introduction

249. Planning and managing the House's resources to a high standard, and being able to demonstrate that those resources are being managed effectively and provide value for money, is a continuing priority for the Commission and the House Service. In terms of risk and contingency planning and environmental concerns the aim is to match or exceed public sector standards.

250. Improved management skills are key to the delivery of this aim. Following on from the development of a management programme for senior staff a management skills programme for all those in managerial posts will be rolled out in 2007/08 (see paragraph 204). Following the recommendations of an internal audit regarding project management the Board of Management has tasked Joan Miller, Director of Parliamentary ICT Services, to lead a programme to deliver comprehensive guidance and standards for project management.

251. Improved management information is also vital. Planning and management is identified as a priority area in the Commission's strategic plan (see page 13) as there is recognition of an increasing requirement to be able to demonstrate that resources are being managed in an efficient and cost-effective way. Over the planning period, the aims are:

- To plan and manage the House's services to a high standard.
- To achieve value for money and be able to demonstrate that resources are being managed in an efficient and cost-effective way.
- To be able to comply consistently with legal and financial requirements.
- To match public service standards in areas such as risk and change management and environmental protection.

252. In 2006/07 major elements of the House Administrative Information System (HAIS) were rolled out, including a new system for ordering and paying for goods and services. The HAIS2 programme closed in April 2007. In 2006/07 departments successfully transferred to planning and managing their budgets on a resource rather than a cash basis. Targets for energy use and recycling of waste were met (see paragraph 44).

253. Specific actions for 2007/08 include:

- Revising and strengthening the House's Resource Framework.
- Extending the attribution of central costs to departmental budgets.
- Conducting a review of the House's internal review function (see paragraph 264)
- Further development of key performance indicators at corporate and departmental level.

Management Information

254. Over the past three years a number of HR and finance responsibilities have been delegated to departments, enabled by the introduction of the House Administrative Information System (HAIS) (for information on HAIS see paragraphs 53 to 66). To support this, resource budgeting and staff planning modules were introduced for use by departmentally-based finance and HR teams during 2006/07. This means that planning and budgeting is now seamless with consistent data used to present budgets and forecast outturns. Information presented at a departmental level is consistent with summary information presented to the Board of Management and the House of Commons Commission.

255. During 2006/07 financial controls have been strengthened by requiring the authorisation of goods and services at the point of ordering rather than on receipt. Items are ordered and authorised electronically, through HAIS, removing the need for the generation and storage of paper orders and documentation. House staff are also now able to check and update their own HR information online, and will shortly be able to check and update their training records.

256. A new till system (EPoS) has been introduced into all Refreshment Department venues. The major benefit of EPoS is its web-based management reporting tool which allows managers to retrieve key information at a detailed level that will enhance budgeting, stock control and purchasing processes.

Risk management and contingency planning

257. The Board of Management reviewed its high level risks in July 2006, including considering the Board's "risk appetite" for each risk. The Board devolved responsibility for two risks to the appropriate second tier group and revised the wording of the remaining eight risks to concentrate effort on reducing the residual risk left after the mitigating action which has already been taken by the House Service.



Management information is key to the Board of Management's consideration of risk management.

258. A new matrix for assessing the likelihood and impact of risks has been implemented at both corporate and departmental level. The Business Planning Group, consisting of Departmental Finance Officers, is ensuring that there are stronger links between the two levels of register, with departmental registers supporting corporate as well as departmental risks.

259. For 2007/08, the Board's aim is to continue to build upon embedding risk management processes across the House and to ensure consistency of approach in the way risks are managed at both corporate and departmental level. The Board will also monitor and review the corporate risks, to ensure that any new emerging risks are identified.

Contingency Planning

260. In addition to managing day-to-day risk the Commission and the Board of Management must ensure that contingency plans are in place in case of incidents which disrupt the work of the House or the availability of the Parliamentary Estate. Work in this area is led by the Serjeant at Arms, supported by the House-wide Contingency Planning Group, and is carried forward in co-operation with the security services and the Cabinet Office. In 2006/07 the Board of Management agreed to strengthen arrangements through a short-term post based in the Office of the Clerk to consider sub-disaster planning.

Internal Review Service

261. The Internal Review Service (IRS) provides internal audit and staff review services; its principal role is to provide assurance to the Clerk of the House as Accounting Officer on the adequacy of internal controls. IRS also helps to ensure that the House Service makes the best use of the human resources available to it.

262. During 2006/07 IRS, together with its internal audit partner PricewaterhouseCoopers, delivered 17 reports to the Administration Estimate Audit Committee and 6 reports to the Members Estimate Audit Committee.

263. IRS continued to develop and improve its services in the year. A comprehensive monthly progress report was introduced at the beginning of the year and the tracking document provided ahead of Audit Committee meetings was improved. In addition a project to improve the look, format and content of IRS's annual report was undertaken.

264. In February 2007 the Clerk of the House instigated a review of the internal audit function. The review will define the work of an internal audit function, assess the effectiveness of the House's relationship with PricewaterhouseCoopers, the House's internal audit partner, and make recommendations as to the future provision of internal audit at the House of Commons.

Procurement

265. Professional procurement is one of the cornerstones of a modern organisation, and the House Service aims to comply fully with European Union procurement policy. The Central Procurement Office (CPO), based in the Department of Finance and Administration, is responsible for the formulation and dissemination of House-wide procurement policy. The CPO works closely with departmentally-based procurement staff, and with the House of Lords.

266. Last year's annual report recorded work to launch a number of framework agreements for procurement. During 2006/07 this work was completed, with framework agreements relating to training, consultancy, and print and design work launched. As well as ensuring compliance with EU legislation, including the new EU public procurement directive which took effect during the year, the framework agreements have led to a reduction in spending of approximately £½m. The frameworks are open to the House of Lords, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly, and are expected to have an aggregate annual spend in excess of £6m.

267. During 2006/07 the CPO has issued an up-dated version of the standard procurement manual and desk guide. Two new guides, covering contract management and financial appraisal, have also been produced and added to the suite of template documents available to intranet users.

268. The available templates include standard parts for inclusion in a contract, such as the mandatory terms that ought to be included in any House contract, as well as a range of optional terms relevant to different agreements (e.g. terms that pertain to the purchase of goods, or terms for service providers who will work on the Parliamentary Estate).

269. The Procurement Practitioners Group (PPG), a sub-group of the Business Planning Group, brings together staff with responsibility for procurement activity. During 2006/07 the CPO and PPG have worked together to deliver training for all staff involved in procurement. At its February 2007 meeting the Board of Management agreed to institute functional-based procurement, where procurement personnel based in Departments would assume responsibility for specific categories of procurement on behalf of all. This system will be implemented in 2007/08.



Supporting task iv: Maintain the heritage and integrity of the Palace of Westminster and other buildings, objects and documents for the benefit of future generations

Introduction

270. The UK Parliament has a long and rich history and consequently an extensive heritage; both cultural and physical. The physical heritage includes buildings, furniture, works of art and documents. We have a responsibility to the nation to maintain this physical heritage beyond the degree necessary for our immediate business need. In particular, the Palace of Westminster needs to be maintained in accordance with its status as a Grade 1 listed building, which adds considerably to the complexity and cost of the works programme. It is anticipated that there will be major projects in coming years to refurbish the Palace's cast iron roofs – which have been largely untouched since the building was constructed between 1840 and 1852 – and to renew much of the mechanical and electrical equipment a great deal of which is now over 50 years old.

271. Older documents need to be conserved, but we also want to make access to key items quicker and easier for both parliamentary and non-parliamentary users. A strategy for digitising Parliament's historic documents is being developed and a major project to digitise Hansards from 1803 is underway (see paragraph 282). The Parliamentary Archives provide an archive service on behalf of both Houses.

Westminster Hall

272. During 2006/07 work was undertaken to halt the ongoing settlement of the Westminster Hall floor and underpin the south steps (for more information on the maintenance aspects of this work see paragraph 234). Two archaeological excavations were carried out, one under the floor and the other beneath the south steps, and archaeologists also completed a programme of core-sampling to examine the topography and environment of the site before the Palace was laid out.

273. Beneath the lower landing of the south steps the foundation of a seventeenth century wall was discovered, incorporating considerable quantities of re-used architectural stone fragments, including pieces of arched trestles carved from Purbeck marble in a gothic style. These decorative supports are believed to derive from the mediaeval "King's Table" which originally stood on a dais at the south end of Westminster Hall for use at state banquets, but was broken off during the Commonwealth (1649-60).

274. The archaeological investigations have revealed that the construction of Westminster Hall on soft marshy ground was made possible by the formation of a firm clay raft. Core sampling revealed a complex series of layers due to the repeated making-up of the ground surface and successive relaying of the floor throughout the mediaeval period.

Works of Art

275. The Palace of Westminster Collection is an important and unique collection of works of art which document the story of Parliament over the ages. It is an important national asset. Comprising over 7,500 pieces, divided between the House of Commons and the House of Lords, a significant part of the collection of pictures and sculptures is on display at any one time across the Parliamentary Estate. The collection is managed by a team of four professional curatorial staff and overseen in the House of Commons by the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art. The Committee follows an active policy of commissioning and buying paintings and sculptures of eminent, current and latter-day political figures. Recent acquisitions include an unfinished portrait of Michael Foot by Robert Lenkiewicz acquired after the artist's death and portrait busts of Barbara Castle and Tony Benn, both sculpted by Ian Walters.

276. During September and October 2006 a major exhibition was held to mark the bicentenary of the deaths of William Pitt the Younger and Charles James Fox. It was imaginatively mounted in the atrium of Portcullis House, bringing old and new aspects of Parliament together in a graphic way. It was dedicated to the memory of Tony Banks, Lord Stratford, a former Chairman of the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art, at whose suggestion the exhibition was mounted. The exhibition comprised pieces from the Palace of Westminster Collection and loans from private and institutional lenders including Lady Stratford and the National Portrait Gallery. The exhibition was accompanied by a special catalogue supplement to the "House Magazine" and was timed to coincide with the national "Open House Weekend", giving members of the public the chance to visit it.



An exhibition to mark the bicentenary of the deaths of William Pitt the Younger and Charles James Fox was imaginatively mounted in the atrium of Portcullis House.

277. 21 February 2007 saw the official unveiling of Antony Dufort's statue of Baroness Thatcher, located in Members Lobby immediately outside the Commons' Chamber. The statue was commissioned by the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art in 2003 to recognise her contribution to British politics during her three terms of office as Prime Minister, and her place in history as the United Kingdom's first woman Premier. The statue represents Baroness Thatcher in her last term in office, 1987-1990.

278. During the year the only surviving hand-knotted Pugin rug was purchased jointly by the Advisory Committee on Works of Art and the Speaker's Art Fund. Conservation work was undertaken and the rug is now on display in a public area of Committee corridor in the Palace.



Conservation of the House of Commons' medal and coin collection took place in 2006/07.

279. During 2006/07 the House of Commons' medals and coins collection was dismantled, cleaned by specialist conservators, reorganised and redisplayed in line with current conservation standards. The main impetus for this work was that the cases used to store the collection had been infected with "woolly bears", moth-like insects which were eating their way through the felt backing and would have caused serious damage if action had not been taken. The collection was formed through a substantial bequest in 1908, and two further major donations in 1938 and 1939 from Members of Parliament. Since then a number of personal bequests have added to the collection, and the Royal Mint, Ministry of Defence medal office and others have donated specimen medals. In addition to the conservation work, information has been added about individual medals and the collection as a whole, supplemented by large print labels and an information booklet. Information on the collection is also now available on the Parliament website.

280. The medals collection was also augmented by an important new acquisition, the decorations and medals of Sir Arnold Wilson, KCIE, CSI, CMG, DSO, MP for Hitchin 1932-40. Sir Arnold had a notable political and military career, and had himself made donations to the Commons' medal collection. Shot down near Dunkirk on 31 May 1940, he was one of the few MPs to die on active service. Sir Arnold's awards, including his Distinguished Service Order (DSO), his wartime medals and the insignia of his knighthood, were acquired at auction with funds from the Speaker's Art Fund, and mark the first time that the medals of a Member of Parliament have been incorporated into the collection.

Photographic project

281. In summer 2006 David Partner was commissioned by the House of Commons to photograph 100 staff of the House, a project to complement the portraits taken by the Victorian MP and photographer Sir Benjamin Stone at the end of the 19th and early 20th century. An exhibition of the portraits will be displayed in Portcullis House in autumn 2007.

Digitisation

282. A project to digitise pre-electronic volumes of Hansard is underway. By the end of 2006/07 over three-quarters of a million pages had been scanned, representing approximately one-third of the total. The intention is for all text to be available on the internet by mid-2008.



In February 2007 a statue of Baroness Thatcher, by Antony Dufort, was unveiled in Members Lobby.

History of Parliament Trust

283. The History of Parliament is a major academic project to create a scholarly reference work describing the Members, constituencies and activities of the Parliament of England and the United Kingdom. The published history covers 281 years of parliamentary history in 28 volumes. Work on the sections of the History dealing with the Commons from 1422 to 1504, 1604 to 1660 and 1820 to 1832 and the Lords from 1660 to 1832 is on-going. The project is governed by a Trust, chaired by Sir Patrick Cormack FSA MP, and composed mainly of Members and staff of both Houses. It employs around 30 staff and in 2006/07 received grant-in-aid of £1.3m from the Administration Estimate and £0.3m from the House of Lords Estimate.

284. The History's aims and objectives are contained in its annual plan, which is published on its website (www.histparl.ac.uk) and reviewed by the Commission (most recently in January 2007). The Commons 1820-32 section is due to be published in 2009 and publication of the Commons 1604-29 section will follow in 2010. Tendering for a contract to cover the print publication of these volumes began during the year and is expected to be completed by summer 2007.

285. As was anticipated in last year's report, the Trustees agreed during the year that the completed sections should be replaced by new projects on the Lords 1604-60 and the Commons after 1832. Revised funding arrangements have been agreed with the parliamentary authorities to reflect the increase in work on the Lords, and the History will now report regularly to the Lord's House Committee as well as to the Commission. A volume on the history of the House of Lords will be published by the History in 2009. The History is developing a different approach to its work for the post-1832 period, to reflect the volume of manuscript and published material relating to parliamentarians in existence. A major academic colloquium was held in January 2007 to discuss this issue and Trustees will be invited to decide the shape of the History's post-1832 work during 2007/08.

286. Work on publishing the History online, in a searchable format capable of being linked to other historical parliamentary material, has, as indicated last year, continued. A project manager has been recruited and options for introducing a content management system, both for online publication and the management of the History's day-to-day work, are being explored. The invitation to tender for print publication also sought proposals for online publication and Trustees will be asked to decide how to proceed during 2007-08. The History has continued its collaboration with the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London in building a digital library of historical resources (www.british-history.ac.uk). The History's engagement with parliamentarians, the academic community and the public has continued – for example, with the continued success of the History's annual lecture and its prize competition for school students, and collaborating with the Churchill Archive and the Parliamentary Archives in organising an exhibition of politicians' papers in the House of Commons in November 2006.



Supporting task v: Ensure that information is well-managed in pursuit of the primary objectives, by exploiting technology effectively

Introduction

287. Information management and Information & Communications Technology (ICT) is identified as a priority area in the Commission's strategic plan (see page 13). Parliament is an information-rich environment, and this information – whether in paper or electronic form – needs to be well managed if it is to be both accurate and accessible. The aim for the planning period is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Parliament through excellent management and use of information.

288. Activities in 2006/07 have concentrated on consolidating the creation of the new Parliamentary ICT Service (PICT) while maintaining business as usual services. Achievements include: the introduction of mobile computing for Members with the provision of PDAs and the introduction of wireless access in the Portcullis House atrium; completing the amalgamation of sub-networks onto the Parliamentary Network; and improving IT security. PICT has worked with users to identify and prioritise requirements for future ICT developments.

289. A key success in 2006/07 has been improvements to the PICT Service desk response times and processes. The average time taken to answer a call to the service desk has been reduced from an unacceptable high of four minutes to less than 35 seconds. The quality of the response of Service Engineers has also been improved. Further improvements are planned for 2007/08.

290. Priorities for 2007/08 include responding to the recommendations of the Administration Committee's inquiry into ICT services for Members,³⁰ rationalising desktop services for parliamentary staff and continuing work related to EDRM.

Electronic document and records management

291. A feasibility study for developing EDRM was completed in July 2006, further development identified and from October 2006 detailed planning work commenced. The project has now commenced a pilot stage, involving staff from across the House Service, which is due to be completed by the end of 2007.

Web Centre Project

292. The project to develop the Parliamentary intranet continued during 2006/07. Following technical failures in June and October which resulted in loss of service, PICT led a review of the project focussing on both the stability of the technical solution and the usability of the content management system. As a result of the review, the content of the intranet has been moved to a less complex platform that is both more reliable and easier for PICT to support.

293. The Web Centre, which manages the Parliament website, has taken on responsibility for the intranet, and the two sites will now be developed alongside one another, rather than in isolation. In 2006/07 the web centre team have made significant strides in improving the content and appearance of the Internet core pages (see paragraphs 154 to 155 above) and have compiled a draft strategy and designs for a new look intranet. Improvements to the content and presentation of the intranet will continue in 2007/08.

PICT Strategy

294. During 2006/07 PICT began a comprehensive review of ICT strategy for Parliament which will be completed in 2007/08. The technology strategy will be driven by business strategies for information management and retrieval, bearing in mind the wide range of users and stakeholders for parliamentary information. Reviews of several key sub-strategies have already been completed, namely intranet, internet, asset management and mobile working. PICT plans to develop a revised Members ICT strategy in the light of the recommendations made in the ICT services report mentioned in paragraph 290.

³⁰ HC 498 2006-07



295. The 2005/06 annual report highlighted the difficulties caused by the wide range of separate ICT applications supporting parliamentary business, which were not fully integrated, but had inter-dependencies (see paragraph 270). During 2006/07 PICT has worked within the strategic framework for information management as set out in the House of Commons Corporate Business Plan 2007. Elements of this will be updated in the light of the reviews leading to the revised ICT strategy. In March 2007, PICT merged the previously separate Department of Official Report and main Parliamentary networks: the full integration of parliamentary information systems is a longer-term goal and will be achieved progressively as systems are replaced or upgraded.

Parliamentary Archives

296. In November 2006 the announcement that the House of Lords Record Office had changed its name to the Parliamentary Archives marked the beginning of a fortnight of activities to celebrate 60 years of archiving in Parliament. The primary purpose of the events was to raise awareness of the importance of effective record keeping today for the long-term preservation and accessibility of historical archives. The name change also better reflects the work that the Parliamentary Archives undertakes for and on behalf of both Houses of Parliament. Tours of the Victoria Tower repository and the conservation studios were offered, talks held and an exhibition, entitled “For the Record: Preserving the Archives of Parliament and Parliamentarians” and organised in conjunction with the History of Parliament Trust (see paragraph 283), containing records both from Parliament’s collection and that of the Churchill Archives Centre.

297. By August 2006 all volumes of the Authorised Records Disposal Practice, designed to provide guidance to staff on when records can be disposed either by destruction after a stated time or transfer to the Parliamentary Archives for permanent preservation, had been signed off by the Clerks of both Houses and implemented across the two Houses. The conclusion of this work was a major achievement both for the staff of the Parliamentary Archives, the members of the Parliamentary Records Disposal Panel and the records officers and other staff in both Houses who contributed to and commented on the draft volumes. During the year a questionnaire was completed by selected staff across both Houses to assess how well these corporate records management practices were embedded, and a programme of field visits was undertaken by the Parliamentary Archives to ensure that staff receive adequate support and guidance in managing the records they create and receive, and to assess the effectiveness and consistency of records management controls throughout each House.

Data Protection

298. As Data Controller, the Clerk of the House has a duty to ensure that the House of Commons Service treats personal information lawfully and correctly. To this end he fully endorses and adheres to the principles of data protection, as described in the Data Protection Act 1998. One aspect of this commitment is the annual updating of an entry on the Information Commissioner's public register of Data Controllers describing the extent of personal information held by the House of Commons and the use to which it is put.

299. In order to ensure that there is someone with specific responsibility for data protection in the House of Commons Service, the Data Controller has appointed a Data Protection Officer. The Data Protection Officer ensures that the House of Commons complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and provides advice to Members and staff of the House about the application of the Act's rights and obligations. Each Department of the House of Commons has also nominated a Data Protection Representative.

300. During 2006/07 staff of the House Service administered eight formal requests for access to personal data. The Data Protection Officer was asked to provide advice on data protection matters on a range of issues including: ensuring that principles of fair and lawful processing were incorporated into new processes and systems; consideration of data protection requirements in response to around 50 requests for information under Freedom of Information legislation; providing advice to House staff about the application of the eight data protection principles to individual circumstances; and providing advice to Members as required about the operation and implementation of the Act in their constituency offices (each Member is required to maintain a separate entry on the Commissioner's public register of Data Controllers).

PIMS

301. The Parliamentary Information Management Services (PIMS) system provides a content management system for managing parliamentary information and gives users access to it through a portal with search and retrieval features. The PIMS project was closed in April 2006 and responsibility for maintaining the live system passed to PICT. A series of small but important changes identified by the PIMS user groups was put in place during 2006/07, including an upgrade to the Autonomy search engine which has improved the predictability of search results, and changes to remedy faults in the reporting function used to produce the index to the bound volumes of Hansard. These changes have made PIMS considerably easier to use. As a result there has been a gradual increase in user confidence amongst end users and the indexing staff who input data.

302. During the year a technical review of the Vignette content management system underlying PIMS has been carried out by PICT. A number of minor improvements to the configuration of Vignette were recommended; these will be carried out as part of the support contract. A small number of proposed technical changes requiring more significant levels of effort will be investigated further.



Supporting task vi: Maintain a good working relationship with the House of Lords, particularly in the provision of shared services; share information and best practice with other parliaments and assemblies; and co-operate with other organisations that can assist the House Service in its work

Introduction

303. If Parliament as a whole is to function effectively, the House of Commons and the House of Lords need to work well together, while maintaining their distinct roles. A number of services have been provided on a shared-service basis for some years including Parliamentary Estates and Works, the Parliamentary Education Service, the Central Tours Office and the Parliamentary Archives. This form of joint-working entered a new phase with the creation of the Parliamentary ICT Directorate (PICT) on 1 January 2006. In January 2007 the Parliament (Joint Departments) Bill was introduced in the House of Lords.³¹ The Bill, once enacted, will provide the legal framework for PICT to be re-constituted as a joint department of the two Houses (see paragraph 24).

304. We share experience and best practice with other parliaments and assemblies, both in the UK and abroad, through bilateral visits and membership of inter-parliamentary organisations. There are also other organisations that play a role in promoting the work of Parliament such as the Hansard Society (see paragraph 309) and the History of Parliament Trust (see paragraph 283) whose work we recognise.

Inter-parliamentary co-operation

305. During 2006/07 the Overseas Office dealt with 95 visits from 66 countries. Visitors included the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, the Speaker and Government Chief Whip of the Bangladesh Parliament and the Secretary General of the Israeli Knesset. The Office also ran eight professional development programmes for 34 parliamentary staff from 16 mostly Commonwealth countries. In addition to this the Overseas Office has also worked closely with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch, the Inter-Parliamentary Union British Group and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

306. The Clerk of the Overseas Office is Secretary to the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments. The Society met in Nigeria in September 2006 under the aegis of the CPA annual conference.

307. During the year the House of Commons Library has held a number of events for colleagues in the UK and Europe, hosting the annual conference of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation jointly with the House of Lords. The Education Service hosted a conference for education, outreach and visitor's service staff from the devolved legislatures, the Republic of Ireland, the European Parliament and the London Assembly. An open day for over 50 librarians from other organisations across the UK was held in April 2006. The Library has also received a number of visits from colleagues from overseas parliaments including those in Canada, Egypt and South Korea.



The House of Commons and House of Lords jointly hosted the 2006 annual conference of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation.

Hansard Society

308. The House partly funds some projects run by the Hansard Society. During 2006/07 their programme has included exploring the feasibility of a network of parliamentary regional outreach centres (for more information see paragraph 41), updating its guide to "citizenship resources" "Big Ben and All That" and supporting the "Heads-up" on-line forum for young people. Plans for 2007/08 include carrying out research into public engagement and working on a revised and relaunched "Members in schools" programme.

³¹ Passing to the Commons on 24th April 2007

Annex 1: data tables

Providing advice and services to the House and its committees

Sittings of the House	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Number of sitting days	152	155	151	137	146
Average length of sitting days	7hr 51min	7hr 54min	7hr 57min	8hr 13min	7hr 39min
Westminster Hall sitting days (a) figure revised	95(a)	102	100	86	93
Average length of Westminster Hall sitting days	4hr 0min	3hr 59min	4hr 4min	4hr 6min	3hr 53min
<i>Hansard</i> Total pages of daily part published Average pages published per sitting day (b) figure revised	24,118 159	25,538 165	25,178 167	24,666 180(b)	27,288 187
Columns per significant error (target=13) Average daily print run	14.3 2,132	14.4 2,085	14.0 1,836	16.0 1,987	20 1,923
<i>Daily vote bundle</i> Average number of pages	271	270	268	297	372
<i>Printing and publishing</i> Total expenditure (£m)	10.9	12.0	11.5	9.2	12.6

Questions, answers and motions	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Average number of questions dealt with by the Table Office per day	463	472	456	596	605
Number of Members who have used e-tabling facility	45(c)	102	153	300	334
Percentage of questions e-tabled	5.8%(c)	14.9%	20.9%	29.6%	36.0%
(c) e-tabling introduced on 1 Jan 2003: percentage of questions tabled is for period from 1 Jan to 31 March 2003					
Total number of written answers published	51,978	50,032	49,562	61,477	63,451
EDMs: average number tabled per week	52	63	60	76	76
EDMs: average number of signatures per week	2,673	3,055	3,090	4,222	4,345

Legislation	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Government bills	35	31	44	49	38
Private Members' bills	105	113	95	87	86
Private bills	5	4	6	5	5
Standing committee meetings (d) including 28 meetings of the Select Committee on the Crossrail Bill (e) including 108 meetings of the Select Committee on the Crossrail Bill	477	399	421	371(d)	492(e)
Total number of new amendments, new clauses and new schedules tabled	8,842	8,509	7,668	5,438	7,737
Average per sitting day	58.2	54.9	48.8	39.7	53.2
Hansard (General committees)					
Total number of pages of debates published	9,036	7,826	7,236	6,059	7,208
Columns per significant error (target=13)	n/a	26	17	37	32
Statutory instruments					
Considered by Joint or Select Committee on Statutory Instruments	1,519	1,555(f)	1,467	1,662	1,373
Special attention of House drawn to	75(f)	85(f)	74	100	85
(f) figures revised					
Regulatory reform					
Proposals and draft orders reported on	18	10	18	4	8
European Scrutiny Committee					
EU Documents scrutinised (g) data from PIMS database of EU documents received in Financial Year	925(g)	1008(g)	898	883	1045
Reported as legally or politically important	n/a	n/a	431	437	484
Debates in European Standing Committee	30	32	38	32	42
Debates on the floor of the House	2	4	2	1	6
Joint Committee on Human Rights					
Bills considered	126	100	88	99	46
Special attention of the House drawn to	26	36	40	43	19
Select Committees					
Meetings	1,037	1,312	1,286	758	1,173
Reports (departmental committees only)	201	232	190	147	203

Information services	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Research enquiries					
With deadline <i>answered by deadline</i>	6,712(h) 98%	6,723(h) 98%	6,563(h) -(i)	6,245(h) 96%	6,639 98%
Without deadline <i>answered within two weeks</i>	4,919(h) 90%	4,617(h) 94%	4,621(h) 95%	5,462(h) 99%	5,689 99%
Unlogged enquiries (estimated)	17,300	15,500	18,400	-(i)	-(i)
(h) figures revised; figures for 2004/05 are likely to be underestimated due to the transition from POLIS to PIMS (i) not available on a comparable basis to previous years due to transition from POLIS to PIMS					
Reference enquiries					
Members' Library (estimated)	30,200	30,200	24,300(j)	-(k)	-(k)
Derby Gate and e-library (estimated)	23,600	19,300	16,500	-(k)	-(k)
(j) Members Library was closed during the 2004 summer recess including the September sitting period. (k) not available on a comparable basis to previous years					
Books and video loans					
Total	3,487	3,514	3,277	3,077	3,446
From stock	83%	81%	80%	81%	82%
Tapes and transcripts acquired	305	290	260	201	191
Items supplied by requested date	88%	88%	89%	90%	94%
Research papers and standard notes					
Number of research papers published	96	91	94	82	80
Standard notes on intranet at year end	1,368	1,816	2,173	2,720	2,813
Research papers on major bills published before second reading	97%	100%	97%	100%	100%
On-line material accessed					
Research papers (internet and intranet) (l) figures revised; 2005/06 total excludes figures for Nov and Dec 2005 which are unavailable	673,000(l)	893,000(l)	887,000	947,000(l)	1,520,000
Standard notes (intranet and internet) (m) Not available on a comparable basis to previous years due to transition from POLIS to PIMS	58,000	103,000	121,000	-(m)	289,000
Factsheets (intranet and internet) (n) Figures revised (o) Total excludes figure for Dec 2005, which are unavailable	323,000(n)	309,000(n)	280,000	310,000(o)	386,000
Debate packs (intranet)	n/a	4,000	3,000	4,000	5,000
POLIS/PIMS					
Items added	142,462	142,821	136,881	199,702	137,789
availability during scheduled hours	99.4%	100.0%	99.8%	96.5%	98.5%

Providing advice and services to individual Members and their staff

Parliamentary Network	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Infrastructure availability (working hours)	99.2%	99.9%	99.3%	99.93%	99.93%
PCD/PICT Helpdesk: cases logged	-	-	32,041	35,415	56,945
Percentage within target	-	-	97.6%	96.3%	80.6%(p)
<small>(p) more rigorous target time compared to previous years</small>					

Members' staff	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Number of Members' staff on payroll at end of financial year	2,280	2,446	2,584	2,577	2,493

Promoting public knowledge and understanding of the work and role of Parliament

Information Office	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Telephone enquiries	69,269	59,373	53,245	46,181	42,385
email and written enquiries	6,230	5,262	4,822	5,953	4,149
Total enquiries	75,499	64,635	58,067	52,134	46,534
Calls answered within 20 seconds	84%	86%	88%	88%	91%

Visitor numbers	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Visitors to Chamber galleries	130,206	136,156	126,781	100,297	116,768
<i>Percentage entering via public queue</i>	79%	79%	88%	81%	77%
Members' tours	100,267	105,529	113,815	108,089	129,940
Summer Opening	82,679	86,806	93,314	79,170	87,294

Education Service	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Publications sent out	130,257	80,351	97,762	78,617	83,492

Parliamentary broadcasting	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Archived videotape recordings of proceedings	2,155	1,828	2,078	1,253	1,283
Completed orders for recordings	702	718	780	814	800

Website	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Requests (million)	14.6	24.5	29.4	32.5	33.5

Support Services

Internal communications	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Intranet 'requests' (million) (q) data not available	3.4	6.8	5.1	5.4	-(q)

Staff payroll	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Full-time equivalent House staff (average over year)	1,477	1,517	1,554	1,553	1,606
Data changes made to staff payroll	30,343	30,134	29,200	29,126	39,714

Recruitment	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Recruitment exercises					
<i>Internal</i>	175	169	67	79	172
<i>Internal/External or External only</i>	69	97	46(r)	79	98
(r) simultaneous internal/external recruitment introduced in 2004/05					
Total	244	266	113	158	270

Occupational health, safety and welfare	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Treatments provided by nursing sister	1,772	1,679	2,213	1,938	2,223
Medical screenings (Members)	89	126	101	83	130
Staff referrals to physician	121	374	452	369	356
Referrals to physiotherapy	309	308	288	334	292
Sickness absence referral	142	475	470	256	269
Accidents causing injury	158	143	125	151	149

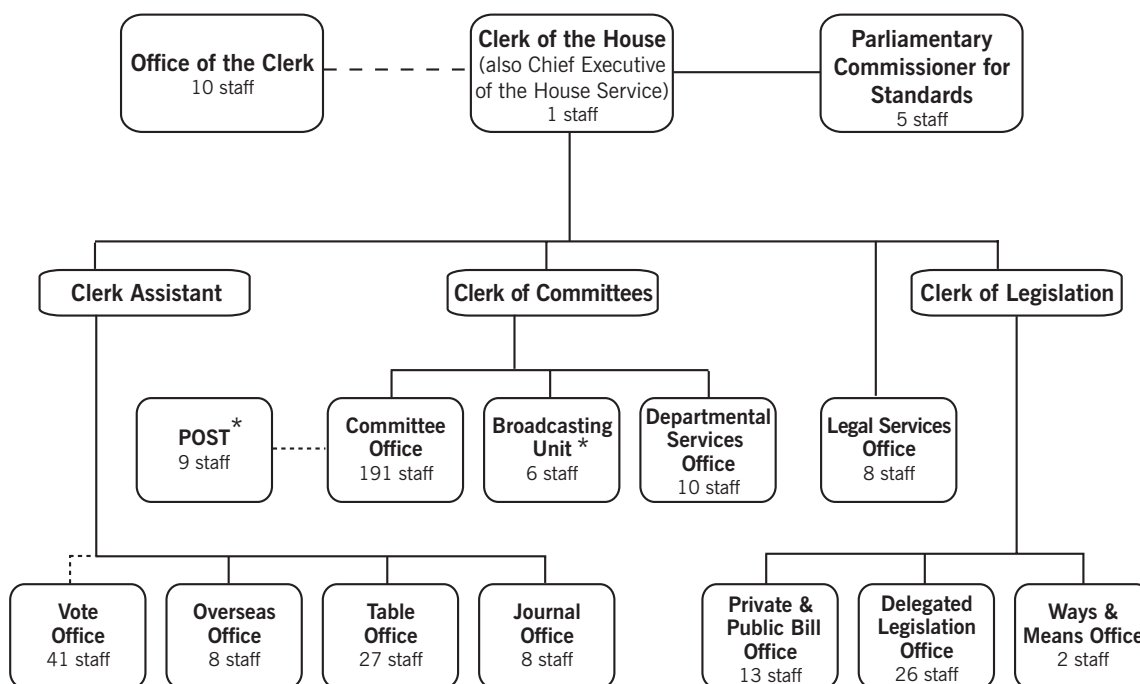
Catering	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Total covers (thousands)	1,119	1,501	1,454	1,345	1,525

Environmental performance	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Energy use per square metre (kWh) (whole parliamentary estate)	343	357	320	348	366
Waste recovered (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Waste recycled (%)	39	27	29	37	40

Annex 2: departmental organograms

Department of the Clerk of the House 360 staff

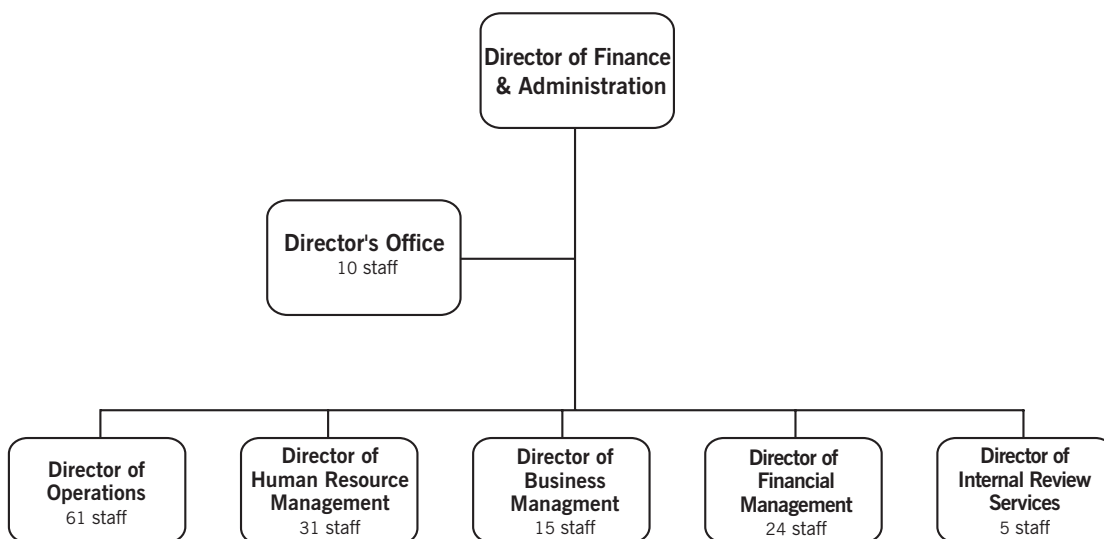
*denotes service shared with the House of Lords
 - - - - Office of the Clerk not part of the departmental structure
 = in post, 31 March 2007



Department of Finance and Administration

152 staff

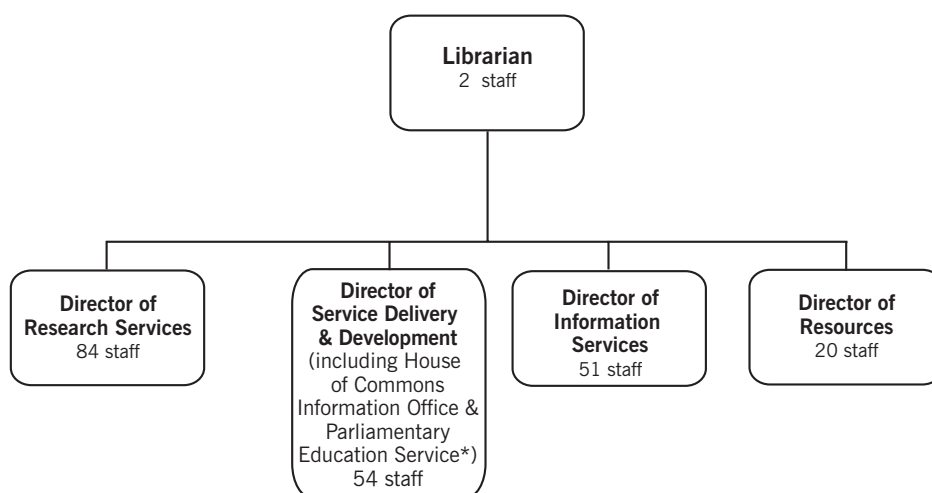
staff numbers = in post, 31 March 2007



Department of the Library

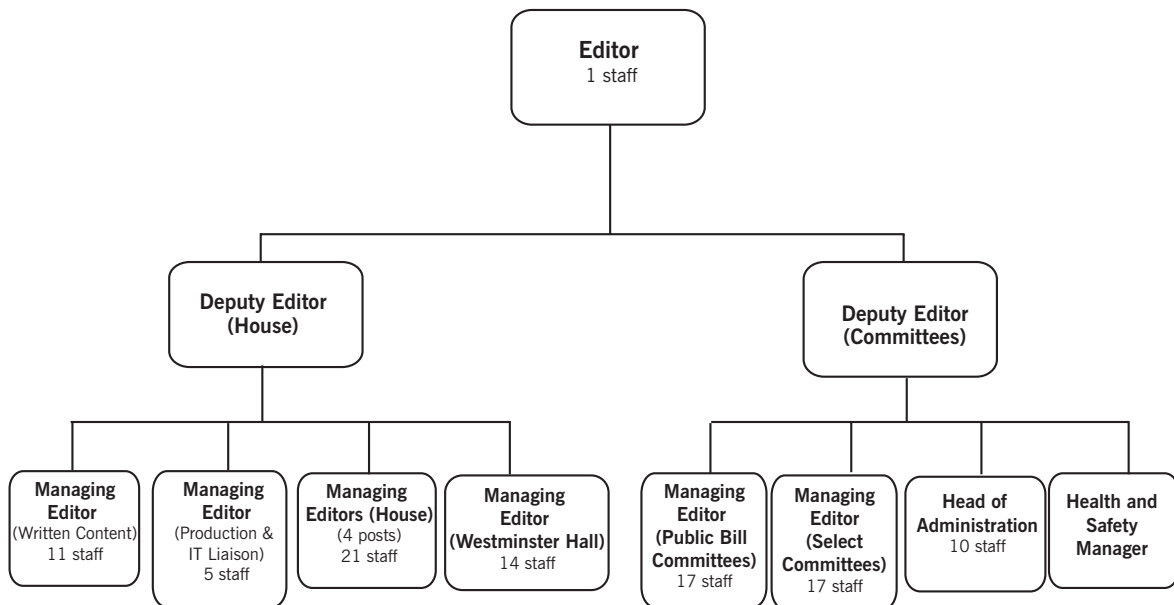
216 staff

*denotes service shared with the House of Lords
staff numbers = in post, 31 March 2007



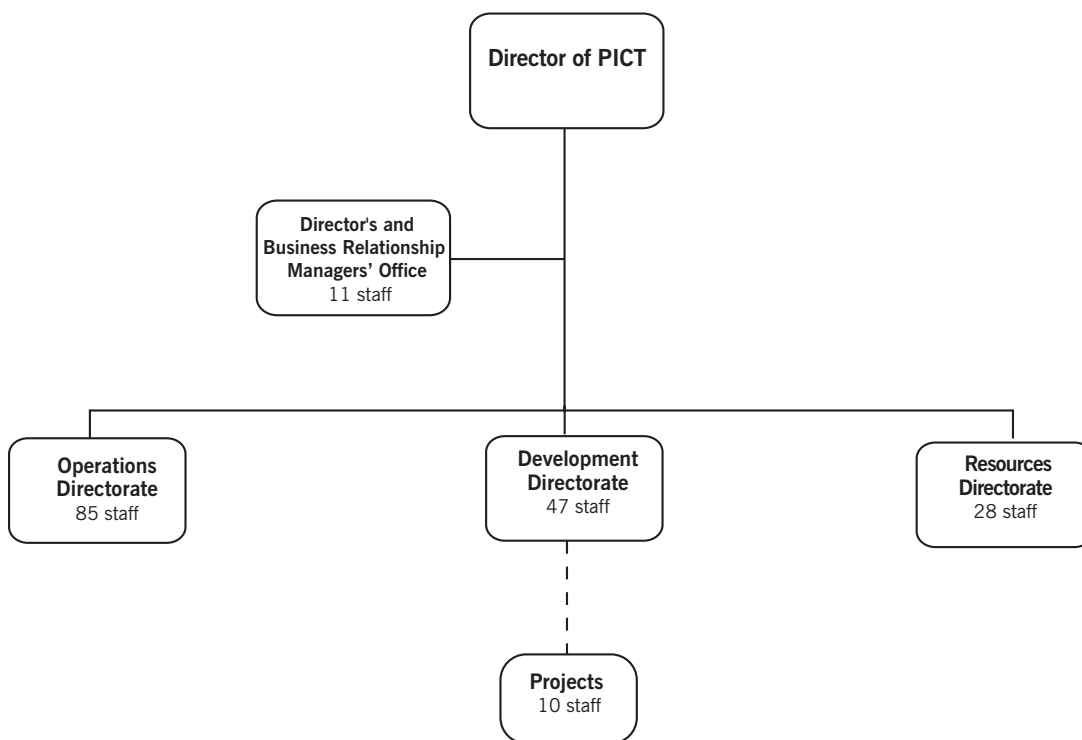
Department of the Official Report
110 staff

staff numbers = in post, 31 March 2007



Parliamentary ICT Service 182 staff

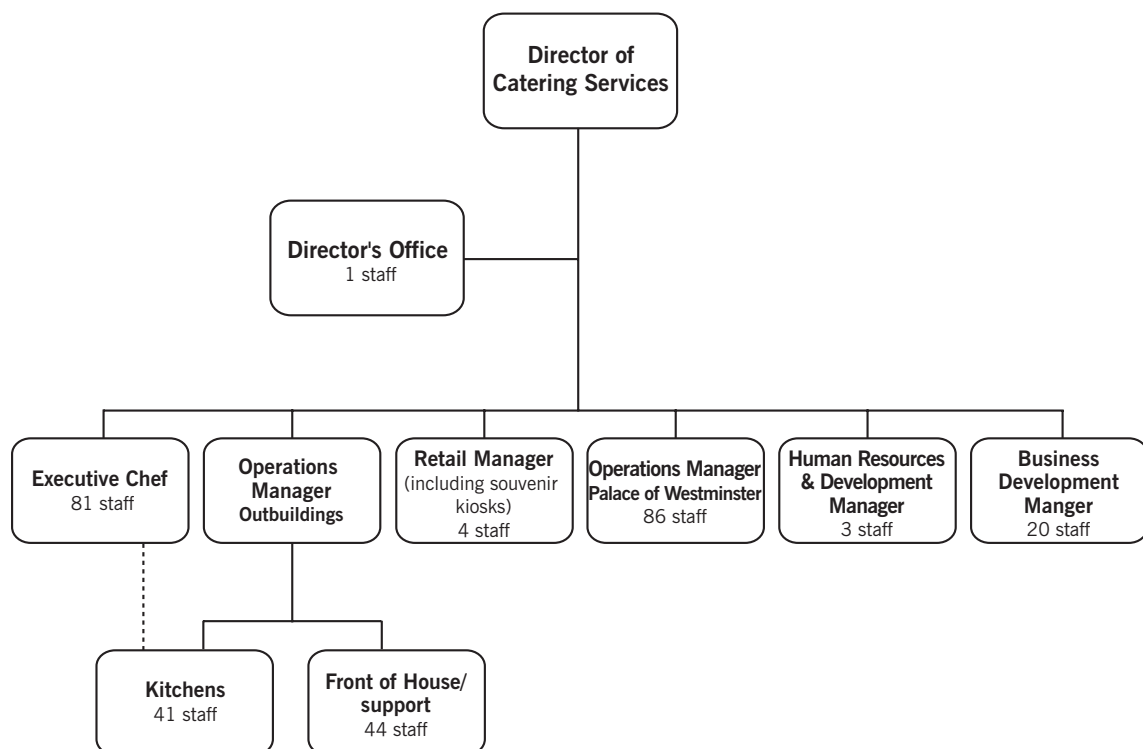
staff numbers = in post, 31 March 2007
- - - - denotes staff working on major projects



Refreshment Department

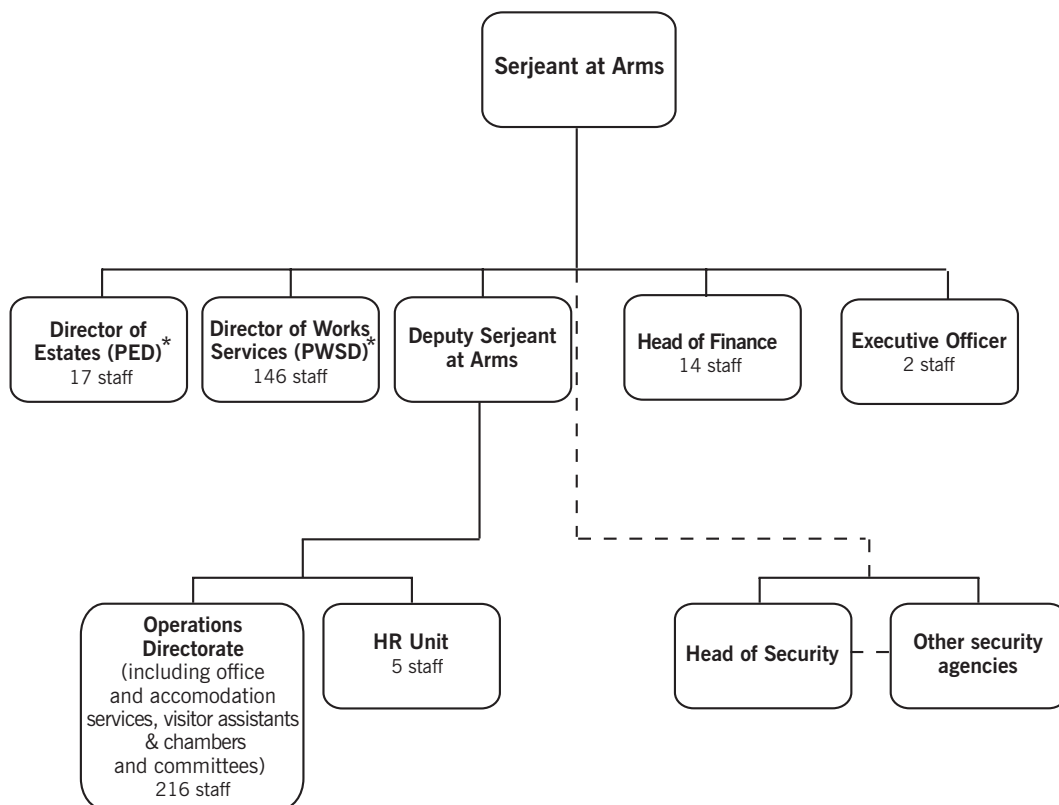
287 staff

staff numbers = in post, 31 March 2007
 denotes responsibility as head of profession



Department of the Serjeant at Arms
406 staff

*denotes service shared with the House of Lords
 - - - - - services provided under contract
 staff numbers = in post, 31 March 2007



Administration Estimate Audit Committee Annual Report for 2006/07

Introduction

1. This is the seventh annual report of the House of Commons Administration Estimate Audit Committee, which was established by the House of Commons Commission on 15 May 2000.

Membership

2. During 2006/07 the Rt. Hon Theresa May MP has served as Chairman of the Committee, and Nick Harvey MP as a member of the Committee. There were also two external members of the Committee, Sir Thomas Legg KCB QC and Mr David Taylor FCA.

3. The Clerk of the House, the Director of Finance and Administration, the Director of the Internal Review Service and the Secretary of the Board of Management attend meetings, although they may withdraw for specific items at the Committee's, or their own, request. In October 2006 Sir Roger Sands KCB retired from the position of Clerk of the House, and his place was taken by Dr Malcolm Jack.

4. The Committee's secretary is the Private Secretary to the Clerk of the House, Miss Tracey Garratty.

Terms of Reference

5. The Committee's terms of reference are annexed to this report.

6. The Committee was established on the recommendation of the 1999 Braithwaite review of the House of Commons Service. Sir Kevin Tebbit KCB CMG is currently leading a further review on behalf of the House of Commons Commission. In 2007/08 the Committee will consider whether its terms of reference need to be altered in light of Sir Kevin's recommendations.

Meetings

7. The Committee met three times in the financial year 2006/07.

8. The external members of the Committee also held an informal meeting with their counterparts in the House of Lords.

Information about the Committee

9. The Committee has a page on the Parliament website on which are published its membership, terms of reference and annual reports. Minutes of meetings from January 2005 are also published on-line.

Internal audit

Internal Review Service

10. The Committee routinely receives an oral report at its meetings from the Director of the Internal Review Service (IRS) on the work of his unit, supplemented by a paper showing progress against the annual work programme and the balance between core audit and other work undertaken by IRS.

11. During 2006/07 the Director of IRS has supplemented his oral reports with a written monthly progress report, sent both to Members of the Committee and to stakeholders across the House. These monthly reports have enabled the Committee more precisely to track progress with each audit and to question IRS about the reasons for any delays or postponements. Following the Committee's agreement in 2005/06 that it would consider audits three months after they had been issued for management response, the Secretary to the Committee now follows up with sponsors responses which have not been received shortly before this deadline; in 2006/07 all management responses to audits have been received within the three month window. The monthly reports also contain benchmarking information on staff time usage: IRS have set a target of 60% of staff time to be spent on audit work. The Committee has monitored progress against the target, and noted that the most senior members of the audit team now spend over 50% of their time on audit work, with the lowest amount of time spent on audit, 16%, being attributable to a member of staff who was recruited primarily to undertake administrative tasks. The Committee will keep IRS' time usage under review in 2007/08.

12. Following a review of the work required from the House's internal audit function, and options for the provision of internal audit, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) were appointed in October 2004 to work with IRS to enhance the House's internal audit capacity. The Committee has kept this arrangement under review since its inception, and welcomed the Clerk of the House's announcement at its February meeting that he had instigated a review of the House's internal audit function, including consideration of the partnership arrangement. The Committee looks forward to contributing to this review and discussing its recommendations with the Clerk of the House.

Internal audits considered by the Committee

13. During 2006/07 the Committee considered eleven audits relating to the Administration Estimate at its three meetings, and a further six audits were delivered up to the end of the financial year and will be considered at the Committee's meeting in April 2007.

14. Audit reports are usually considered first by the external members of the Committee, who may choose to bring matters to the attention of the full Committee. Of the eleven reports considered by the external members up to the Committee's February meeting five were considered by the external members only, three audits, relating to data protection, HR disciplinary and performance procedures and the general ledger, were circulated in whole or part to the Committee as take note items, and six audits were discussed by the Committee as a whole.

15. Audits discussed by the Committee dealt with a wide range of topics, covering core audit issues such as financial controls, procurement and tendering; compliance audits such as risk assurance; and audits concerned with a number of corporate issues including diversity and internal communications. The Committee discussed a first stage audit which sought to validate pay band structures in the House Service through a desk top review of 32 roles. As this desk top exercise did not produce conclusive results the Committee agreed to instigate a more in-depth second phase review to be carried out in 2007/08.

16. Overall the Committee has been satisfied that management has taken action to address any shortcomings in procedures identified by the audits it has considered during the year. The Committee has had concerns that two audits, on tender evaluation procedures and internal communications, have highlighted a resistance to corporate action and direction in some parts of the House Service, and the Committee has sought assurance from the Clerk of the House that the Board of Management is committed to dealing with this issue. Further information on specific audits is available in the minutes of the Committee's meetings which are available on the Committee's website.

Internal audit charter

17. The House's internal audit charter, setting out the purpose, role, responsibility, status and authority of internal auditing within the House of Commons, and outlining the scope of internal audit work, is reviewed annually by the Committee. The Committee is satisfied that the scope and nature of the work of IRS, supported by its partnership with PwC, and in parallel with the NAO as the external auditors, adequately underpins the assessment of the Accounting Officer on the system of internal control.

Planning of the audit programme

18. For the first time the Committee held a discussion of the work programme for 2007/08 in advance of a draft programme being drawn up by the Director of IRS. The Committee had been concerned at the beginning of 2006/07 at the large number of audits which had been carried forward from the previous year, resulting in delivery of the 2006/07 programme being delayed from the beginning. In 2007/08 the Committee's priority is to ensure that IRS' work programme is achievable whilst still providing the appropriate level of assurance to the Clerk of the House as Accounting Officer.

19. The IRS work programme for 2007/08 will, for the first time, be drawn up on a corporate and functional basis rather than departmentally. It will be approved by the Committee at its April 2007 meeting.

External audit

20. Staff from the National Audit Office (NAO) routinely attend meetings of the Committee and receive all of its papers and minutes, although the Committee continues to discuss certain items of business from time to time without auditors present.

21. The external members of the Committee met with NAO and Department of Finance and Administration staff on 22 June 2006 to discuss the draft House of Commons: Administration Accounts for 2005/06, following which the accounts were discussed by the full Committee on 12 July 2006 prior to being signed off by the Clerk of the House, as Accounting Officer. Amongst the issues raised by the Committee were the impact of the introduction of the FRS17 accounting standard; the training programme undertaken to improve staff understanding of the accruals process; and the number of adjusted and unadjusted errors to the accounts, which had increased compared to previous years due to the faster closing of the accounts.

22. The Committee also received an audit completion memorandum for 2005/06 and an audit strategy memorandum for 2006/07 from the NAO.

23. The Committee wishes to congratulate those officials of the House and the NAO who contributed to the House meeting the Treasury's aim that public sector resource accounts for 2005/06 should be completed by July 2006.

House of Lords Audit Committee

24. The Committee continues to share agendas and minutes with the House of Lords Audit Committee. The external members of the two Committees held an informal meeting in September 2006 to discuss matters of interest and concern. The results of the jointly sponsored audit of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology will be a matter of interest to both Committees, and may provide a vehicle for a joint meeting in the coming year.

Review of effectiveness

25. At its February meeting the Committee agreed that it should undertake a self-assessment of its effectiveness, facilitated by the NAO. Self-assessment forms were completed both by Committee members and by those who normally attend the Committee. The results will be analysed and presented to the Committee for discussion early in 2007/08.

Other areas of work

26. Risk management was again one of the Committee's priority areas of interest. A report from IRS on the House's corporate risk management process, and a management response, were discussed in July 2006. The Committee was pleased to note that the Clerk of the House now required a letter of assurance from each Departmental Head that risk in their Department was being mitigated, improving assurance that operational business risk was being managed. Despite this improvement the Committee was concerned that the management response to the audit was generally too defensive, and unwilling to engage in the issues IRS had raised. The Committee suggested, and the Clerk of the House agreed, that IRS should meet with management to discuss these issues and provide a further update to the Committee at its October meeting. This update confirmed that the differences between management and the Internal Review Service had been one of semantics rather than fundamental differences of approach. The further update included information on improvements in project risk management and business continuity and disaster recovery planning. The Board of Management had met to consider its high level risks in July 2006 and had used techniques suggested by IRS to quantify its "risk appetite" in relation to each of the corporate level risks and to consider whether risks should appear on the corporate register or be remitted to one of the Board's second tier groups.

27. In 2007/08 the review of risk management will take place later in the financial year so that it dovetails with the corporate and departmental planning cycle.

28. At its July meeting the Committee discussed the work undertaken by the Finance and Services Committee to monitor expenditure by the House administration with its then Clerk, Mr David Natzler.

29. Papers on the operation of the House's Central Procurement Office were circulated to the Committee.

Members Estimate Audit Committee

30. A Members Estimate Audit Committee was established by the House's Members Estimate Committee on 14 June 2004. It has the same membership as the Administration Estimate Audit Committee (AEAC) and usually meets immediately after meetings of the AEAC. The annual report of the Members Estimate Audit Committee will be published with the House of Commons: Members Accounts 2006/07 in the summer.

Annex

The Committee's current terms of reference are shown below:

On behalf of the Commission, to:

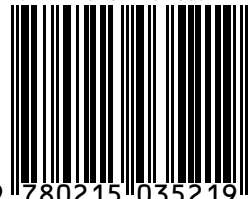
- have general oversight of the work of internal audit and review, with particular emphasis on promoting economy, efficiency and effectiveness, on value-for-money studies, and on risk assessment and control assurance;
- receive and consider reports from the Internal Review Service (IRS), together with management letters and other external audit material;
- monitor and review the external auditor's independence, objectivity and effectiveness, and to make recommendations to the Commission about the external auditor's appointment; and
- advise the Accounting Officer in the exercise of his responsibilities;
- consider and recommend to the Accounting Officer the internal review programme;
- encourage best financial practice, use of resources and governance in the House administration;
- report annually, the report to be published with the Commission's Annual Report.

Index

	Page		
Accommodation	3, 7, 9, 46, 70-71	House of Commons Commission	3-4, 6-12, 14, 16, 20, 38, 46, 48, 50, 52, 56, 57,
Accounting Officer	6-7, 38, 82, 110		60, 66, 70, 71, 77, 80, 81, 88, 90, 107
Administration Accounts, House of Commons	3, 6, 10, 109	House of Lords	9, 10-11, 19, 22, 30, 39, 55,
Administration Committee	3, 7-9, 19, 44, 46, 48, 58, 70-71, 77, 90		76, 82, 84, 88, 94
Administration Estimate, House of Commons	10, 39, 70, 82, 88	Information Office, House of Commons	19, 53-54
Apprenticeship scheme	66-67	Internal communications	60, 63-64
Audit Committee, Administration Estimate	10, 14, 82, 107-110	Internal Review Service	82, 107-108
Board of Management	9-10, 12, 14, 20, 22,	Investors in People	62, 63
	23-26, 63, 64, 65-66, 80-82, 108, 110	Joint Business Systems Board	11
Bookshop, parliamentary	40, 56	Journal Office	44
Broadcasting	51	Leader of the House	6-7, 31
Chief Executive	4, 7, 9-10	Legislation Service	32-35
Clerk's Department	14, 28, 30-35, 36-38, 52, 54, 100	Liaison Committee	37
Committee Office	36-37	Library	14, 16, 28, 38-39, 44-46, 54, 94, 102
Computer equipment	3, 20, 34, 47-48	Mail services	46
Contingency planning	11, 81	Management conference	64
Corporate Business Plan	12, 91	Medical services	50, 67, annex 1
Cycle parking	46	Meeting rooms	47
Data protection	55, 92, 108	Members' allowances	3, 6, 10, 26, 44, 47, 49, 54
Debate, Commission Annual Report	3, 6, 7-8	Members Estimate, House of Commons	6, 10, 44, 47, 49
Delegated legislation	36	Members Estimate Committee	6, 8
Departments, House	6, 12, 14, 100-106	Merchandising	57
Digitisation	35, 55, 87	Modernisation of the House of Commons, Select	
Domestic committees	8	Committee on the	33, 36, 39
Editorial Supervisor of the Vote	30	National Parliament Office	36
Education Service, Parliamentary	11, 16-18, 19, 56, 65, 94	New Voters Guide, "Voting Times"	3, 7, 52
Election, general	36, 49, 57, 76	Office of the Clerk	81, 100
Energy	3, 20, 22, 55, 80	Official Report, Department of the	11, 14, 28, 29-30, 103
Environmental report	20-22	Overseas Office	38, 94
European scrutiny	36	Parliament website	7, 12, 17, 29, 33, 37, 38, 39,
Expenditure	6, 8, 10, 12, 40, 42, 49, 70, 110		52, 53, 55, 86, 88, 90
Finance and Administration, Department of	23, 24, 49, 54, 61, 101	Parliamentary Archives	11, 35, 55, 65, 88, 91, 94
Finance and Services Committee	8, 14, 110	Parliamentary Information and Communications	
Fire safety	75	Technology Service (PICT)	10, 11, 47-48, 90-91, 94, 104
Fox and Pitt exhibition	85	Parliamentary Information Management Services	
Freedom of information	54-55, 92	(PIMS)	92
Hansard (see Official Report, Department of the)		Parliamentary intranet	38-39, 44, 46, 50, 75, 82, 90
Hansard Society	19, 94	Parliamentary Network	47, 48, 90
Health and safety	73-74	Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology	
History of Parliament Trust	88, 91	(POST)	39-40
House Administrative Information System (HAIS)	23-26, 64, 80	Parliamentary Recording Unit	11, 55
		Pensions, staff	61
		Printing	30, 32, 95, 119
		Procedure Committee	32

Procurement	23, 26, 70, 82, 108, 110
Project management	25-26, 80
Public, connecting Parliament with the	3, 7, 16-19, 37, 52, 53, 55, 88
Questions, parliamentary	4, 8, 29, 30-32, 40, 44
Recruitment	62, 66
Recycling	20-21, 77, 80
Refreshment Department	9, 14 18, 21, 57, 62, 76-78, 81, 105
Risk management	81, 110
Scrutiny Unit	33, 37-38
Security	3, 8, 11, 58, 70, 71
Select Committees	36-37, 38, 96
Serjeant at Arms Department	7, 9, 10-11, 14, 23, 46, 54, 106
Sitting days	28, 95
Staff, House	3, 6, 10, 23, 25, 26, 29, 37, 60-61 70, 80
Diversity	65-6
Learning and development	64-65
Recognition Scheme	63
Survey	62
Staff, Members'	45, 49, 50, 98
Summer opening	57
Sustainability	20, 21-22, 78
Table Office	30-32, 95
Tebbit review	4, 7, 12, 52, 70, 107
Tours, visitor	56-57
Travel Office	11, 49-50
Visitor facilities	3, 9, 16-19, 56-58, 76
Visitor reception building	7, 70, 71
Vote Bundle	32, 40-42, 95
Vote Bundle project	42
Vote Office	40-42
Web Centre project	90
Webcasting	52, 55
Welfare service	67-68
Westminster Hall, chamber	28, 29, 95
Westminster Hall, conservation work	47, 72-73, 84
Works of Art	84-87

ISBN 978-0-215-03521-9



9 780215 035219

Photograph credits

Catherine Bebbington: 9; 21; 27; 29; 34; 40; 53; 56; 57; 59; 75; 78; 79; 81; 91

Jude: 43, 88

Liz Crotty: 58, 69

Terry Moore: 12; 67; 93

Parliamentary Curatorial Office: 85, 87

Parliamentary Education Service: 15, 16, 17, 18, 51

Parliamentary Recording Unit: 8, 33

Liz Parratt: 37

Deryc Sands: 3; 5; 6; 11; 20; 22; 25; 45; 63; 72; 73; 83; 86; 94

Helen Wood: 19

Distributed by TSO (The Stationery Office) and available from:

Online

www.tsoshop.co.uk

Mail, Telephone, Fax & E-mail

TSO

PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN

General enquiries: 0870 600 5522

Order through the Parliamentary Hotline *Lo-call* 0845 7 023474

Fax orders: 0870 600 5533

E-mail: customer.services@tso.co.uk

Textphone: 0870 240 3701

TSO Shops

16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD

028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401

71 Lothian Road, Edinburgh EH3 9AZ

0870 606 5566 Fax 0870 606 5588

The Parliamentary Bookshop

12 Bridge Street, Parliament Square

London SW1A 2JX

Telephone orders: 020 7219 3890

General enquiries: 020 7219 3890

Fax orders: 020 7219 3866

Email: bookshop@parliament.uk

Internet: <http://www.bookshop.parliament.uk>

TSO@Blackwell and other Accredited Agents

© *Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2007*

Application for a Click Use licence to reproduce parliamentary material can be made online via <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/click-use/index.htm>

ISBN 978 0 215 03521 9

