

HOUSE OF LORDS

Information Committee

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1st Report of Session 2010–12

# **Annual Report 2010–11**

Report

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### *The Information Committee*

The Information Committee considers the House's information and communication services, including the Library and Parliamentary Archives, within the strategic framework and financial limits approved by the House Committee.

### *Current Membership*

The Members of the Information Committee are:

Lord Black of Brentwood  
Viscount Bridgeman  
Baroness Coussins  
Earl of Erroll  
Lord Feldman  
Lord Maxton  
Lord Haskel  
Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope  
Baroness Massey of Darwen  
Baroness Pitkeathley  
Lord Rennard  
Lord St John of Bletso  
Lord Selsdon

### *Declaration of Interest*

See Appendix 1

A full list of Members' interests can be found in the Register of Lords' Interests:

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests>

### *Publications*

All publication of the Committee are available on the internet at:

[www.parliament.uk/hlinfocom](http://www.parliament.uk/hlinfocom)

### *Parliament Live*

Live coverage of debates and public sessions of the Committee's meetings are available at:

<http://www.parliamentlive.tv>

### *General Information*

General information about the House of Lords and its Committees, including guidance to witnesses, details of current inquiries and forthcoming meetings is on the internet at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/lords>

### *Committee Staff*

The current staff of the Committee are Rob Whiteway (Clerk) and Claudia Rock (Committee Assistant).

### *Contacts Details*

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# Annual Report 2010–2011

## CHAPTER 1: THE INFORMATION COMMITTEE

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1. This report is intended to inform members about the activities of the Information Committee, and provide information about the work of the services which fall within the Committee's remit, during the first half of the 2010-12 Session.

### BOX 1

#### The Role of the Information Committee

The Information Committee is one of the domestic committees of the House. Its terms of reference are:

“To consider information and communications services, including the Library and Parliamentary Archives, within the strategic framework and financial limits approved by the House Committee.”

The Committee considers current levels of services and makes recommendations for change.

The services with which the Information Committee is concerned are:

- Parliamentary Information and Communication Technology (PICT);
- House of Lords Library;
- Information services, including Hansard;
- Public information services, including outreach;
- Bicameral services, based in the House of Commons and including the parliamentary website, parliamentary outreach, visitor services, the education service and the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings; and
- Parliamentary Archives, which is the only bicameral service based in the House of Lords.

The Committee has met eight times so far in this Session.

#### The work of the Committee in 2010–11

2. At the start of the Session in July 2010 we held a seminar on the work of the services which fall within the remit of Information Committee. Representatives from each service provided a short presentation on the challenges expected to be faced by that service in the Parliament. Two main “themes” were developed from this seminar which have framed our work in the Session and around which we base this Report. The first of these themes relates to the increased use of electronic devices and technology to provide documents and services online and assist Parliamentarians in their work. The second has focused on how the House can best deliver messages on its work to the public. Third, we have considered how members services can be made more bespoke—focusing on what individual members need rather than providing only a single service for all members.

3. On the first theme we have considered how Information Services will function by the end of this Parliament in 2015, focusing on the use of technology by members in their parliamentary work. This has gone beyond simply considering which ICT services are provided to members, to assessing how technology can best be used to deliver information and how it can be used to meet other aims, including reducing expenditure. Through the use of electronic devices, Parliament can provide members with access to a greater amount of information on demand and reduce the amount of printing of Parliamentary documents.
4. Also in relation to this theme we have considered how Parliament can adopt new technologies, including cloud computing and tablet technology, to further its work. This is conducted with the aim of creating an online, interconnected working environment for members, where documents needed for their parliamentary duties (such as business documents) can be accessed electronically through a variety of means, including laptops and tablet devices.
5. Value-for-money, particularly in relation to ICT, has been an important consideration of the Committee in the last year. This is both in terms of short-term and long-term expenditure. This is explored in greater detail below.
6. The second theme we have considered is how the House can best deliver messages to those outside the House about its work and functions. As set out in Chapter 4, we have considered a Communications Strategy and a number of Outreach initiatives to this end.

### **People and Parliament report**

7. In the 2008-2009 Session, the Committee published a report on how the House relates to the public: *Are the Lords Listening? Creating Connections between people and Parliament*.<sup>1</sup> Its recommendations covered a range of public information services delivered by Parliament; the website and the delivery of core parliamentary documents online; and House of Lords media and communications activities. It also made some recommendations to Government, which were positively received.
8. As we note below, major progress has been made in many of these areas but much still remains to be completed. The Committee will encourage further developments through supporting and advising on the work of the services and through setting and pursuing strategic priorities for them, which build on the *People and Parliament* agenda.

### **Changes to the Committees working practices**

9. In the past year, we have implemented a policy on the publication of Information Committee papers. All Committee papers and agendas which do not have a “reserved” status are published online on the Committee website by the time of the Committee meeting where these papers will be considered. Committee minutes, excluding the confidential annex, are published on the website once agreed at the following meeting. This is in line with the policy of most other domestic Committees of the House and ensures the Committee as far as possible operates in a transparent manner. A full outline of the policy can be found on the Committee website.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Information Committee, 1<sup>st</sup> Report (2008–09), *Are the Lords Listening? Creating connections between people and Parliament* (HL Paper 138)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/information-committee/>

## CHAPTER 2: PARLIAMENTARY ICT

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10. The Committee considers regular updates from the Parliamentary ICT (PICT) department on their provision of services to members. We have begun to assess how the provision of ICT in the House will change over the course of the Parliament and what sort of services PICT should be providing by 2015. We are convinced that modern technology provides an opportunity for Parliament to move toward an interconnected, online working environment, where members are able to access all documents electronically as they are required, reducing the need for printed copies and associated expenditure.

### Parliamentary ICT strategy

11. In December 2010 the Director of PICT, Joan Miller, briefed the Committee on the Parliamentary ICT Strategy from 2010-15. Her paper set out the strategy intended to meet the following vision for Parliamentary ICT services in the next five years:

“[The ICT Strategy will] connect Members, the public and the administration to the information and services they need from anywhere at any time. It will reduce the cost of ICT and provide new opportunities and pathways for greater efficiency and effectiveness for Parliament.”

12. Intended outcomes identified by the strategy included:
- Reduced ICT costs and increased opportunity for Parliament to be more efficient as generic commercial solutions are used in generic areas.
  - Increased effectiveness for members and the administration through better use of ICT and bespoke solutions for Parliament’s unique core activities.
  - Improved connections to ICT services for members, the public and the Administration: helping them to be more informed and enabling more collaboration and participation.
  - An enhanced customer experience with PICT helping Parliament and its members get the best from ICT.
13. It is through the implementation of this strategy that Parliament will be able to work toward a more connected, online working environment. We endorsed the Strategy and will continue to monitor the success of PICT in implementing its aims.

### Provision of services to members

14. Early in the Session, the Committee considered a paper on the renewal of ICT services provided to members and the decommissioning of some old and outdated services. Part of the programme involved the upgrade of all members’ computers to run the Windows 7 operating system. This has provided members access to updated and new software, including the Office Communicator Suite which enables messages to be sent instantly to another computer on the Parliamentary estate. This should reduce the costs associated with the storing and archiving of emails.
15. The paper also confirmed the equipment available to every member:

- One laptop.
  - One desktop computer on the Parliamentary estate.
  - One shared laser printer on the Parliamentary estate.
  - One inkjet printer for use off the Parliamentary estate.
  - One Blackberry handheld device.
16. We also agreed that the House should provide, where required, one broadband line for members to carry out their Parliamentary duties away from the estate. In exceptional cases, such as disability, a further line could be provided. In the case of some members this represents a reduction on the number of broadband lines provided. We agreed that as part of the consolidation of equipment provided to members and the reduction of expenditure, each member should be entitled only to a single line: PICT would assist members in taking over the responsibility for their second lines.
17. In this year, we have also considered the services provided to members who wish to use their own equipment, which may also assist in moving away from a “standard package” of equipment provided to members to a more bespoke service. We intend to continue to pursue this issue in the coming year and we welcome the realignment of PICT services towards achieving this aim. This tallies with our aim to consider the value for money of services provided to members, as members using their own equipment will reduce costs.

#### **Information Committee tablet trial**

18. We have recently begun a six-month trial tablet computers starting from April 2011, in order to understand how best they can be utilised by Parliamentarians in their work. Enabling the use of tablets in the House of Lords could greatly improve access to core information resources and business documents, reduce the cost of providing electronic equipment by consolidating the number of devices required by members, and reduce overall levels of printing. The reduction of printing to paper also has environmental advantages. These propositions are being tested over a period of six months, and will be evaluated at the end of the trial, as will be arrangements for the management, support and security of tablet devices and how they compare with palmtops and other portable PCs.
19. The Library is supporting this pilot by trialling tablets and their use to access relevant material online. It is developing tailored resources for tablets to meet the business needs of members, members’ staff and House of Lords staff.
20. It is not expected that in future a tablet would be provided to members in addition to the ICT equipment currently provided; any tablet would replace a piece of electronic equipment already on offer to members. We consider tablets may provide better value for money provision of services in the long-term, by reducing printing costs and enabling members to view documents online in a cheaper and more environmentally friendly manner than printing off all documents on paper.

#### **Improving online access to core parliamentary documents**

21. Providing members with the technology to access online resources is only part of the challenge to provide an interconnected, online working environment for members by 2015. Parliamentary documents have also to be



available electronically in an accessible format, which make the best use of the technology available. We therefore welcome the work being done by the two Houses to e-enable core parliamentary documents, which was one of the recommendations of the *People and Parliament* Report. This is being done through the Procedural Data Programme.

22. This programme aims to simplify the processes which support the procedural business of the Chambers and Committees, and to provide the IT solutions required to support them. It will replace and enhance the IT applications which create procedural information across the two Houses, to generate both the printed publications and a new XML version which can be reused in other systems and on the website.<sup>3</sup> This will decrease the need for printing and enhance access to electronic data.
23. We are also pleased to note progress on improving information flows between government and Parliament, for example through piloting a new system for automating questions for written answer.

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<sup>3</sup> XML—Extensible Markup Language. Using XML allows information to be attached to data to allow computers to understand what the data is and potentially re-use it on other forms.

### CHAPTER 3: THE INFORMATION OFFICE

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24. The Information Office is responsible for the development and delivery of the House of Lords' External Communications functions. In January, we considered and endorsed their communications strategy for the House of Lords. The strategy is intended to provide an increased focus on delivering House of Lords messages in the context of Parliament as a whole. This will help advance the goal of better informing the public about the functions and work of the House, particularly in the context of the forthcoming debates about its future.
25. The strategy looks also to ensure a stronger acknowledgement of and emphasis on Member-led outreach activities and a more sophisticated analysis of target audiences. This will enable the Information Office to direct its finite resources in a more focused manner. We have used the strategy to test the activities of the Information Office this year, while at the same time building on the recommendations of the Committee's Report, *People and Parliament*. We welcome progress in this area, and particularly on the Outreach front.
26. Outreach activities of the House of Lords are coordinated by either the Lord Speaker's Office or the Information Office, often working closely with the Parliamentary Outreach and Education Services. Key initiatives of the Lord Speaker include the Peer Factor competition and the Peers in Schools outreach programme. We congratulate the Lord Speaker on her Outreach work in her time in office, some of which is set out below.

#### Outreach

27. House of Lords Outreach activities supported and endorsed by the Committee in the session so far have included:
  - A debate in the House of Lords chamber on the future of the House of Lords, involving 200 15 to 18-year-olds from 19 state schools across England and Wales, delivered in partnership with the social enterprise Debate Mate.
  - The Lord Speaker's competition for young people, entitled 'The Peer Factor', which was launched in January 2011. It sought entries from 11 to 16-year-olds to propose an individual who they thought should be a Member of the House of Lords, and to explain why they had the experience and qualities to make a valuable contribution to the House.
28. We also note good progress with Member-led outreach activities. The Peers in Schools programme, led by the Lord Speaker, which involved sending Members of the Lords into schools to talk to and answer questions from students about the work of the House, has continued to expand during 2010/11. 180 Members contribute to the programme, including many of the recently appointed Members. Of the 555 requests for visits received from schools between March and December 2010, over half (280) were fulfilled by 31 March. This represents more than a 100% increase in the number of visits compared to 2009/10. The Lords of the Blog website has seen both an increase in core authors across the reporting period (with 12 members blogging first-hand about life and work in the Lords), and increased traffic—with page views up by 56% over the course of the month of March 2011—as the result of an event held for bloggers and the media to mark the third

anniversary of the site. This has seen the site increasingly being mentioned by other media.

29. We also endorsed a parallel online debate pilot, run in partnership with the BBC, and provided periodic advice on its implementation. This provided the opportunity for the public to engage in the topic of a Thursday chamber debate via the BBC Have Your Say website. The public could post comments, engage in discussion and take part in a live web chat on the Have Your Say forum with the member who tabled the debate. The BBC promoted the opportunity to feed in to the House of Lords debate across the BBC News website and their social media channels.
30. During the debate the public could continue to respond, as well as watch it live on Parliament TV and BBC Democracy Live. The BBC also issued a Live Event page during the debate—tracking the debate, surfacing the expertise and points raised by the Members and feeding in comments from the public. Along with the standard Library Note issued in advance of the debate, the views expressed on the Have Your Say website were also summarised by the Library in a follow-up Note which was sent direct to the speakers in the debate a day in advance, and posted on the Library website and intranet.
31. Much effort went into this pilot, which produced a positive if not overwhelming level of public contribution to the debate. On the basis of lessons learned, most notably the need to ensure greater recognition of the public's participation by members on the floor of the House, we have approved a further pilot to be held in due course.
32. We have recently endorsed a three-day Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP) event managed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to take place at Westminster from 6-10 September 2011. CYP 2011 will emphasise the importance of encouraging young Commonwealth citizens to engage in politics; to understand the importance of strong parliamentary democracy and to consider what Commonwealth citizenship means to them.
33. Up to 100 Commonwealth Youth Parliamentarians will participate, with support from up to 100 delegates from Commonwealth diaspora communities in the UK, staff and Members of both Houses. On Friday 9 September, and marking the finale of the CYP 2011, participants will take part in a debate on climate change in the House of Lords Chamber. This will be the fifth such event held in the Chamber as part of the outreach and engagement programme at the House of Lords.
34. Further Outreach initiatives successfully delivered by the Information Office include:
  - Lord Puttnam's lecture for young people entitled 'Parliament and Young People—bringing the two together in a digital world'.
  - Lord Hennessy's lecture 'Cabinets and the Bomb' (covering the nuclear deterrent, security and defence), in association with the Mile End Group.
  - A seminar entitled "The Interaction between Religion and Politics in the Contemporary World", chaired by the Lord Speaker with a panel of Lord Sacks, Lord Harries of Pentregarth and Lord Parekh, that brought together an invited audience of Members and journalists.

- A review of the House of Lords' suite of public information publications and development of a new structure and approach to content, including the development of a new corporate brochure.
- Members have undertaken 51 visits to adult audiences, including the regional federations of the Women's Institute, involving nearly 20,000 women, and the regional conferences of Rotary International and events held by the University of the Third Age.

### **Public Enquiry Service**

35. We also welcome the work of the Enquiry Service, which deals with all requests for information about the role, work and membership of the House of Lords received from the general public. The Enquiry Service has seen a dramatic increase of 91% in the number of enquiries from the public received by email 5,166 (2,706 in 2009/10). Enquiries by telephone did not increase at the same rate, but still grew by 11.6% to 9,127 (8,185 in 2009/10). This is an important part of providing the public with information on the work and function of the House of Lords.

### **Press and Media**

36. The Press and Media Team is the House of Lords Administration's interface with the media. During 2010/11 the Press and Media Team planned and implemented targeted communications activity for all select committee reports, major outreach activities and chamber debates, and highlighted maiden speeches. It also worked to increase the House of Lords' reach and influence by developing select committees' use of online channels and contacts with influential outside organisations, and improving services to journalists through an out-of-hours service and online media centre. Reports of Select Committees are highly influential outside of the house. For example, reports of the EU Committee are widely circulated amongst the European Commission and Parliament. This contributes to increasing the knowledge of the work of the House.
37. The most high profile proactive activities of the year, according to associated levels of public interest and media coverage, were:
- the Economic Affairs Committee's report into auditors' market concentration and role.
  - the Communications Committee's report on television advertising.
  - the chamber debates on defence and Libya.
  - the EU Select Committee report on the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework from 2014, which stakeholders in Europe received positively.

## **CHAPTER 4: LIBRARY SERVICES**

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38. The Library is one of the most important services for members which falls within the Committee's remit. In 2010/11 we have considered the exceptional growth in demand for reference and research services. In the post-election nine months, July to March, there was a 23% increase in reference enquiries (10,791 up from 8,809) and a 61% increase in research enquiries (1,611 up from 998). We congratulate the Library staff for meeting the demand.
39. We have also endorsed additional strategic objectives for the Library to increase the range of publications, increase take-up of these products and e-enable members so that they have the option of self-service access to an expanding range of online resources.

### **Proactive products**

40. Proactive work has continued to form an important part of the Library's service delivery. A key element of this strand of work is Library Notes and the total number written rose by 50%, while requests by members for Library Notes doubled to 5,437 (2,307) and subscribers to the CAD tripled to 317 (104). This shows how the Library has rebalanced research efforts into proactive products to meet members' requirements, in accordance with the Committee's strategic objectives.

### **Online resources and e-enabling members**

41. We have also endorsed the Library's e-enabling strategy. This has involved Library staff planning for the induction of new members and training and awareness for all members, linked to the House-wide initiative to streamline induction processes. As part of this initiative, a number of new leaflets detailing Library services were published and tailored tours and online training were provided for members and staff. Since March, the Library has been running weekly drop-in coaching sessions for members each Thursday morning. These sessions are run in collaboration with PICT Training and offer coaching on Library online resources plus any IT related issues members may need to discuss. The number of members attending coaching sessions has increased significantly.
42. In July 2010 we endorsed a project to install a new catalogue with a more user friendly screen and navigation. This was completed in March 2011. The new catalogue allows members to search and browse with greater facility and has a 'linked search' capability to repeat a search in the Commons Library catalogue.
43. The Library was involved in early trials of e-book and other document readers and the PICT tablet trial in Autumn 2010. This has enabled staff to offer coaching and knowledge sharing in response to members' increasing use of mobile technologies of this kind, and to keep ahead of the Chamber and Information Committee pilots. The Library has an important role in providing an interconnected, online working environment for members and we welcome the role it has played in moving towards this.

**Millbank library and research expansion**

44. Plans for a new library at Millbank House and an enhancement of the Library's research capability have been developed over a number of years with advice from the Committee. These plans are now well advanced: the fit-out for an e-library area and a quiet reading room area should be completed by October and the Library's rebalancing of resources for Millbank and the research expansion has been agreed. This will further increase the capacity of the Library to deal with queries and research requests from members in a timely and efficient manner.

## CHAPTER 5: PARLIAMENTARY ARCHIVES

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45. At our seminar in July, we were pleased to note the wide-ranging work programme of the Parliamentary Archives for the coming year. Much of this work ties in with and supports the Committee's work to promote digital technology and outreach.

### Electronic Records Management and Digital Preservation

46. The Archives has played an important role in developing the SPIRE electronic documents and records management system, which will streamline information management and enable the Administration to move away from printing to paper. The Digital Preservation Project, a vital part of the e-parliament agenda which enables digital documents to be preserved for posterity, is also making good progress. Archived versions of the parliamentary website and related sites, including Lords of the Blog, are now available online.

### Public Services and Outreach

47. The Archives received 5748 enquiries about the records and history of Parliament, an increase of 3.8% on 2009/10. 891 researchers visited the public search room at Westminster (925 in 2009/10). This slight drop is accounted for by the greater availability of self-service online sources via the Parliamentary website, and the effectiveness of the team in answering enquiries and supplying copies of records for remote users.
48. In May 2010 the Victoria Tower, purpose-built as Parliament's archive repository, celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A virtual tour of the Tower was launched on the day of the anniversary.<sup>4</sup> There was a programme of events, displays and lectures culminating in a wall display in Portcullis House and the publication of a souvenir book, *Victoria Tower Treasures from the Parliamentary Archives* just before Christmas 2010.<sup>5</sup>
49. The Archives has contributed to a wide range of bicameral projects across Parliament including support for the Cultural Olympiad exhibition in Westminster Hall, joint initiatives with the Curator's Office and working with the Education Service on the web-based *Houses of History*. Between November 2010 and January 2011 the 1832 Great Reform Act was loaned to Newcastle City Library for an exhibition on Lord Grey. This was the first time that the Act had left Westminster, and it enabled this iconic constitutional document to be seen by new and more diverse audiences, far from London, for the first time.
50. The Parliamentary Archives continues to have a close relationship with the media and highlights this session include:
- BBC Radio 4's 'The Long View' based around the encrypted Naseby Letters, looking at the past and present of state security.
  - Lord Bragg filmed with the transcript of the trial of Charles I by BBC for programme on the legacies of the King James Bible.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/visiting/online-tours/virtualtours/victoria-tower/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/parliamentary-archives/parliamentary-archives-news>

- Suffragette records filmed by the education charity WorldWrite for a documentary on Sylvia Pankhurst, subsequently distributed on DVD to schools in London.
- Rupert Everett filmed with the 1757 divorce act of a maternal ancestor for the BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are?'
- Two visits by Tony Robinson for Channel 4 programme, provisionally titled 'Tony Robinson's Superstitions', filmed with Tudor & Stuart witchcraft Acts and the Felo de Se Act 1823.
- Two visits by Andrew Marr for BBC programme about the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, provisionally titled 'Diamond Queen', filmed in Act Room and with various royal documents relating to the abdication of Edward VIII and the death of George VI.



## CHAPTER 6: PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

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51. Parliament's bicameral public information services also fall within the remit of the Committee. These include the Education Service, Parliamentary Outreach, Visitor Services, the Broadcasting Unit and the Web and Intranet Service. We have an overseeing role and consider periodic updates on the work of these services.

### Education

52. Parliament's Education Service aims to inform, engage and empower young people to get involved in Parliament, politics and democracy, through a range of interactive educational programmes, visits, resources and activities, a goal fully endorsed by the Committee. It welcomed over 37,000 young people from 839 schools on its school visits programme during 2010-11, and trained over 1,000 teachers through its outreach programme.
53. We welcome the achievements of the education service to date in receiving so many young people and we are keen to work towards ensuring that this number can be further increased. These visits are very well-received and heavily over-subscribed by schools and we hope to contribute to a review of the delivery capacity of the Education Service in the context of the proposed Education Centre for Parliament later this year.
54. Other key achievements in the last year include:
- The Service won a Sandford Award for Heritage Education.
  - The Lord Speaker addressed over 1,500 students at a successful conference for 16-18 year olds in Methodist Central Hall, also attended by 46 Members from both Houses.
  - The development of new resources including publications for different Key Stages, the "Houses of History" interactive timeline, online animated teaching resources on women in British politics and Members in the House of Lords, and a quiz mobile app.
55. The Education Service also launched its own Twitter account, and its monthly electronic newsletter is sent to over 5,000 subscribers. The BBC Schools Question Time project was again popular, and the "Lights, Camera, Parliament!" competition invited young people to submit their ideas for a new law. The Education Service also assisted with the transport subsidy for the chamber event for young people; described in detail above.

### Parliamentary Outreach

56. In November, we considered an update on the work of Parliamentary Outreach. The service aims to spread awareness of the work, processes and relevance of the institution of Parliament, encouraging greater engagement between the public and both Houses. The Committee's Report, *Are the Lords Listening*, made recommendations on its work, and we were pleased to note that, since the Report was published, the service has developed and delivered a programme nationally. The service continues to deliver an impressive number of well-received regional outreach training sessions (over 15,500 people were trained at 493 events).

57. Parliamentary Outreach's work also includes support for Select Committees meeting outside London and a series of well-received workshops on parliamentary procedure. These were supported by members of the House, who led panel discussions explaining the ways in which community and voluntary groups, and small and medium sized enterprises, can get their voices heard at Parliament. This is a particularly effective means of connecting interested groups with Parliament.
58. We note that the remit and scope of this service, as well as all other public engagement services, is being reviewed in the context of a value for money assessment of Parliament's public information services.

### **Visitor Services**

59. Visitor Services aims to offer a proactive and well-informed welcome for visitors to Parliament through its team of Visitor Assistants. It organises non-charged tours of the Visitor Route for Members' guests (including Clock Tower tours) and charged visits for the general public.
60. Two significant achievements over the last year deserve special mention: firstly, the introduction of a training and accreditation programme for our in-house guides, who conduct Member-sponsored tours of Parliament. The Lord Speaker presented the first set of "graduates" with their certificates last summer. The second significant achievement was the launch of year round Saturday opening for visitors. This operation is run on a cost-recovery basis. Both initiatives have been very successful.
61. Other achievements of the service include:
  - The launch of a series of videos of the Visitor Route on Parliament's YouTube channel.
  - The Westminster Hall exhibition "Parliament and the Games: On Your Marks", featuring information and memorabilia from many of the House's Olympians.
  - The participation of House of Lords public information staff in Parliament's Open House London weekend, which received around 3,500 visitors in September.
62. Parliament's commercial visitor programme also won the Group Travel Awards' UK Best Attraction in the "Short Visit" category (having been runner-up twice before).

### **Parliamentary Broadcasting**

63. From August 2011, broadcasting of the Chambers and Committees will be run directly by the Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit, instead of via a consortium of broadcasters under licence. Following a rigorous procurement process, Bow Tie Television will take on the contract for service provision.
64. We welcome the move to clarify and simplify licences for the use and re-use of broadcast material. These should widen access to proceedings while maintaining existing safeguards against the misuse of such material.
65. We also note the current review of BBC Parliament, the work of which we greatly value and we look forward to discussing the issues with representatives of the BBC.

### Web and Intranet Service

66. We received an update on the work of the Web and Intranet Service in March. The Web and Intranet Service aims to strengthen links between Parliament and the public and increase the reach of parliamentary information through effective use of online engagement initiatives and social media channels. Activities in the last year include:
- Launch of a new design for Parliament's website and for the intranet.
  - Launch of a new content management system (CMS).
  - A dynamic feed for Lords' financial interests went live.
67. During the past 12 months, the website received just short of 15 million visitors with over 50 million page views. The UKParliament Twitter account now has over 40,000 followers, and images on Parliament's Flickr site and YouTube channel have now been viewed over 1 million times each.
68. We warmly welcome the progress being made by this service towards enabling the cross searching and linking of core parliamentary material, towards improving the presentation of Hansard and audio-visual proceedings on the web, and towards better online access to bills, amendments and linked commentaries. All of these move towards implementation of recommendations in the *Are the Lords Listening Report*. We would, however, like to see more urgency given to some other recommendations on the Report, in particular in developing the Members' biographical pages and in creating an area where Members can record their own specialisms.
69. We have also taken an active role in the design of the Lords' Online Member Centre, the home page of the Parliamentary Intranet. We are keen to ensure that it offers an effective and easy-to-use portal to the rest of the intranet and so members are able to use it easily to access business documents and other resources. We intend to continue to work with the Web and Intranet Service to ensure the Online Member Centre is as useful a resource to members as possible.