



HOUSE OF LORDS

Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords

Laid before the House by the Clerk of the Parliaments

2022





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Preface

This is the 26th edition of the *Companion to the Standing Orders of the House of Lords* since Sir John Shaw-Lefevre, then Clerk of the Parliaments, compiled the first edition in 1862. The *Companion* is issued under the authority of the Procedure and Privileges Committee.

The last two years have seen unprecedented procedural and technological change during the Covid-19 pandemic. From April 2020 until September 2021, the House met either fully virtually or in hybrid form with a small number of members being present, socially-distanced, in the Chamber and other members joining remotely. Since September 2021, the House has in most respects reinstated its pre-pandemic procedures, but with some exceptions, perhaps the most striking of which is that the House has now made permanent provision for a small number of members to continue to participate virtually, on grounds of long-term disability.¹

The *Companion* is the authoritative guide to Lords procedure, but it is by no means the only source of information. The *Companion* should be read alongside the Standing Orders of the House.² The most comprehensive guide to the procedures of both Houses is *Erskine May*, the 25th edition of which is available online and is regularly updated.³ Guidance for members on key elements of Lords procedure and taking part in business is given in the *Short Guide to Practice and Procedure in the Chamber and Grand Committee* and in the booklets on participation in legislative business issued by the Legislation Office,⁴ while general services are covered in the *Handbook on facilities and services for members and their staff*.⁵ Members should also consult the Guide to the Code of Conduct,⁶ and the *Guide to Financial Support for Members*.⁷

1 This is reflected in Chapter 4.

2 www.parliament.uk/business/publications/house-of-lords-publications/rules-and-guides-for-business/the-standing-orders-of-the-house-of-lords-relating-to-public-business/

3 erskinemay.parliament.uk/

4 intranet.parliament.uk/business-news/parliamentary-business/guidance-and-handbooks/procedure-and-practice/

5 intranet.parliament.uk/business-news/parliamentary-business/guidance-and-handbooks/

6 www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/code-of-conduct-for-the-house-of-lords/

7 www.parliament.uk/business/lords/whos-in-the-house-of-lords/house-of-lords-expenses/

I do hope you will find this edition of the Companion helpful in describing the procedures and practices of the House. My colleagues and I who support the House are always available to advise members further as required.

SIMON BURTON
Clerk of the Parliaments

Abbreviations

<i>Erskine May</i>	<i>Erskine May's Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament</i> , 25th edition, 2019
HL Deb.	House of Lords Official Report (Hansard)
LJ	House of Lords Journals
PBSO	Private Business Standing Order
SO	Public Business Standing Order

References to House of Lords committee reports

Conduct	Select Committee on Conduct
Leave of Absence	House of Lords (Leave of Absence) Select Committee
Offices	Select Committee on the House of Lords' Offices
Procedure	Select Committee on Procedure of the House
Procedure and Privileges	Select Committee on Procedure and Privileges

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	iii
Abbreviations.....	v
References to House of Lords committee reports	v
1. The House and its membership.....	1
Composition of the House.....	1
Disqualification from membership	1
Membership of the House under SO 9.....	3
Writ of summons.....	4
Introduction and sitting first in Parliament.....	5
Oath of allegiance and affirmation	6
Retirement age.....	8
Retirement or resignation.....	8
Cessation of membership through non-attendance	9
Imprisonment for a serious offence.....	9
Expulsion and suspension	10
Leave of absence	10
Access to the facilities of the House.....	11
Tax status.....	13
Notification of death of member	13
The Lord Speaker.....	13
Role of the Senior Deputy Speaker.....	15
Deputy Speakers and Deputy Chairmen	16
Seating in the Chamber	17
Steps of the Throne.....	18
Map of the House of Lords Chamber	19
2. The Crown and parliamentary sessions	21
Opening of a new Parliament.....	21
Opening of subsequent sessions.....	21
First meeting after State Opening.....	22
Prorogation	23
Dissolution.....	24
Effect of termination of session.....	24
Demise of the Crown.....	25
Emergency recall of the House	25

Addresses to the Crown	25
Messages from the Crown.....	27
3. Sittings and documents of the House	29
Lord Speaker's procession and the Mace.....	29
Prayers	30
Quorum	30
Change of Speaker	30
Adjournment.....	31
Secret sittings.....	31
Grand Committee	31
Leave of the House.....	33
Suspension or amendment of standing orders	34
House publications	35
Arrangement of business	36
Official Report.....	45
Journals	46
Parliamentary papers	46
Public petitions.....	48
Messages between the two Houses.....	49
4. Conduct in the House	51
Self-regulation	51
Role of the Leader of the House, whips and Lord Speaker.....	51
Conduct in the House.....	52
Relevance	54
Order of speaking.....	54
Interruption of speeches	56
Speaking more than once.....	56
Attendance at debate.....	56
Virtual participation by disabled members.....	57
Length of speeches.....	58
Reading of speeches	59
Languages other than English.....	59
Reference to visitors.....	60
Speaking on behalf of outside interests.....	60
References in debate to the House of Commons	60
Maiden speeches	61
Valedictory speeches	61

Appellations	62
Personally insulting and offensive speeches (SO 31).....	63
"That the noble Lord be no longer heard".....	63
The next business motion.....	64
Closure	64
Sub judice.....	65
Ministerial accountability.....	67
Members and employees of public boards	68
5. Members' conduct	71
Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords.....	71
Revisions to the Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Code of Conduct.....	78
Enforcement.....	78
Disciplinary powers	79
6. Statements, questions and motions	81
Statements	81
Personal statements.....	81
Ministerial statements (oral)	81
Written statements	83
Commons urgent questions repeated as statements.....	83
Questions and motions	84
Questions and motions: general principles.....	84
Questions.....	84
Motions	98
Committees on motions.....	104
7. Divisions	107
General principles.....	107
Voting in wrong lobby and voting in both lobbies.....	110
Votes of the Lord Speaker, Senior Deputy Speaker and Chairman.....	111
Discrepancies.....	111
Insufficiency of Tellers.....	111
Equality of votes	112
Quorum on divisions.....	114
Contingency arrangements.....	115
8. Public bills.....	117
Stages of a public bill	117

Successive stages of a bill to be taken on different days.....	117
Recommended minimum intervals between the stages of a bill.....	118
Carry-over.....	118
Introduction and first reading.....	119
Interests, matters sub judice and devolution.....	119
Procedure on introduction: Lords bills.....	121
Procedure on introduction: Commons bills.....	121
Bills brought up and published when Lords not sitting.....	121
Publishing of bills and explanatory notes.....	122
Statements on public bills.....	122
Notice of subsequent stages.....	123
Private members' bills.....	123
Commons bills not taken up within twelve sitting days.....	124
Withdrawal of bills.....	125
Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.....	125
Constitution Committee.....	125
Pre-legislative scrutiny.....	126
Lords bills and Commons financial privilege.....	126
Second reading.....	126
Opposition to second reading.....	126
Second reading agreed to with amendment.....	127
Motion for adjournment of second reading debate.....	127
Consideration in a second reading committee.....	127
Debate in Grand Committee before second reading.....	128
Commitment.....	128
Committee negatived.....	129
Instructions.....	129
Amendments.....	130
Tabling of amendments.....	130
Explanatory statements.....	130
Admissibility of amendments.....	131
Publishing of amendments.....	133
Rules of marshalling.....	133
Marshalled lists.....	135
Manuscript amendments.....	136
Procedure on amendments.....	136
Guidance on speaking at amending stages.....	137
Pre-emption.....	138

Grouping of amendments.....	138
Amendments moved en bloc.....	139
Proceedings in Committee of the whole House.....	139
Powers and duties of member in the Chair.....	140
Powers of Committee of the whole House.....	140
Procedure in Committee of the whole House.....	141
Clause stand part.....	141
Postponement of clauses.....	141
Schedules.....	141
Preamble and long title.....	142
House resumed during committee stage.....	142
Conclusion of proceedings in committee.....	142
Report received immediately.....	143
Order of commitment discharged.....	143
Bill reported forthwith.....	144
Proceedings in Grand Committee.....	144
Other committee procedures for public bills.....	145
Special public bill committee.....	145
Bill committed to select or joint committee.....	147
Recommitment.....	148
Consideration in Committee of the whole House at later stages of bills.....	149
Report stage.....	149
Amendments on report.....	150
Repeat amendments.....	150
Amendments grouped and en bloc.....	150
Opposition to clause or schedule.....	151
Manuscript amendments.....	151
Rules of debate on report.....	151
Conclusion of proceedings on report.....	152
Third reading and passing.....	152
Notice of amendments.....	152
Admissibility of amendments.....	152
Legislative consent.....	153
Further proceedings after third reading.....	154
Privilege amendment.....	154
Passing.....	154
House bills.....	154
Bill sent or returned to Commons.....	155

Consideration of Commons amendments	155
Initial Commons amendments to a Lords bill.....	155
Notice of consideration of Commons amendments.....	156
Response to Commons amendments.....	156
Tabling responses to initial Commons amendments to a Lords bill.....	156
Procedure on initial consideration of Commons amendments to a Lords bill..	157
Commons amendments agreed to.....	158
Other outcomes of consideration of Commons amendments.....	158
Commons amendment agreed to with amendment.....	159
Commons amendment disagreed to.....	159
Further communications between the two Houses.....	159
Lords amendments and Commons financial privilege	161
Privilege reasons.....	162
Consent of the Crown	162
Royal Assent	163
Record copies of Acts	163
Procedures which apply only to certain types of bill	163
Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949	163
Supply bills.....	165
Separate subjects.....	165
Tacking.....	166
Consolidation bills.....	166
Hybrid bills.....	168
Measures	170
9. Private legislation	173
Role of the Senior Deputy Speaker.....	173
Private bills	174
Origination of private bills.....	174
Examination for compliance with standing orders.....	174
European Convention on Human Rights.....	175
Late bills	176
Lords bills: introduction and first reading.....	176
Subsequent stages.....	177
Interests.....	177
Petitions against private bills.....	177
Petitions for additional provision.....	178
Second reading	178

Instructions.....	179
Commitment.....	180
Committees on opposed bills.....	180
Bill rejected.....	182
Recommitment.....	182
Special report.....	182
Unopposed bill committees.....	183
Report	183
Third reading and passing.....	184
Commons bills	184
King's Consent.....	184
Commons amendments.....	185
Royal Assent.....	185
Hybrid instruments	185
Expedited hybrid instruments	187
Special procedure orders	187
Laying of orders.....	188
Petitions.....	188
Resolution for annulment.....	189
Joint committee.....	190
Confirming bills.....	190
Orders relating to Scotland.....	191
Scottish private legislation	191
Legislation not confined to Scotland.....	191
Draft orders.....	192
Order refused.....	193
Substituted bill.....	193
Unopposed orders	193
Opposed orders	194
Confirmation bills	194
Transport and Works Act 1992	195
10. Delegated legislation and other matters	197
Delegated legislation	197
General powers of the House over delegated legislation	197
Types of delegated legislation	198
Scrutiny of delegated powers and delegated legislation.....	199
Negative instruments	199

Affirmative instruments.....	200
Orders subject to super-affirmative and other strengthened scrutiny procedures.....	202
Remedial orders.....	203
Legislative reform orders.....	204
Other strengthened scrutiny procedures.....	206
Northern Ireland Assembly legislation.....	210
European Union legislation.....	212
National policy statements.....	212
Scrutiny of treaties.....	213
11. Select committees.....	215
Motions of appointment.....	215
Instructions.....	217
Membership.....	217
Rotation rule.....	218
Committee Chairs.....	218
Powers.....	219
Proceedings in committee.....	220
Participation by non-members.....	221
Recess, prorogation and dissolution.....	221
Report.....	221
Joint committees.....	223
Sessional committees.....	224
Committees on public matters.....	224
Committees on private business.....	228
Domestic committees.....	229
Bodies analogous to select committees.....	234
Other bodies.....	235
International delegations.....	237
12. Parliamentary privilege and related matters.....	239
Privilege of Parliament.....	239
Freedom of speech.....	240
Freedom to attend freely.....	240
Control by Parliament of its affairs.....	241
Disciplinary and penal powers.....	242
Privilege of peerage.....	242
Human rights.....	243

Parliamentary copyright.....	243
Broadcasting.....	244
Data protection.....	245
Freedom of information.....	245

Divisions: Instructions to Tellers..... 247

Rules for the admission of visitors..... 249

Royal Commissions..... 251

Entry of Commissioners.....	251
Summoning the Commons.....	251
Reading the Commission.....	252
Departure of the Commons.....	252
Departure of Commissioners.....	252

Opening of a new Parliament and election of Commons Speaker.. 253

First day.....	253
Second day.....	254
New Speaker in mid-Parliament.....	256

The King's Speech..... 257

First session of a new Parliament.....	257
Subsequent Sessions.....	258

Royal Assent by Commission..... 260

The ceremony of prorogation by Commission..... 262

Without Royal Assent.....	262
With Royal Assent.....	263

Endorsements to bills..... 264

Lords bill sent to Commons.....	264
Lords bill agreed to by Commons without amendment.....	264
Lords bill agreed to by Commons with amendments.....	264
Commons amendments to Lords bill agreed to with amendments.....	264
Disagreement with the Commons.....	264
Commons bill sent to Lords.....	264
Commons bill returned with amendments.....	265
Supply bill returned to Commons agreed pending Royal Assent by Commission.....	265

Prayers for the Parliament.....	266
Introductions.....	269
Lords Temporal.....	269
Lords Spiritual.....	270
13. Index	273

CHAPTER I

The House and its membership

Composition of the House

1.1 The following are members of the House of Lords:

- Lords Spiritual:
 - the Archbishops of Canterbury and York;
 - the Bishops of London, Durham and Winchester; and
 - twenty-one other diocesan bishops of the Church of England according to seniority of appointment to diocesan sees. Until 2025, when a vacancy arises, a bishop who is a woman takes priority over a more senior bishop who is a man.¹
- Lords Temporal:
 - Lords created for life under the Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876 (as amended) to serve as Lords of Appeal in Ordinary;²
 - life peers created under the Life Peerages Act 1958;
 - 90 hereditary peers elected under SO³ pursuant to the House of Lords Act 1999;
 - the Earl Marshal;⁴ and
 - the Lord Great Chamberlain.⁵

Disqualification from membership

1.2 The following are disqualified from membership of the House of Lords:

-
- 1 Lords Spiritual (Women) Act 2015, s. 1.
 - 2 The Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876 was repealed by Schedule 7 to the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, but Lords previously created under the Act remain members of the House.
 - 3 SO followed by a number refers to the *Standing Orders of the House of Lords Relating to Public Business*. PBSO followed by a number refers to the *Standing Orders of the House of Lords Relating to Private Business*.
 - 4 House of Lords Act 1999, s. 2(2).
 - 5 House of Lords Act 1999, s. 2(2).

- those under the age of twenty-one;⁶
- aliens

By the Act of Settlement 1701⁷ “no person born out of the Kingdoms of England, Scotland or Ireland, or the Dominions thereunto belonging ... (except such as are born of English parents)” may be a member of the House of Lords. By virtue of a modification contained in the British Nationality Act 1981,⁸ this provision applies only to persons who are not Commonwealth citizens or citizens of the Republic of Ireland. Under the 1981 Act,⁹ “Commonwealth citizen” means a British citizen, a British Overseas Territories citizen, a British subject under that Act, or a citizen of an independent Commonwealth country;
- those convicted of treason

The Forfeiture Act 1870 provides that anyone convicted of treason shall be disqualified from sitting or voting as a member of the House of Lords until they have either suffered their term of imprisonment or received a pardon;
- bankrupts

Under the Insolvency Act 1986,¹⁰ a member of the House (a) who, in England and Wales or Northern Ireland, is subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order (including an interim order) or a bankruptcy restrictions undertaking; (b) who, in England and Wales, is subject to a debt relief restrictions order (including an interim order) or a debt relief restrictions undertaking; or (c) in Scotland, whose estate is sequestered, is disqualified from sitting and voting in the House of Lords or in any committee of the House. A writ is not issued to any person who would otherwise be entitled to one while they are so disqualified. The court or, in the case of a bankruptcy restrictions undertaking or debt relief restrictions undertaking, the Government, notifies the restriction or sequestration to the Lord Speaker and it is recorded in the Journals;

- holders of disqualifying judicial office

Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005,¹¹ a member of the House who holds a disqualifying judicial office¹² is disqualified from sitting and voting in the House of Lords or in any committee of the House or joint committee. Such members are not disqualified from receiving a writ of summons;
- those who have resigned or left the House because of non-attendance or imprisonment

Under the House of Lords Reform Act 2014, a member who has resigned from the House or who has ceased to be a member by virtue of not attending during a session lasting six months or more, or a member who is sentenced to imprisonment indefinitely or for more than one year, is disqualified from attending the proceedings of the House (including the proceedings of a committee or joint committee). Such persons do not receive a writ of summons and may not attend in pursuance of a writ already received (see paragraph 1.27); and
- those who have been expelled from the House because of misconduct

Under the House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015, the House may pass a resolution to expel a member for misconduct. Standing Order 11 provides that a motion to expel a member must follow a recommendation from the Conduct Committee after the member has been found in breach of the Code of Conduct. A person expelled in accordance with the 2015 Act is no longer entitled to receive a writ of summons and may not attend in pursuance of a writ already received.

Membership of the House under SO 9

1.3 Section 1 of the House of Lords Act 1999 provides that “No-one shall be a member of the House of Lords by virtue of a hereditary peerage”.¹³ However, section 2 of the Act provides that 90 hereditary peers, and also the holders of the offices of Earl Marshal and Lord Great

6 SO 2.

7 s. 3.

8 Schedule 7. See also s. 47 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

9 s. 37.

10 s. 426A and s. 427 as amended by the Enterprise Act 2002, the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2008 and the Insolvency Act 1986 (Disqualification from Parliament) Order 2012.

11 s. 137.

12 Defined in the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975, as amended, and the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975, as amended.

13 Certain members of the House who sat formerly by virtue of a hereditary peerage now sit by virtue of a life peerage. Under SO 7 they use their higher title.

Chamberlain, shall be excepted from this general exclusion and shall remain as members for their lifetime or until a subsequent Act otherwise provides.

1.4 In accordance with SO 9, 75 of the 90 excepted hereditary peers were elected by the hereditary peers in their political party or Crossbench grouping.¹⁴ The remaining 15 were elected by the whole House to act as Deputy Chairmen and other office-holders.¹⁵

1.5 Under SO 9, any vacancy due to the death, retirement or exclusion of one of the 90 is filled by holding a by-election. By-elections are conducted in accordance with arrangements made by the Clerk of the Parliaments and take place within three months of a vacancy occurring. If the vacancy is among the 75, only the excepted hereditary peers (including those elected among the 15) in the relevant party or Crossbench grouping are entitled to vote. If the vacancy is among the 15, the whole House is entitled to vote.

1.6 The Clerk of the Parliaments maintains a register of hereditary peers who wish to stand in any by-election under SO 9. Any hereditary peer other than a peer of Ireland is entitled to be included in the register. Under SO 10, any hereditary peer not previously in receipt of a writ of summons who wishes to be included in the register petitions the House and any such petition is referred to the Lord Chancellor to consider and report upon whether such peer has established the right to be included in the register.

Writ of summons

1.7 Members of the House may not take their seat until they have obtained a writ of summons. Writs of summons are issued by direction of the Lord Chancellor from the office of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery.

1.8 New writs are issued before the meeting of each Parliament to all Lords Spiritual and Temporal who have established their right to them and who are not statutorily disqualified from receiving them.

1.9 An archbishop, on appointment or translation to another see, and a bishop who has become entitled to sit or who already has a seat and is translated to another see, applies for a writ to the Lord Chancellor with evidence to support their claim.

14 Under SO 9(2)(i), two peers were elected by the Labour hereditary peers, 42 by the Conservative hereditary peers, three by the Liberal Democrat hereditary peers, and 28 by the Crossbench hereditary peers.

15 The elections were held on 27–28 October 1999 and 3–4 November 1999. SO 9(2)(ii).

1.10 Writs, called writs of assistance or writs of attendance, are also sent to the following, unless they are members of the House: the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls, the President of the Family Division, the Chancellor of the High Court, Justices of the Supreme Court, the Lords Justices of Appeal and the Justices of the High Court.¹⁶ The attendance of such judges is normally now confined to the State Opening of Parliament.

Introduction and sitting first in Parliament

1.11 The following are ceremonially introduced before taking their seats in the House:

- newly created life peers;
- archbishops, on appointment or on translation; and
- bishops, on first receiving a writ of summons or, if already a member of the House, on translation to another see.

1.12 When a writ has been issued to any such person, the Lord Speaker fixes a day for the introduction. The following rules apply:

- introductions may not take place on the first day of a new Parliament;¹⁷
- the House has agreed that, save in exceptional circumstances, no more than two new members should be introduced on any one day.¹⁸ This rule does not apply to introductions on swearing-in days at the beginning of a new Parliament;
- introductions normally take place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays;¹⁹
- new members of the House are normally supported on introduction by two other members of the House. Archbishops and bishops may only be supported on introduction by other archbishops or bishops. Archbishops

16 Holders of disqualifying judicial office who are members of the House receive a writ of summons at the start of each Parliament, notwithstanding their disqualification from taking part in proceedings of the House.

17 Procedure 1st Rpt 1970–71.

18 LJ (1997–98) 775. In the 2010–12 session the House twice agreed, exceptionally and temporarily, to allow three introductions on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays (Procedure [1st](#) and [3rd](#) Rpts 2010–12).

19 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2005–06](#).

and bishops may not act as a supporter at the introduction of a peer;²⁰ and

- no member of the House may act as supporter without having first taken the oath.

1.13 Appendix J describes the ceremony of introduction.

1.14 Hereditary peers elected under SO 9 require no introduction and, on receiving a writ, can take their seat and the oath of allegiance without any ceremony.

1.15 New members of the House may not use the facilities of the House, other than the right to sit on the steps of the Throne, before taking their seat for the first time.²¹ However, they may use the dining facilities on the day of introduction.

Oath of allegiance and affirmation

1.16 All members must take the oath of allegiance or make a solemn affirmation before they can participate in parliamentary proceedings, including sitting and voting in the House, tabling business, or participating in committee meetings:

- on introduction;
- in every new Parliament;²² and
- after a demise of the Crown.²³

1.17 The oath is usually taken after prayers, but may be taken at the end of business before the adjournment.²⁴ On the first day of debate on the

King's Speech in a new Parliament, the oath or affirmation is taken at the end of business, after a brief adjournment.²⁵

1.18 The form of the oath, prescribed by section 2 of the Promissory Oaths Act 1868 and section 1 of the Oaths Act 1978, is:

"I (giving name and title) do swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles, His heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God."

1.19 Under the Oaths Act 1978, members of the House who object to being sworn may affirm:

"I (giving name and title) do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles, His heirs and successors, according to law."

1.20 The oath or affirmation must be taken in English but may be repeated in Welsh²⁶ or in Gaelic.²⁷

1.21 Before taking the oath or making an affirmation members go to the Table, bringing their writ of summons (except on a demise of the Crown, when new writs are not issued). If they are taking the oath, they then recite aloud the words of the oath, reading them from a card kept at the Table, and holding a New Testament in the right hand. The oath may also be taken in the Scottish form with uplifted hand. In the case of members of the House who are of the Jewish faith, the Old Testament is used; in the case of other faiths, the appropriate sacred text is used. If they are making an affirmation, they recite aloud the words of the affirmation.

1.22 In cases of disability or infirmity, the oath or affirmation may be taken seated.

1.23 After taking the oath or making an affirmation, members must sign the Test Roll and an undertaking to abide by the House of Lords Code of Conduct.²⁸ Finally, they go to the Woolsack, shake hands with the Lord Speaker and leave the Chamber.

25 [Procedure 4th Rpt 2017–19](#).

26 Procedure 1st Rpt 1982–83.

27 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2001–02](#).

28 After a demise of the Crown members do not re-sign the Test Roll nor the undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct if they have already done so in that Parliament.

20 Members of the House holding offices which give them special precedence under the House of Lords Precedence Act 1539, such as the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President and the Lord Privy Seal, may act as supporters for new members of the House; their precedence as office holders determines their seniority as supporters (Procedure 2nd Rpt 1992–93).

21 Offices 2nd Rpt 1975–76. The issue of Letters Patent entitles a newly created Lord to use their title and sit on the steps of the Throne.

22 SO 76(1).

Precedence in the queue to take the oath, after the Lord Speaker, the archbishops, the Senior Deputy Speaker and the occupants of the front benches have taken the oath, should be given to members with a disability or with impaired mobility and there is an expectation that other members will give way to those members if there is a long queue.

23 Members may take part in tributes to a recently deceased Monarch and the agreement of any associated Address before taking the oath of allegiance or making the solemn affirmation to the new Monarch.

24 SO 39(5).

1.24 Members who sit by virtue of one peerage but are known by another title take the oath or make an affirmation and sign the Roll using the title by virtue of which they sit.

1.25 Any member of the House who sits or votes without having either taken the oath or made an affirmation is subject to a penalty of £500.²⁹ However, a member may attend prayers or an introduction before taking the oath or making an affirmation. On a swearing-in day (see paragraph 2.1), it is convenient for members to occupy their seats while they are waiting to take the oath. Members who attend the House without taking the oath are not recorded in the attendance lists in the Journals, and votes cast by such members in divisions are invalid.³⁰ A member of the House may not attend the State Opening of Parliament without having taken the oath.³¹

Retirement age

1.26 There is no retirement age for members of the House of Lords, except that bishops retire from their sees on reaching the age of seventy and cease to be members of the House.³²

Retirement or resignation

1.27 Members of the House who are peers may retire or otherwise resign by giving written notice to the Clerk of the Parliaments.³³ The notice must specify a date from which the resignation takes effect and be signed by the peer and a witness. A resignation may not be rescinded.

1.28 When the Clerk of the Parliaments receives notice of a resignation they inform the House by an entry in the Minutes of Proceedings. On the day the resignation takes effect, the Lord Speaker informs the House that the peer has ceased to be a member.³⁴

29 Parliamentary Oaths Act 1866, s. 5.

30 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1993–94.

31 Procedure 1st Rpt 1970–71. This restriction does not apply to those members who, while in receipt of a writ of summons, are disqualified from attending under s. 137 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. See paragraph 1.2.

32 Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limit) Measure 1975.

33 House of Lords Reform Act 2014, s. 1.

34 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2014–15](#).

Cessation of membership through non-attendance

1.29 A member of the House who is a peer and does not attend the House during a session of six months or longer ceases to be a member at the beginning of the following session.³⁵

1.30 The above provision does not apply to peers who are disqualified from sitting or voting, or suspended from the service of the House, for the whole of the session. It does not apply to members on leave of absence in respect of any part of the session. The House may resolve that a peer should not cease to be a member by virtue of non-attendance by reason of special circumstances.

1.31 The Lord Speaker certifies when a member has not attended during a session. The Lord Speaker informs the House that the peer has ceased to be a member.³⁶

Imprisonment for a serious offence

1.32 A member who is convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced or ordered to be imprisoned or detained indefinitely or for more than one year ceases to be a member of the House.³⁷

1.33 The above provision applies whether or not the offence was committed while the person was a member of the House. It applies to convictions outside the United Kingdom only if the House resolves that it should.

1.34 The Lord Speaker certifies when a member has been convicted and sentenced to a relevant term of imprisonment. The Lord Speaker informs the House that the member has ceased to be a member.³⁸

1.35 The Lord Speaker certifies when a member has had a conviction quashed or had the sentence varied or reduced so that it is no longer imprisonment or detention indefinitely or for more than one year; in such circumstances the original certificate that the member has been convicted is treated as having never had effect.

35 House of Lords Reform Act 2014, s. 2.

36 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2014–15](#).

37 House of Lords Reform Act 2014, s. 3.

38 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2014–15](#).

Expulsion and suspension

1.36 A motion to expel or suspend a member must follow a recommendation from the Conduct Committee that the member be expelled or suspended (as the case may be) because the member has breached the Code of Conduct. Such a recommendation may be made by the Conduct Committee only if the Commissioner for Standards has found the member in breach of the Code of Conduct or the member is in breach of the Code in accordance with paragraph 24 or 25 of the Code. A motion to suspend a member must specify the period for which the suspension is to last (which may be until the occurrence of a specified event). Notice must be given of a motion to expel or suspend a member. Expulsion or suspension takes effect as soon as the House has agreed the motion.³⁹

Leave of absence

1.37 Members of the House are to attend the sittings of the House. If they cannot attend, because of temporary circumstance, they should obtain leave of absence.⁴⁰ At any time during a session, a member of the House may obtain leave of absence for the rest of the session by applying in writing to the Clerk of the Parliaments, specifying both a reason for asking to take leave of absence and either a date by which they expect to return to the House or, if they are unable to specify a date, the circumstances which will allow their return.

1.38 A member who has no reasonable expectation of returning as an active member at some point in the future should retire under the House of Lords Reform Act 2014. The House will not grant leave of absence to a member whose application has not stated that they have a reasonable expectation that they will return as an active member at some point.⁴¹

1.39 Before the beginning of every session, the Clerk of the Parliaments writes to those members who were on leave of absence at the end of the preceding session to ask whether they wish to renew that leave of absence for the new session. The Clerk of the Parliaments draws the attention of such members to section 2 of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014.

1.40 The House grants leave of absence to those who apply (subject to the conditions in paragraph 1.38). The House may however refuse or end leave of absence on the application of the Commissioner for Standards or the Conduct Committee, where this is necessary either to enable the Commissioner to conduct an investigation under the Code of Conduct, or to enable the Conduct Committee to impose or recommend the imposition of a sanction on a member.⁴²

- 1.41 Directions relating to those on leave of absence are as follows:
- (a) members of the House who have been granted leave of absence should not attend sittings of the House or of any committee of the House until their leave has expired or been terminated, except to take the oath of allegiance;
 - (b) members of the House on leave of absence who wish to attend during the period for which leave was granted should give notice in writing to the Clerk of the Parliaments at least three months before the day on which they wish to attend; and their leave is terminated three months from the date of this notice, or sooner if the House so directs;
 - (c) a member of the House on leave of absence may not act as a supporter in the ceremony of introduction;⁴³ and
 - (d) a member of the House on leave of absence may not vote in the election of the Lord Speaker or in by-elections for hereditary peers.

1.42 In applying the provisions on leave of absence the Clerk of the Parliaments may seek the advice of the Leave of Absence Sub-Committee of the Procedure and Privileges Committee (see paragraph 1.1.92).

Access to the facilities of the House

1.43 Former members of the House who have retired, and members who are on leave of absence or who are disqualified from participation in the proceedings of the House as judges,⁴⁴ enjoy access to the following facilities:

39 SO 11.

40 SO 21.

41 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2015–16](#).

42 SO 21

43 Leave of Absence 1st Rpt 1957–58.

44 House Committee [2nd](#) and [3rd](#) Rpts 2014–15.

- (a) they may use the Library (but not its research facilities), the Peers' Guest Room, the Peers' Dining Room with up to five guests and the Barry Room with up to six guests; and
- (b) they may sit on the steps of the Throne during a sitting of the House.

1.44 The access privileges in paragraph 1.43 are not afforded to members who lose their membership as a result of non-attendance or a sentence of imprisonment, nor to any member expelled under the House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015.

1.45 The House of Lords Commission may agree, on a case-by-case basis, to withdraw the access privileges of a member following their retirement or resignation from the House.⁴⁵ For members who retire or resign before a report recommending their suspension or expulsion from the House is agreed, the withdrawal of their access privileges is automatic.⁴⁶

1.46 Rights of access enjoyed by members are cancelled for those who are suspended from the service of the House for the duration of the suspension. Members who are suspended may not enter the parliamentary estate, including as guests of other members.⁴⁷ The House may also withdraw a member's access to certain facilities or services for a specified period as a sanction, short of full suspension, for breaching the Code of Conduct.⁴⁸

1.46A Any member who is charged with a serious violent or sexual offence must, at the first opportunity, notify the Clerk of the Parliaments of the charge or charges. The member will then be excluded from the Parliamentary Estate until criminal proceedings are completed.⁴⁹

1.46B An excluded member may not enter the Parliamentary Estate, participate in proceedings of the House or its committees, vote in any election conducted under SOs 9 or 18, or undertake any external visits or other activities supported or funded by Parliament. They may transact business not requiring their personal presence on the Estate, and they may continue to access services provided remotely. The rights of existing staff sponsored by an excluded member are unaffected.

45 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2015–16](#).

46 [House of Lords Commission 2nd Rpt 2019–21](#).

47 House Committee minutes, 19 May 2009.

48 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2013–14](#).

49 SO 21A.

1.46C Excluded members remain subject to the Code of Conduct and the rules on access to facilities.

Tax status

1.47 All members of the House who are entitled to receive writs of summons to attend the House are treated as resident and domiciled in the United Kingdom for the purposes of certain taxes.⁵⁰

Notification of death of member

1.48 The Lord Speaker informs the House of the death of a member of the House.⁵¹ The Lord Speaker's announcement takes a standard form and is distinct from tributes, which are a matter for the Leader of the House and the usual channels. It is not debatable.

The Lord Speaker⁵²

Election of the Lord Speaker

1.49 The House resolved on 12 July 2005 to “elect its own presiding officer”.⁵³ The process of election is governed by Standing Order 18. A new election is to be held in the fifth calendar year after the previous election, on a day no later than 15 July in that year, or within three months of the Lord Speaker dying, giving written notice of their resignation to the Leader of the House, or being deemed to have resigned (see paragraph 1.50), if sooner.⁵⁴

1.50 The result of the election is subject to the approval of the King. If the House passes a motion for an Address to His Majesty seeking the Lord Speaker's removal from office, the Lord Speaker shall be deemed to have resigned with effect from the date on which the motion is passed.

50 Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, s. 41.

51 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2006–07](#).

52 The decisions of the House with regard to the office of Lord Speaker are found in various sources, including Standing Orders; [Report of the Select Committee on the Speakership of the House of Lords, HL Paper 92, 2005–06](#); resolutions of the House on 12 July 2005 and 31 January 2006; Procedure [3rd](#) and [4th](#) Rpts 2005–06, [4th](#) Rpt 2010–12 and [6th](#) Rpt 2017–19; and [House Committee 1st Rpt 2005–06](#).

53 LJ (2005–06) 152.

54 An election held in such circumstances would then be treated as the “previous election” for the purpose of calculating the date of the next election.

1.51 All members of the House who have taken the oath and are not disqualified, suspended or on leave of absence are entitled to stand and vote.⁵⁵ However, a member who has been successful in two previous elections is not entitled to stand.

1.52 The election is conducted in accordance with arrangements made by the Clerk of the Parliaments. The Alternative Vote system is used,⁵⁶ according to which candidates are numbered in order of preference, and the first-preference votes for the least successful candidates are successively reallocated until one candidate has at least half the total number of valid votes.

Role of the Lord Speaker

1.53 The primary role of the Lord Speaker is to preside over proceedings in the Chamber, including Committees of the whole House.⁵⁷ They call on the business on the order paper, private notice questions (PNQs), urgent question (UQ) repeats and oral statements. They take the oath first at the opening of a new Parliament; their role in the ceremonies accompanying oath-taking, the State Opening of Parliament, and Royal Commissions, are described in the appendices.⁵⁸ The Lord Speaker notifies the House of all necessary absences of more than one full sitting day. He or she seeks the leave of the House when such absences relate to the public duties of the Lord Speaker.

1.54 The Lord Speaker has no power to act in the House without the consent of the House. They observe the same formalities as any other member of the House, addressing the House as a whole, and not an individual member, and not intervening when a member is on their feet save to call on the next business as necessary. The Speaker's function is to assist, and not to rule. The House does not recognise points of order.

1.55 Any advice or assistance given by the Lord Speaker is subject to the view of the House as a whole.⁵⁹ The Lord Speaker has specific responsibilities with regard to private notice questions and the application of the *sub judice* rule (see paragraphs 6.37 and 4.69).

55 [Procedure Committee 2nd Rpt 2009–10.](#)

56 [Report of the Select Committee on the Speakership of the House of Lords, HL Paper 92, 2005–06](#) and [Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House 2nd Rpt 2017–19.](#)

57 SO 61.

58 Appendices C–G.

59 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2005–06.](#)

1.56 Outside the Chamber, the Lord Speaker chairs the House of Lords Commission, which oversees the House of Lords Administration (see paragraph 11.77). They are a member of the Procedure and Privileges Committee; have formal responsibility for the security of the Lords part of the parliamentary estate; are one of the three 'keyholders' of Westminster Hall; and have a wide role representing the House at home and overseas.⁶⁰

1.57 The Lord Speaker may, after consultation with the Government, recall the House whenever it stands adjourned.⁶¹

1.58 The Lord Speaker is a salaried office-holder, and is required to lay aside outside financial interests falling into specific categories, including remunerated directorships and other employment.⁶² A candidate for office may however ask the Conduct Committee for a derogation from these rules in exceptional circumstances to enable them to retain an interest or interests in one or more of these categories.⁶³ The Lord Speaker is also expected to lay aside any party or group affiliation on appointment, and to refrain from political activity, including voting in the House.⁶⁴

Role of the Senior Deputy Speaker

1.59 At the beginning of every session, and whenever a vacancy occurs, a member is appointed by the House to fill the salaried office of Chairman of Committees.⁶⁵ The post-holder is normally referred to as the Senior Deputy Speaker.⁶⁶ As a salaried office-holder, they are required to lay aside outside financial interests falling into specific categories, including remunerated directorships and other employment.⁶⁷ A candidate for office may however ask the Conduct Committee for a derogation from these rules in exceptional circumstances to enable them to retain an interest or interests in one or more of these categories.⁶⁸ They are also expected to

60 [Report of the Select Committee on the Speakership of the House of Lords, HL Paper 92, 2005–06.](#)

61 SO 16(1). See also paragraph 2.21.

62 [Privileges 2nd Rpt 2009–10.](#)

63 [Conduct 11th Rpt 2019–21.](#)

64 [Procedure 4th Rpt 2005–06.](#)

65 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2016–17.](#)

66 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2016–17.](#)

67 [Privileges 2nd Rpt 2009–10.](#)

68 [Conduct 11th Rpt 2019–21.](#)

lay aside any party or group affiliation on appointment and for the duration of their time in office.

1.60 They are Chair *ex officio* of all committees unless the House otherwise directs. In practice, this means that they chair the following domestic committees:

- (a) Liaison Committee;
- (b) Procedure and Privileges Committee; and
- (c) Committee of Selection.

1.61 The Senior Deputy Speaker is spokesperson for the Commission and speaks in the House on matters relating to the internal administration of the House and the work of domestic committees. Questions on matters relating to internal administration are addressed to the Senior Deputy Speaker, who may delegate responsibility for answering questions falling within the remits of the Conduct, Finance and Services Committees to the relevant Chair.⁶⁹

1.62 The Senior Deputy Speaker exercises general supervision and control over private bills and hybrid instruments. Their duties in this respect are described in more detail in chapter 9.

1.63 The Senior Deputy Speaker is *ex officio* the first of the Deputy Speakers appointed by Commission (see paragraph 1.64). They are empowered, in the absence of the Lord Speaker, to recall the House during a period of adjournment.⁷⁰

Deputy Speakers and Deputy Chairmen

1.64 Certain members of the House are appointed by the Crown by Commission under the Great Seal to act as Deputy Speakers of the House of Lords in the absence of the Lord Speaker.⁷¹ In addition, at the beginning of every session the House on motion appoints a number of members, proposed by the Committee of Selection, to serve as Deputy Chairmen of Committees for the remainder of that session.⁷² Deputy Chairmen exercise all the functions of Deputy Speakers, and it is the practice that

they are appointed Deputy Speakers at a convenient opportunity after their appointment as Deputy Chairmen.

1.65 In practice the duties of Deputy Chairmen and Deputy Speakers are indistinguishable. In the absence of the Lord Speaker or Senior Deputy Speaker, one of the panel of Deputy Chairmen officiates in their place. If no Deputy Chairman is present, the House appoints some other member, on motion, to perform their duties on that occasion.

1.66 Deputy Chairmen or Deputy Speakers may not recall the House under SO 16.

Seating in the Chamber

1.67 The side of the House on the Sovereign's right hand when seated on the Throne is called the spiritual side, and that on the left the temporal side.

1.68 By convention the Government and their supporters occupy the benches on the spiritual side, with the exception of the first two benches nearest to the Throne, which are taken by the Bishops. Lords Spiritual must speak from the Bishops' benches. Only the two archbishops and the Bishops of London, Durham and Winchester may speak from the front one of these benches, and they also have priority in relation to seating on this bench. Lords Temporal may sit on the Bishops' benches, when space allows, but may not speak from them.

1.69 The benches on the temporal side are, by convention, occupied by the Opposition party or parties. The diagram at the end of chapter 1 shows the usual seating arrangements.

1.70 The crossbenches are for those who are not members of any of the main political parties in the House.⁷³ Crossbench members also sit on the benches nearest the Bar on the spiritual side.⁷⁴

1.71 On the spiritual side of the Chamber, the front bench closest to the Bar is customarily occupied by Privy Counsellors. On the temporal side, Privy Counsellors tend to sit on the front bench closest to the Throne.

1.72 Additional seating for members of any grouping is available below the Bar on the temporal side. Members may not speak from these seats.

⁶⁹ [House Committee 1st Rpt 2016–17](#); Motions to agree reports of the Conduct, Finance and Services Committees are tabled in the name of the relevant Chair.

⁷⁰ SO 16(2).

⁷¹ SO 17.

⁷² SO 62(5).

⁷³ The Crossbench group is made up of members who are not affiliated to any political party. Members who belong to smaller parties may also sit on the crossbenches.

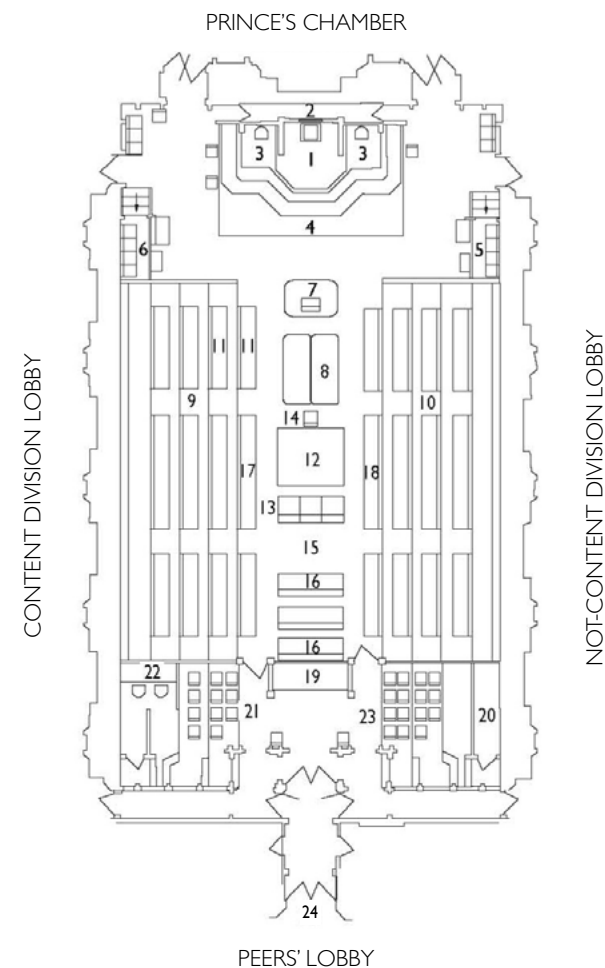
⁷⁴ This arrangement may be varied to suit the convenience of the House.

Steps of the Throne

1.73 The following may sit on the steps of the Throne:

- members of the House of Lords in receipt of a writ of summons, including those who have not taken their seat or the oath and those who are on leave of absence;
- members of the House of Lords who are disqualified from sitting or voting in the House as holders of disqualifying judicial office;⁷⁵
- hereditary peers who were formerly members of the House and who were excluded from the House by the House of Lords Act 1999;⁷⁶
- the eldest child (which includes an adopted child)⁷⁷ of a member of the House (or the eldest son where the right was exercised before 27 March 2000);⁷⁸
- peers of Ireland;
- diocesan bishops of the Church of England who do not yet have seats in the House of Lords;
- retired bishops who have had seats in the House of Lords;
- former members who have retired or resigned from the House under the terms of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014;⁷⁹
- Privy Counsellors;⁸⁰
- Clerk of the Crown in Chancery;
- the Gentleman or Lady Usher of the Black Rod⁸¹ and their Deputy; and
- the Dean of Westminster.

Map of the House of Lords Chamber



Key overleaf

75 [House Committee 2nd Rpt 2008–09.](#)

76 [Offices 1st Rpt 1999–2000.](#)

77 House Committee, decision by correspondence, November 2004.

78 [Offices 4th Rpt 1999–2000.](#)

79 The House of Lords Commission may agree, on a case-by-case basis, to withdraw the access privileges of a member following their retirement or resignation from the House ([House Committee 1st Rpt 2015–16](#)). For members who retire or resign before a report recommending their suspension or expulsion from the House is agreed, the withdrawal of their access privileges is automatic ([House of Lords Commission 2nd Rpt 2019–21](#)).

80 Ministers who are not Privy Counsellors, and Members of the House of Commons, may stand or sit below Bar.

81 Referred to as 'Black Rod' hereafter.

1. Throne
2. Cloth of Estate
3. Chairs of State
4. Steps of the Throne
5. Parliamentary officials' box
6. Officials' box
7. Woolsack
8. Judges' Woolsacks
9. Spiritual side of the House
10. Temporal side of the House
11. Bishops' benches
12. Table of the House
13. Clerks at the Table
14. Senior Deputy Speaker's chair at the Table
15. Accessible space
16. Crossbenches
17. Government front bench
18. Opposition front bench
19. Bar of the House
20. Black Rod's box
21. Seats for members' spouses and partners
22. Hansard reporters
23. Overflow seating for members
24. Brass Gates

CHAPTER 2

The Crown and parliamentary sessions

Opening of a new Parliament

2.1 A proclamation issued at the dissolution of an old Parliament appoints a day and place of meeting of the new Parliament. The new Parliament is summoned to meet a few days, usually a week, before the King's Speech. During this period the House of Lords usually sits for two or three 'swearing-in' days. Only business which does not require the House to take a decision on a motion may be taken on these days. The principal business is:

- proceedings relating to the election of a Speaker of the House of Commons, which takes place on the first and second days (see appendix D), and
- administering the oath of allegiance to members of the House.¹

2.2 New members of the House of Lords may be introduced after the first day.

2.3 Members may attend to take the oath at any time the House is sitting during the swearing-in days. The House sits long enough (sometimes with short adjournments 'during pleasure') to enable those who are present to take the oath.

Opening of subsequent sessions

2.4 The election of a Commons Speaker and the swearing-in of members occur only in the first session of a Parliament. Each subsequent session is opened with the King's Speech without any preliminary proceedings. The King usually delivers the Speech in person.² In his absence, the presiding Commissioner delivers it. The procedure for delivery of the King's Speech is described in appendix E.

¹ SO 76(1).

² On 10 May 2022 the Queen was not present and authorised the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cambridge to act in her place, as Counsellors of State, by Letters Patent under section 6 of the Regency Act 1937.

First meeting after State Opening

2.5 At the time appointed for the sitting of the House (usually 3.30pm on the day of State Opening) the Lord Speaker takes their seat on the Woolsack. Prayers are read and members of the House may take the oath. A bill, for the better regulating of Select Vestries, is then read a first time *pro forma* on the motion of the Leader of the House, in order to assert the right of the House to deliberate independently of the Crown.³ Until this has taken place, no other business is done.

2.6 Immediately after the Select Vestries Bill has been read a first time, the Lord Speaker informs the House that the King delivered the Gracious Speech earlier in the day to the two Houses of Parliament. They say:

“My Lords,

I have to acquaint the House that His Majesty was pleased this morning to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament assembled in the House of Lords. Copies of the Gracious Speech are available in the Printed Paper Office. I have for the convenience of the House arranged for the terms of the Gracious Speech to be published in the Official Report.”

2.7 A government backbencher chosen by the Leader of the House then moves:

“That an Humble Address be presented to His Majesty as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, beg leave to thank Your Majesty for the Most Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.”

2.8 The mover then makes a speech and at the end says: *“I beg to move that an Humble Address be presented to His Majesty.”* They then proceed to the Woolsack with the Address and bow to the Lord Speaker, who rises and bows in return and receives the Address. When the mover has returned to their seat, the Lord Speaker rises and says:

“The Question is that an Humble Address be presented to His Majesty as follows”

and reads the text of the Address.

2.9 A government backbencher, also chosen by the Leader, then seconds the motion for an Address. It is customary for the speeches of the mover and seconder to be uncontroversial. After the speech of the seconder, the Leader of the Opposition moves the adjournment of the debate. On this motion the Leader of the Opposition and the other party leaders congratulate the mover and seconder and comment generally on the King’s Speech. After the Leader of the House has responded, the debate on the Address is adjourned.

2.10 Certain formal business is then taken. The Senior Deputy Speaker is appointed on the motion of the Leader of the House. Exceptionally, if State Opening takes place on the last sitting day before a weekend, public bills may be introduced. Formal entries in the Minutes of Proceedings record the laying before the House by the Clerk of the Parliaments of a list of members of the House, a list of hereditary peers who wish to stand for election as members of the House of Lords under SO 9, and the sessional order for preventing stoppages in the streets.

2.11 The general debate on the Address is resumed on the next sitting day. The principal topics for debate (e.g. foreign affairs, home affairs, economic affairs, agriculture, transport) are taken on different days. Members should not stray beyond the topics being taken on the day of their speech. Amendments, of which notice must be given, may be moved to the Address at any time in the debate, and are disposed of at the end of the day on which they are debated or at the end of the whole debate. If there is no voice against the Address, the Lord Speaker declares the Question decided *nemine dissentiente*. The House then orders the Address to be presented to His Majesty. This is usually done by the Lord Chamberlain.

Prorogation

2.12 The prorogation of Parliament, which brings a session to an end, is a prerogative act of the Crown and not a proceeding of the House. Parliament is prorogued by Commissioners acting in the Sovereign’s name or by the Sovereign in person.⁴ The House has no role in determining the timing of prorogation.

2.13 On prorogation day, prayers are read and any necessary business is transacted. The sequence of events followed at prorogation, with

³ SO 76(2).

⁴ Parliament was last prorogued by the Monarch in person in 1854.

or without Royal Assent, is given in appendix G. Parliament is always prorogued to a definite day. Prorogation for further periods may be effected by proclamation.⁵ Parliament, while prorogued, can be summoned by proclamation pursuant to the Meeting of Parliament Acts 1797 and 1870⁶ and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Dissolution

2.14 No Parliament may continue to sit for more than five years from the day on which it first met.⁷ Under the terms of the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022, Parliament is dissolved by Royal Proclamation under the Great Seal on the request of the Prime Minister.

Effect of termination of session

2.15 Prorogation has the effect of putting an end to all business before the House, except:

- private bills and hybrid bills which may be 'carried over' from one session to another (including dissolution);⁸
- proceedings on Measures, statutory instruments and special procedure orders laid in one session, which may be continued in the next, notwithstanding prorogation or dissolution. Prorogation and dissolution are disregarded in calculating 'praying time';⁹ and
- certain sessional committees which remain in existence notwithstanding the prorogation of Parliament until the House makes further orders of appointment in the next session (but this does not apply to a dissolution, when all select committee activity must cease).¹⁰

2.16 Government public bills may also be 'carried over' from one session to the next, but not over a dissolution. See paragraph 8.9.

5 Prorogation Act 1867 s. 1, amended by the Statute Law Revision Act 1893.

6 As amended by the Parliament (Elections and Meeting) Act 1943.

7 Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022, s. 5. A bill containing any provision to extend the maximum duration of Parliament beyond five years is exempted from the restrictions imposed on the powers of the House of Lords by the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949.

8 The procedure by which this is done provides for the waiving of certain standing orders by agreement between the two Houses in order that the bills may be taken *pro forma* up to the stage that they had reached in the previous session.

9 See paragraph 10.9.

10 SO 63.

Demise of the Crown

2.17 The Succession to the Crown Act 1707¹¹ provides that in the event of the demise of the Crown, Parliament, if adjourned or prorogued, must meet as soon as possible¹² and, if sitting, must immediately proceed to act without any summons in the usual form.

2.18 The Representation of the People Act 1985¹³ provides that, in the case of the demise of the Crown after the dissolution of one Parliament and the proclamation summoning the next, but before the election, the election and the meeting of Parliament are postponed by 14 days. If the demise occurs on or after the date of the election, Parliament meets in accordance with the proclamation summoning the next Parliament.

2.19 When Parliament meets under either of these Acts, there is no speech from the Throne. Members take the oath of allegiance to the new Sovereign, and debate and agree an Address to the new Sovereign, expressing condolences upon the death of their predecessor and loyalty to them upon their accession. In the course of a few days a message under the Sign Manual is sent formally acquainting the House with the death of the Sovereign, and stating such other matters as may be necessary.

2.20 If the demise of the Crown has taken place during the session, business is resumed and proceeds as usual; but if it has occurred during an adjournment or prorogation, both Houses again adjourn as soon as the Addresses have been presented.

Emergency recall of the House

2.21 The Lord Speaker, or, in their absence, the Senior Deputy Speaker, may, after consultation with the Government, recall the House whenever it stands adjourned, if satisfied that the public interest requires it¹⁴ or in pursuance of section 28(3) of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Addresses to the Crown

2.22 The ordinary method by which the Houses communicate with the Sovereign is by Address. Addresses may be agreed by both Houses and

11 s. 5.

12 Notice of the time of meeting is given by any means available.

13 s. 20.

14 SO 16.

jointly presented, or agreed separately but presented together, but are more commonly agreed and presented separately. From the House of Lords, they may be presented by certain designated members, by members who are members of the Royal Household or Privy Counsellors, or by the whole House. The most common form of Address occurs at the beginning of every session in reply to the King's Speech. Other forms of Address are those requesting the King to make an Order in Council in the form of a draft laid before the House or praying the King to annul a negative instrument. There has been an Address for the exercise of the prerogative of mercy.¹⁵ There are also Addresses of condolence or congratulation to the Sovereign on family or public occasions. An Address may also be presented in response to a Royal Message, concerning for example the Civil List or the declaration of a State of Emergency.

2.23 The Sovereign's reply is communicated to the House on the first convenient occasion. The member reporting the reply to the House (usually the Lord Chamberlain or another member of the Royal Household) does so at the beginning of business.

Messages to members of the Royal Family

2.24 The congratulations or condolences of the House are communicated to a member of the Royal Family other than the Sovereign by a message, and not by an Address. In such a case certain members of the House are ordered to present the message, and one of them reports the answer or answers.¹⁶

Address presented by the whole House

2.25 On occasions of particular importance, an Address may be presented by the whole House. Until 1897 (the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's accession) such Addresses were presented at Buckingham Palace or another royal residence. Since then Addresses by the whole House have been presented, together with Addresses from the House of Commons, within the Palace of Westminster. Thus Addresses were presented in Westminster Hall to mark the 50th Anniversary of the end of

¹⁵ The case of Guardsmen Fisher and Wright, HL Deb. 20 July 1998, cols 653–72.

¹⁶ For example HL Deb. 23 July 2013, col. 1164; 8 Oct 2013, col. 1 (Birth of a son to Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cambridge); and 14 November 2018, col. 1 (70th birthday of the Prince of Wales).

World War II (1995) and Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee (2002) and Diamond Jubilee (2012).¹⁷

2.26 After prayers on the day appointed for the presentation of the Address, the House proceeds to the designated place. The motion that the House do now proceed to the designated place also provides that the House do thereafter adjourn during pleasure and meet again in the Chamber at an appointed time. The Lord Speaker and the Commons Speaker either lead their respective Houses or arrive with their processions after the members of both Houses are seated. The Commons Speaker usually arrives last. Both Houses sit facing the King, the Commons on his left and the Lords on his right. As soon as the King has arrived, the Lord Speaker reads the Lords' Address and then presents it to the Sovereign. The Commons Speaker likewise reads and presents the Commons' Address. The King delivers his reply to the Addresses and withdraws. The Lords withdraw followed by the Commons. By virtue of the terms of the motion moved earlier in the Chamber, the House then adjourns during pleasure and resumes its sitting at the appointed time.

Messages from the Crown

2.27 Messages from the Crown other than in reply to an Address are rare. They are formal communications relating to important public events that require the attention of Parliament, for example, the declaration of a State of Emergency. A message from the Crown is usually in writing under the King's Sign Manual. It is brought by a member of the House who is either a minister, for example the Leader of the House, or one of the King's Household. A message from the Crown has precedence over other business, except for introductions, oaths and the Lord Speaker's leave of absence.

2.28 The member bearing a message announces to the House that they have a message under the King's Sign Manual that the King has commanded them to deliver to the House. They read it at the Table, and then give it to the Lord Speaker at the Woolsack, who hands it to the Clerk of the Parliaments. When the message has been read, it is either considered immediately on motion or, more usually, a later day is appointed.¹⁸ An Address is then moved in reply, usually by the Leader of the House.

¹⁷ LJ (1994–95) 387; LJ (2010–12) 2208.

¹⁸ SO 39(1).

However, the House takes no further action on messages from the Crown in reply to an Address from the House.¹⁹

¹⁹ Such as those received following the end of the debate on the King's Speech or replying to an Address to annul a statutory instrument.

CHAPTER 3

Sittings and documents of the House

3.1 The House usually sits for public business on Mondays and Tuesdays at 2.30pm, on Wednesdays at 3pm and on Thursdays at 11am. The House also sits on some Fridays at 10am. It is a firm convention that the House normally rises by about 10pm on Mondays to Wednesdays,¹ by about 7pm on Thursdays, and by about 3pm on Fridays. The time of meeting of the House can be varied to meet the convenience of the House. In exceptional circumstances the House has met on Saturday and on Sunday.²

3.2 The length of a session within a Parliament is at the discretion of the Government.

3.3 The House usually breaks for substantial recesses as follows:

- over Christmas and New Year (usually two weeks);
- sometimes in mid-February (up to one week);
- at Easter (one or two weeks);
- over the Spring Bank Holiday (one week); and
- in the summer (usually between late July and early September, and again from the end of the second week in September to the end of the first week in October).

Lord Speaker's procession and the Mace

3.4 Before each day's sitting, the Lord Speaker walks in procession from their room to the Chamber, preceded by the Mace.³ During the procession, doorkeepers and security staff ensure that the route is unobstructed. The procession crosses the Prince's Chamber and moves down the Not-

¹ [Procedure 5th Rpt 2001–02](#).

² The House sat on a Saturday and a Sunday at the outbreak of World War II. It sat on Saturdays in 1982 to discuss the situation in the Falkland Islands (LJ (1938–39) 383–4, (1981–82) 216) and in 2019 to discuss Exiting the European Union (HL Deb. 19 October 2019 vol. 800). The House attended the State Funeral for Sir Winston Churchill in St Paul's Cathedral on Saturday 30 January 1965.

³ The procession consists of a doorkeeper, followed by the Deputy Serjeant at Arms (the Yeoman Usher) or Principal Doorkeeper bearing the Mace, followed by the Lord Speaker. In the Prince's Chamber, Black Rod joins the end of the procession. [Procedure 4th Rpt 2005–06](#).

content Lobby, entering the Chamber from below Bar on the temporal side. The Lord Speaker continues up the temporal side of the House to the Woolsack. After the bishop has read the Psalm, the Lord Speaker and other members present kneel or stand for prayers. When these have been read, the Lord Speaker takes their seat on the Woolsack.

3.5 If the Lord Speaker is absent at the beginning of the sitting, the Deputy Serjeant at Arms (the Yeoman Usher), alone, takes the Mace by way of the Library Corridor to meet the Senior Deputy Speaker or other Deputy Speaker and Black Rod in Peers' Lobby.

Prayers

3.6 Prayers are read at the beginning of each sitting. Ordinarily prayers are read by one of the bishops, who take a week each in turn.⁴ In the absence of a bishop, a member of the House who is an ordained minister of the Church of England may read prayers. If no such member is present, the Lord on the Woolsack reads prayers. The prayers are set out in appendix I. During prayers, the doors and galleries of the House are closed and visitors are excluded.

Quorum

3.7 The quorum of the House or Grand Committee is three, including the Lord Speaker or Deputy Speaker. There is, however, a quorum of 30 for divisions on bills and on any motion to approve or disapprove delegated legislation.⁵

Change of Speaker

3.8 During the course of business, the Lord Speaker may be replaced on the Woolsack by a Deputy Speaker. When one member takes the place of another on the Woolsack, there is no interruption of business. The member who is to preside stands at the side of the Woolsack, on the spiritual side. The member on the Woolsack rises and moves to the temporal side. They bow to each other. The member previously on the Woolsack withdraws and the replacement sits down on the Woolsack.

4 The two archbishops and the Bishops of London, Durham and Winchester do not take part in this rota.

5 SO 56.

Adjournment

3.9 At the end of business, a member of the Government moves "*That the House do now adjourn.*" The Lord Speaker puts the Question, but does not collect the voices because this Question is not usually debated. If any member of the House wishes to debate it, the Lord Speaker should be informed beforehand.

3.10 As soon as the Lord Speaker has put the Question for the adjournment, they leave the Chamber by the temporal side and the Bar, preceded by the Mace, and return in procession to their room via the Law Lords' and Library Corridors.

3.11 If a Deputy Speaker is on the Woolsack when the House adjourns, the above ceremony is observed, but the Deputy Speaker leaves the procession in Peers' Lobby.

Secret sittings

3.12 If the House wishes to meet in secret, a motion of which notice is not required is made to that effect.⁶ When an order for a secret sitting is made, the Chamber is cleared of everyone except members of the House, the Clerks at the Table and Black Rod. Members of the House of Commons are not required to withdraw.

Grand Committee

3.13 Certain types of business may take place in Grand Committee. The procedure in Grand Committee is the same for each type of business as the procedure would have been in the House when such business is considered, except that divisions may not take place in Grand Committee.⁷

3.14 A Grand Committee is of unlimited membership. Any member of the House may participate in it. Only one Grand Committee sits on any one day. The place of meeting is usually the Moses Room. Setting up an unplanned Grand Committee at very short notice may be impossible in practical terms.

6 SO 15.

7 Report to the Leader from the Group on sittings of the House: HL Paper (1993-94) 83, paragraph 20; [Procedure 1st Rpt 2005-06](#).

3.15 The following types of business may take place in Grand Committee:

- (a) committee stages of public bills (normally only one bill per day—see paragraph 8.111);
- (b) motions to consider affirmative instruments (see paragraph 10.17);
- (c) motions to consider negative instruments (see paragraph 10.10);
- (d) motions to take note of reports of select committees (see paragraph 11.42) or of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (see paragraph 11.97);
- (e) general motions for debate (see paragraph 6.62);
- (f) questions for short debate (see paragraph 6.48);
- (g) debates on bills before second reading (see paragraph 8.50); and
- (h) debates on proposals for National Policy Statements, laid before Parliament under the Planning Act 2008 (see paragraph 10.49).⁸

3.16 In addition, second reading debates on Law Commission bills may take place in a 'second reading committee' in the Moses Room, although this is not formally a Grand Committee (see paragraph 8.49).

3.17 Grand Committees sit for times agreed in advance, irrespective of the rising of the House.⁹ Notice of the proceedings is given in *House of Lords Business*. The normal start times¹⁰ for the Grand Committee are:

- Monday, Tuesday 3.45pm
- Wednesday 4.15pm
- Thursday 1pm

3.18 The Grand Committee normally sits for up to four hours, but may sit for a maximum of five hours, though this is the exception, not the rule,

⁸ [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2008–09.](#)

⁹ [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2003–04.](#)

¹⁰ [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2005–06.](#)

and should be agreed in advance.¹¹ In such cases the start time may be varied to accommodate the extended sitting:

- Monday, Tuesday 3.30–8.30pm
- Wednesday 3.45–8.45pm
- Thursday 1–6pm

3.19 Committee proceedings begin at the appointed time without any preliminary motion. Members speak standing and, so far as they can, observe the same degree of formality as in the Chamber. Forms of words used in Grand Committee are the same as in Committee of the whole House. The Committee adjourns for 10 minutes for a division in the Chamber. If the Committee is to break (e.g. for a division or a statement in the Chamber), and when it adjourns at the end of the day's proceedings, the Committee is simply adjourned without a Question being put. The verbatim report of the Grand Committee's proceedings is published, and the minutes are published as an appendix to the Minutes of Proceedings.

Leave of the House

3.20 The leave of the House is required before certain procedures or items of business can proceed. Similar rules apply in Committees of the whole House.

3.21 In certain cases where leave is sought, it is granted by majority and the objection of a single member of the House is not sufficient to withhold leave. Leave is granted by majority:

- (a) to ask questions;
- (b) to make ministerial or personal statements;
- (c) to take business not on the order paper of which notice is not required;
- (d) to speak more than once to a motion; and
- (e) to speak more than once to an amendment to a bill at report stage or third reading.

3.22 In other cases leave must be unanimous, notably in those cases where, if leave were granted, the House or committee would be deprived of

¹¹ [Procedure and Privileges, 2nd Rpt, 2021–22.](#)

having a Question put.¹² Leave is withheld if a single member of the House objects to:

- (a) withdrawal of an amendment or a motion which is before the House;
- (b) moving motions, amendments and clauses *en bloc* (see paragraph 3.53);
- (c) moving a motion that the order of commitment or recommitment of a bill be discharged;
- (d) moving a motion or asking a question when the mover or questioner is absent, unless the authority of the member named on the order paper has been given;¹³ or
- (e) postponing business without notice till later the same day.¹⁴

3.23 Leave is usually obtained without putting the Question; but if necessary, the Question “*that leave be given*” could be divided upon in a case where leave may be granted by a majority decision. However, this would be exceptional, as a member who requests leave usually tests the feeling of the House and, if there is opposition to leave being granted, the request is generally withdrawn.

Suspension or amendment of standing orders

3.24 SO 84 provides that no motion shall be agreed to for making a new standing order, or for dispensing with a standing order, unless notice has been given on the order paper.

3.25 Consequently, when it is desired that a standing order should be suspended for a specific period, or dispensed with for a particular purpose, notice of a motion, customarily in the name of the Leader of the House, is inserted on the order paper under the heading “Business of the House”. Such motions are taken before other notices relating to public business. SOs 38 (arrangement of the order paper) and 44 (no two stages of a bill to be taken on one day) are sometimes suspended when pressure of business increases before a recess or prorogation, to enable the Government to

¹² SO 30.

¹³ Unanimous leave of the House is not required to move another member’s amendment, or motion during consideration of House of Commons amendments ([Procedure 5th Rpt 2017–19](#)).

¹⁴ SO 40(3).

arrange the order of business and to take more than one stage of a bill at a sitting.

3.26 Amendments to *Public Business Standing Orders* are usually proposed by the Procedure and Privileges Committee. The rationale for the amendments is explained in a report from that Committee, and once the report has been agreed the Chair of the Committee moves a motion in the Chamber to agree the amendments.

House publications

3.27 There are three core publications giving information about the business that the House has done and the business it expects to do:

- *House of Lords Business*, a single publication containing future business and the Minutes of Proceedings (the daily record of business transacted);
- the order paper (the agenda for the day); and
- *Hansard* (the official report of what was said in debate).

3.28 On sitting days, the order paper is available online and from the Printed Paper Office, from the desks at the Peers’ Entrance, and from the desks adjacent to the Chamber in the Prince’s Chamber and Peers’ Lobby. The HousePapers app is available on digital devices and provides access to all papers for any given sitting.¹⁵

House of Lords Business

3.29 *House of Lords Business* is published after each sitting day. As well as the Minutes of Proceedings of the last sitting day, it shows future business to be taken in the House, so far as it has been tabled or definitely arranged.¹⁶ It also includes:

- (a) business of which notice has been given but for which no day has been named. This business is grouped under six headings:
 - (i) motions for balloted debate;
 - (ii) select committee reports for debate (with the date on which the report was published);

¹⁵ The HousePapers app is available to download free of charge.

¹⁶ Each week, the Government Whips’ Office publishes a separate document entitled ‘Forthcoming Business’, which informally advertises business for the following week and that provisionally proposed for subsequent weeks.

- (iii) other motions for debate (only on the day they are tabled);
 - (iv) motions relating to delegated legislation;
 - (v) motions relating to treaties; and
 - (vi) questions for short debate (drawn from the previous ballot, and entries for the next ballot);
- (b) a list of questions for written answer tabled that day, together with a table showing any written questions which remain unanswered after 10 working days;
 - (c) lists of bills, Measures and various types of delegated legislation in progress, showing the stage reached by each and the next date on which they will be taken, if known; and
 - (d) notices of committee sittings.

3.30 The Minutes of Proceedings of the House are issued under the authority and name of the Clerk of the Parliaments. The Minutes record actions or decisions of the House rather than what is said in the Chamber. Some 'silent' entries are included which happen off the floor.

- 3.31 The Minutes of Proceedings are compiled in the following order:
- (a) preliminary matters, such as prayers, introductions, members taking the oath, messages from the King and matters relating to leave of absence;
 - (b) select committee reports;
 - (c) private business (except where such business is taken part-way through public business);
 - (d) public business, in the order in which it is taken in the House;
 - (e) Grand Committees, second reading committees and special public bill committees; and
 - (f) papers laid before the House.

Arrangement of business

The usual channels

3.32 The Government Chief Whip is responsible for the detailed arrangement of government business and the business of individual sittings. The smooth running of the House depends largely on the whips of the main

political parties. They agree the arrangement of business through the 'usual channels'. The usual channels consist of the leaders and whips of the three main political parties. For certain purposes the usual channels include the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers.

Notices

3.33 Motions or questions may be handed in or sent to the House of Lords Table Office on sitting days between 10am and House Up; the Table Office may also be contacted during these hours (020 7219 3036, holtableoffice@parliament.uk).¹⁷ Motions or questions will appear in the following day's *House of Lords Business* if submitted by 5pm or the rise of the House (whichever is the earlier). At other times (e.g. non-sitting Fridays or recesses) business may be handed in between 10am and 5pm, either to the Table Office or to the duty clerk, using the same contact details.

3.34 Whenever any new notice is put down in *House of Lords Business*, or any material alteration is made to the text of an existing motion or question, it is marked with a dagger (†) to draw attention to it.¹⁸

3.35 Business may be tabled any length of time in advance, up to the end of the session, except:

- oral questions, which may be tabled up to four weeks in advance including recesses;¹⁹ and
- motions and questions for short debate, which may be tabled up to four weeks in advance excluding recesses.²⁰

3.36 A member of the House who wishes a notice to appear in *House of Lords Business* before a specific date has been fixed for it may enter it under either "Other Motions for Debate", "Motions relating to Delegated Legislation" or "Motions relating to Treaties". It may also be entered into the ballot for a "Question for Short Debate" or a "Motion for Balloted Debate". There is no strictly formulated rule against anticipation; but:

¹⁷ Written questions may be submitted by email. Questions are accepted from a member's parliamentary email account. If a member wishes to email questions from a non-parliamentary address the member should first designate the alternative email address by providing signed authorisation to the Table Office.

¹⁸ Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70.

¹⁹ See paragraph 6.26 for a full explanation of the times at which oral questions may be tabled.

²⁰ SO 41.

- (a) a member should not put down for a specific date a question or subject for debate which already appears in the name of another member under any of the undated headings without first consulting that member; and
- (b) it is not in the interests of good order and courtesy that a member should table for an earlier day a question (other than a topical question) or motion similar to one that has already been tabled for a particular day.

3.37 Italic notes are often used to give the House advance notice of business that is not yet in a position to be tabled.²¹

3.38 Notices may be withdrawn or put down for a later date by the member of the House in whose name they stand.²² Oral questions and questions for short debate may be brought forward to an earlier day without leave, at the request of the member asking the question. Other notices can only be brought forward by leave of the House obtained on a motion, of which notice must be given. Such a motion is generally moved by the Leader of the House.²³

3.39 Business of which notice is required (see paragraph 3.42) must first be called before it can proceed. Questions, motions and amendments to motions are called by the member on the Woolsack, in the order in which they appear on the order paper.²⁴ Amendments to bills are called by the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair, in the order of the marshalled list.

3.40 If a member of the House is absent when a motion or question standing in their name is called and has authorised another member to act on their behalf, that member may do so, explaining the situation.

3.41 If authority has not been given by the member in whose name the question or motion stands, the motion or question cannot be proceeded with on that day unless unanimous leave is granted by the House.²⁵ In that case, when the member on the Woolsack has called the motion or question, a member may ask for leave to move the motion or ask the question

standing in the name of the absent member. If there is a single dissenting voice, the House passes on to the next business.²⁶ Notice must be given before business not proceeded with can be taken on a subsequent date. This paragraph does not apply to government motions, which may be moved by any member of the Government without leave, or to amendments to bills (see paragraph 8.76).

Business of which notice is required or not required

3.42 Business of which notice is required must appear at least on the order paper of the day on which it is to be taken, and wherever possible also in *House of Lords Business*.²⁷ Notice must be given of oral questions, questions for short debate and all motions except those which the House customarily allows to be moved without notice. The following list, which is not exhaustive, shows what business the House in practice allows to be taken without notice:²⁸

- (a) business which does not involve a decision of the House:
 - (i) Royal Assent;
 - (ii) obituary tributes and personal statements;
 - (iii) ministerial statements and private notice questions;
 - (iv) statements or questions on business, procedure and privilege;
 - (v) oaths of allegiance; and
 - (vi) presentation of public petitions;
- (b) manuscript amendments to bills and motions;
- (c) business expressly exempted from the need to give notice,²⁹ namely:
 - (i) messages from the Crown;
 - (ii) introduction of bills;
 - (iii) messages from the Commons and first reading of Commons bills; and

²¹ Procedure 5th Rpt 1966–67.

²² SO 40(1).

²³ Procedure 5th Rpt 1966–67; 1st Rpt 1975–76.

²⁴ SO 37.

²⁵ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1992–93; SO 40(2).

²⁶ "Next business" can include the original question, if the business under consideration was an amendment.

²⁷ SO 35; Procedure 5th Rpt 1970–71.

²⁸ Procedure 5th Rpt 1970–71.

²⁹ SO 39.

- (iv) consideration of Commons amendments and reasons, though reasonable notice should be given when possible;³⁰ and
- (d) motions relating to the way in which the House conducts its business, for example:
 - (i) motions for the adjournment of a debate, or of the House;³¹
 - (ii) the motion to go into Committee of the whole House for more freedom of debate on a motion;³²
 - (iii) in Committee of the whole House, motions to adjourn debate on an amendment, or to resume the House;
 - (iv) the motion that leave be not given to ask a question;
 - (v) the motion that the noble Lord be no longer heard (see paragraph 4.59);
 - (vi) the Closure (see paragraph 4.60);
 - (vii) the next business motion (see paragraph 4.61);
 - (viii) the motion that the Lord X be appointed Lord Speaker *pro tempore*; and
 - (ix) the motion that the House should meet in secret (see paragraph 3.12).

Order of business

3.43 The House proceeds with the business of each day in the order in which it stands on the order paper.³³ Business is entered on the order paper in the order in which it is received at the Table, subject to the following main conditions laid down in SO 38:

- (a) oral questions are placed first;
- (b) private business is, subject to the Senior Deputy Speaker's discretion, placed before public business;

30 Procedure 1st Rpt 1987–88.

31 Adjournment to a time other than the next sitting time would need notice, unless the next sitting had not been advertised in which case an adjournment to the next normal sitting time could be moved without notice.

32 SO 61; HL Deb. 16 June 1958, col. 892.

33 SOs 37, 38.

- (c) business of the House motions and, if the mover so desires, the Senior Deputy Speaker's business and the business of the Conduct, Finance and Services Committees are placed before other public business;
- (d) on all days except Thursdays,³⁴ public bills, Measures, affirmative instruments and reports from select committees of the House have precedence over other public business. On Thursdays, the general debate day,³⁵ motions have precedence over public bills, Measures and delegated legislation;³⁶
- (e) any motion relating to a report from the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee on a draft order laid under the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006, or a subordinate provisions order made or proposed to be made under the Regulatory Reform Act 2001, is placed before a motion to approve that order;³⁷
- (f) any motion relating to a report from the Joint Committee on Human Rights on a remedial order or draft remedial order laid under Schedule 2 to the Human Rights Act 1998 is placed before a motion to approve that order or draft order;³⁸ and
- (g) questions for short debate are placed last, even when it is known that they will be taken in the lunch or dinner break, except for topical questions for short debate on Thursdays (which are placed after the first motion for general debate).

3.44 Royal Assent is frequently notified before oral questions, but may be notified between any two items of business or at the end of business, if necessary after an adjournment.

3.45 Private bills are entered on the order paper after oral questions.³⁹ But if a private bill is likely to be debated on second or third reading it may be entered at a later point on the order paper. Similarly, if a debate

34 [Procedure 6th Rpt 2005–06](#).

35 See paragraph 6.48.

36 The general debate day runs from the start of a session until the end of January the following year. [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2010–11](#).

37 SO 38(6).

38 SO 38(7).

39 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1958–59.

unexpectedly arises upon a private bill, the Senior Deputy Speaker may propose the postponement or adjournment of that stage of the bill either to a time later in the same day, or to another day. Members intending to debate any stage of a private bill should accordingly give notice of their intention to the Senior Deputy Speaker. Private bills may also be entered at a later point on the order paper at the discretion of the Senior Deputy Speaker.

3.46 The order in which business is usually taken is as follows:

- (a) prayers;
- (b) introductions;
- (c) oaths of allegiance (or at the end of business);
- (d) statements from the Woolsack;
- (e) messages and answers from the Crown;
- (f) Royal Assent (or at any convenient time during the sitting);
- (g) Addresses of congratulation or sympathy to the Crown;⁴⁰
- (h) notification of death, retirement or exclusion;
- (i) messages to, and answers from, members of the Royal Family (excluding the Crown);
- (j) obituary tributes;
- (k) personal statements;
- (l) oral questions;
- (m) private notice questions;
- (n) announcement of results of hereditary peer by-elections;
- (o) presentation of public petitions;
- (p) questions of privilege;
- (q) statements on business;
- (r) ministerial statements (or at the first convenient moment);⁴¹
- (s) presentation of new Lords bills (or at the end of public business);⁴²

40 Procedure 4th Rpt 1964–65.

41 For example, a repeat of a Commons statement immediately after oral questions usually follows any first readings of Lords or Commons bills, or business of the House motions, that are ready at that point.

42 SO 39(3).

- (t) messages from the Commons (or at any convenient time during the sitting);
- (u) private bills, at the discretion of the Senior Deputy Speaker;
- (v) business of the House motions;
- (w) motions to amend standing orders;
- (x) motions relating to the Senior Deputy Speaker's business or the Chairs of the Conduct, Finance and Services Committees' business, if they so desire;
- (y) motions for the appointment of select committees;
- (z) public business; and
- (aa) questions for short debate.

Variation of order of business

3.47 Under SO 38(8) the order of notices relating to public bills, Measures, affirmative instruments and reports from select committees can be varied by agreement of the members in whose names the notices stand. Such variations are subject to SO 38(4) and (5) so that on Thursdays notices relating to public bills, Measures and delegated legislation may not be advanced before notices relating to motions, even with the consent of those affected. In such cases, a formal motion is required to vary the order of business.

3.48 Where it is wished to vary the order of business beyond the terms of SO 38(4) and (5), a business of the House motion may be put down to suspend or dispense with SO 38. The Standing Order is sometimes suspended so far as is necessary to give the Government power to arrange the order of business.

3.49 Business may be postponed until later the same day without notice, with the unanimous leave of the House.⁴³ When the member on the Woolsack has called the business, the Lord in charge of the business says: "*Unless any noble Lord objects, I beg to move that X be postponed until after Y*". If this is agreed to, the House proceeds to the next business on the order paper.

3.50 If business is adjourned, the House may without notice make an order for the adjourned business to be taken later on the same day or taken

43 SO 40(3).

first on some specified future day,⁴⁴ subject to the rules governing the order in which categories of business may be taken.

Lunch and dinner breaks

3.51 The main business of the day is often interrupted, usually around 7.30pm, for other business to be taken during the dinner break. On days when the House sits in the morning there may be a lunch break at around 1.30pm. Lunch or dinner break business is marked as such in *House of Lords Business*. Interruptions of this sort may also be announced after oral questions by means of a business statement. At the desired time, a motion is moved that the proceedings be adjourned or, if the House is in committee, that the House be resumed. It is usual at this point for an indication to be given that the main business will not be resumed before a certain time. The House then proceeds to consider the next business on the order paper. If this is disposed of before the time indicated for the resumption of business, the House adjourns ‘during pleasure’⁴⁵ until that time.

3.52 If the intention is simply to interrupt the proceedings for a period without taking any other business, a motion is moved that the House do adjourn during pleasure until a stated time. If the House is in committee, however, the proceedings may, with the consent of the committee, be interrupted without any Question being put. If such an interruption is proposed, and no member of the House objects, the member in the Chair announces:

“The committee stands adjourned until —”.

Motions en bloc

3.53 Certain categories of motion may be moved *en bloc*. This means that a single Question is put and decided. The categories are as follows:

- (a) motions to approve affirmative instruments (see paragraph 10.16);
- (b) motions to reappoint or to fill casual vacancies on select committees (see paragraphs 11.6 and 11.11);
- (c) stages of consolidation bills (see paragraph 8.221); and
- (d) motions to carry over private bills.⁴⁶

44 SO 43.

45 Adjournments ‘during pleasure’ are breaks in a sitting for specified or unspecified periods.

46 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2006–07](#).

3.54 Moving other categories of motion *en bloc* may be authorised by a business of the House motion.

3.55 The following rules apply:

- Notice must be given, by means of an italic note in *House of Lords Business*.
- If a single member objects, the motions must be moved separately to the extent desired.

3.56 For moving amendments and clauses *en bloc*, see paragraphs 8.84, 8.142 and 8.176.

Official Report

3.57 The Official Report, or *Hansard*, is the substantially verbatim record of debates and proceedings in the House and Grand Committee. It is published in three separate parts:

- (a) a record of debates and proceedings in the House, including certain items not spoken in the Chamber that are the subject of formal minute entries relating to the progress of bills, texts of amendments moved, and division lists;
- (b) a record of debates and proceedings in Grand Committee; and
- (c) the text of written statements and of replies to questions for written answer.⁴⁷ The definitive record copy of written statements and replies to questions for written answer is the digital copy which is available online.⁴⁸

3.58 The online version of *Hansard* contains hyperlinks to the electronic texts of various relevant documents, including reports from domestic or select committees, copies of bills or statutory instruments, and other official documents of direct relevance to the debate.

3.59 *Hansard* is produced by an Editor and staff who are accountable to the Clerk of the Parliaments. It is published online throughout the day, approximately three hours behind real time, and a printed version is produced the following day. If the House sits after 2.30am a cut-off time on material published may be imposed, with the remaining business from that sitting appearing in the next daily part. Corrections are made to the online text once published to ensure that it remains accurate and authoritative.

47 SO 42.

48 questions-statements.parliament.uk/

Correction of speeches

3.60 When correcting their speeches, members should not attempt to alter the sense of words spoken by them in debate. Corrections are accepted only when the words that were actually spoken have been incorrectly reported. The procedure for suggesting corrections to be included in the record copy is published on the inside cover of each daily part.⁴⁹

Journals

3.61 The Journals are the permanent official record of the proceedings of the House, compiled from the Minutes of Proceedings. The Journals differ from the Minutes in that they include a daily record of members present, the Letters Patent of peers on introduction, and an index. All copies of the Journals of either House are admitted as evidence by the courts and others.⁵⁰ If required in evidence, a copy or extract of the Journals, authenticated by the Clerk of the Parliaments, may be supplied.

Parliamentary papers

Papers laid before the House

3.62 The Minutes of Proceedings record each day the titles of various documents, or 'papers', presented or laid in the House on that day and also those laid since the last sitting. These papers fall into two main categories:

- (a) papers presented by command of His Majesty on the initiative of a minister of the Crown. These are known as 'Command papers'. The majority are published in a numbered series currently labelled 'CP'. Command papers may be presented at any time during the existence of a Parliament, including non-sitting days, recesses and prorogation; and
- (b) papers laid before the House pursuant to an Act, statutory instrument or Measure. These are known as 'Act papers'. They may be of either a legislative or an executive character, and they may be either subject to a degree of parliamentary control (depending on the provisions of the parent statute) or purely informative.

3.63 Papers may also be laid as Returns to an Order of the House, for example in response to a motion for papers, although this is now rare.

3.64 Certain statutory instruments can be laid when the House is not sitting for public business, namely those instruments (apart from special procedure orders) which are required to be laid before Parliament after being made, but which do not require to be approved by resolution or lie before Parliament for any period before they come into operation.⁵¹ The times when such instruments may be deposited are those shown in the table.

3.65 No papers of any type may be laid during a dissolution of Parliament.

3.66 If it is necessary to bring a statutory instrument into operation before it has been laid before Parliament, the responsible department must submit a notification and explanation to the Lord Speaker.⁵² Their receipt is recorded in the Minutes of the next sitting day's proceedings.

Days when papers may be laid

3.67 Papers may be laid on the days and times set out in the table.

Days when papers may be laid	Time at which papers may be deposited in Printed Paper Office	
	Earliest	Latest
House sitting for public business	9.30am	5pm
Non-sitting day (Monday to Friday)	11am	3pm ⁵³
Prorogation	11am	3pm
Dissolution	Papers may not be laid	

3.68 Departments wishing to lay Command papers or statutory instruments outside these hours must make special arrangements for their receipt with the Printed Paper Office.

⁵¹ SO 70.

⁵² Statutory Instruments Act 1946, s. 4, as amended by Sch. 6 to the Constitutional Reform Act 2005; SO 72.

⁵³ [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2006–07](#).

⁴⁹ Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70.

⁵⁰ Evidence Act 1845, s. 3. The Act does not extend to Scotland.

Entitlement

3.69 Members of the House are entitled to obtain certain papers free of charge from the Printed Paper Office. Details can be found in the *Handbook on facilities and services for members and their staff*.

Public petitions

3.70 Members of the public may petition the House of Lords, but only a member of the House may present a petition. Members of the House should give the following guidance to members of the public who ask them to present petitions on their behalf.

3.71 The presentation of a petition is recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings, and the petition is retained in the Parliamentary Archives for one year. However, no order is made for the petition to be published unless a member of the House puts down a motion to debate it for a designated day; otherwise no action follows.

3.72 Petitions relating to a public bill may be presented at any time during its passage through the House. A petition relating to a bill which has not been before the House, or which has already been rejected by it, cannot be presented.

3.73 A member proposing to present a petition should consult the Journal Office at an early stage.

3.74 Petitions to the House of Lords begin:

“To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, The humble Petition of [names or designation of petitioners] sheweth”.

3.75 The general allegations of the petition follow. The petition ends with what is called a ‘prayer’, setting out what the petitioners desire the House to do. After the prayer are added the words “And your Petitioners will ever pray &c.” followed by the signatures. The petition may be written or printed on paper. At least one signature must be on the same sheet as the petition. The signatures must not be stuck on to the paper. The petition of a corporation should be under its common seal, which must be affixed to the first sheet.

3.76 Members of the House presenting petitions should sign them, and either send them to the Clerk of the Parliaments or hand them in at the

Table.⁵⁴ In either case, having notified the Table in advance, they rise in their place after oral questions and say:

“My Lords, I beg to present a petition from [names or designation], which prays that this House will [the prayer is read out].”

3.77 They may add:

“The petition bears X signatures.”

No speech may be made and no debate follows.

Messages between the two Houses

3.78 A message is the means of formal communication between the two Houses. It is used for sending bills from one House to the other, for informing one House of the agreement or disagreement of the other to bills or amendments, for the exchange of documents, for the setting up of joint committees, to obtain agreement to the suspension of proceedings on legislation from one session to the next, and for other matters on which the two Houses wish to communicate.

3.79 Messages to the Commons are taken by a Lords clerk and handed to the Serjeant at Arms. Messages from the Commons are brought by a Commons clerk to the Bar of the House and presented to the Clerk at the Table. There is no special ceremony for the arrival of a message, and the business of the House proceeds without interruption. Messages are always included in the Minutes of Proceedings but they are read in the Chamber only where some immediate action is to be taken by the House.

3.80 Messages are either ‘substantive’ (i.e. they cause a bill or amendments to be published), or ‘non-substantive’ (all other messages). The House can send and receive a substantive message at any time; if the House is not sitting, material received may be published under SO 49. The House must sit to receive a non-substantive message.

54 SO 75.

Conduct in the House

Self-regulation

4.1 The House is self-regulating: the Lord Speaker has no power to rule on matters of order. In practice this means that the preservation of order and the maintenance of the rules of debate are the responsibility of the House itself, that is, of all the members who are present, and any member may draw attention to breaches of order or failures to observe customs.

4.2 If any member is in doubt about a point of procedure, the Clerk of the Parliaments and other clerks are available to give advice, and members of the House are recommended to consult them.¹

Role of the Leader of the House, whips and Lord Speaker

4.3 The Leader of the House is appointed by the Prime Minister, is a member of the Cabinet, and is responsible for the conduct of government business in the Lords.² Because the Lord Speaker has no powers to rule on matters of procedure, the Leader also advises the House on procedure and order, and is responsible for drawing attention to violations or abuse. The Leader also expresses the sense of the House on certain formal occasions, such as motions of thanks or congratulation. However, like the Lord Speaker, the Leader is endowed with no formal authority.

4.4 The Leader, the Government Chief Whip and their offices are available to assist and advise all members of the House. Members greatly assist the effective conduct of the House's business if they give as much notice as possible to the Leader and the Government Whips' Office whenever they propose to raise any matter on which the Leader's guidance might be required.

4.5 Another minister is usually appointed Deputy Leader of the House. In the Leader's absence, the Deputy Leader takes responsibility for advising the House on matters of procedure and order. In the absence of both of

¹ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1981–82.

² Procedure 2nd Rpt 1981–82; 1st Rpt 1987–88.

them, this responsibility falls to the senior government whip present. The Opposition front benches, and the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers (if present), also have a responsibility to draw attention to breaches of order.

4.6 The role of assisting the House at question time rests with the Leader of the House, not the Lord Speaker.

4.7 At other times of day, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair may assist the House by reminding members of the relevant parts of the *Companion*. Such assistance is limited to procedural advice and is usually given at the start of the business in hand. Assistance may be helpful at other stages when procedural problems arise.³

4.8 The Government Chief Whip advises the House on speaking times in debates. Reinforcing such time limits is handled by the front benches rather than the Lord Speaker, and any member can draw such advice to the attention of the House. Timed debates are brought to an end (if necessary) by the Lord Speaker on an indication from the Clerk at the Table.⁴

4.9 Interventions, in particular those calling attention to the failure of an individual member to comply with the practice of the House, for example when arguments deployed in committee are repeated at length on report, may come from the front benches or other members. Such interventions would not normally come from the Lord Speaker.

4.10 As indicated in paragraphs 1.53–1.55, the Lord Speaker’s function in the House is to assist, and not to rule. They observe the same formalities as any other member of the House, addressing the House as a whole, and not an individual member, and not intervening when a member is on their feet save to call on the next business as necessary. The House does not recognise points of order. Any advice or assistance given by the Lord Speaker is subject to the view of the House as a whole.⁵

Conduct in the House

4.11 When the House is sitting, all members should on entering the Chamber bow to the Cloth of Estate behind the Throne.⁶ It is not the

3 [Report of the Select Committee on the Speakership of the House, 2005–06](#), paragraph 17.

4 SO 36.

5 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2005–06](#).

6 SO 19(2).

practice to do so on leaving. Members also bow to the Mace in procession, as a symbol of the authority of the Sovereign. All bows are made with the head and not the body.

4.12 SO 19(1) declares that members of the House “are to keep dignity and order, and not to remove out of their places without just cause, to the hindrance of others that sit near them, and the disorder of the House”. In practice, this means that members:

- must not move about the Chamber while a Question is being put from the Woolsack or the Chair;
- must not pass between the Woolsack or the Chair and any member who is speaking;
- must not pass between the Woolsack and the Table;⁷ and
- must leave the Chamber quietly at the end of question time.

4.13 If members wish to speak to other members while the House is sitting, they should leave the Chamber. Members should not hold conversations in the space behind the Woolsack.⁸

4.14 Unless they are disabled, members of the House must speak standing, except by permission of the House.⁹ Members who need temporary dispensation to speak from their seat should inform the clerks in advance.

4.15 Lords Spiritual wear robes of rochet and chimere in the Chamber, except if sitting on the steps of the Throne. They are expected to wear robes whenever possible in the division lobby.¹⁰

4.16 Lords Spiritual must speak from the Bishops’ benches, and no Lord Temporal may speak from there.¹¹

4.17 No-one may speak from the gangways in the House.

4.18 Members address their speech to the House in general and not to any individual.¹² Thus the expressions used are: “*Your Lordships*”, “*Your Lordships’ House*” and “*the noble Lord*”, and not “*you*”.

7 Procedure 3rd Rpt 1995–96.

8 SO 20.

9 SO 25.

10 Procedure 3rd Rpt 1990–91.

11 See paragraph 1.68.

12 SO 26.

4.19 Members should not bring into the Chamber:

- books and newspapers (except for papers specifically related to the debate);
- unopened correspondence; or
- briefcases and ministerial boxes.¹³

4.20 Exhibits should not be taken into the Chamber or produced in debate, whether to illustrate a speech or for any other purpose.

Use of electronic devices

4.21 Members and officials may use small electronic devices in the Chamber and Grand Committee for any purpose, provided that they are silent and are used with discretion.¹⁴ Members making speeches may refer to electronic devices, subject to the rule against reading speeches (see paragraph 4.44).

4.22 Electronic devices may be used silently in select committee meetings, subject to the discretion of the Chair of the committee on a meeting-by-meeting basis.¹⁵

Relevance

4.23 Debate must be relevant to the Question before the House; and where more than one Question has been put, for example on an amendment, the debate must be relevant to the last Question proposed until it has been disposed of.¹⁶

Order of speaking

4.24 When two or more members rise to speak, the House determines who is to speak. This may, if necessary, be decided upon a motion that one of the members “be now heard”. It is customary for speakers from different parties or parts of the House to take turns.

Speakers' lists

4.25 For most debates, a list of speakers is issued by the Government Whips' Office¹⁷ and published online.¹⁸ Hard copies are also available from that Office, from the Printed Paper Office, the Royal Gallery, the Prince's Chamber and Peers' Lobby. This list is drawn up after consultation through the usual channels. Members wishing to speak should put their names on the speakers' list at any time before 6pm, two working days before the item of business is to be taken (4pm if that day is a Friday). If a speakers' list has been open for less than a sitting day, the list closes at 12 noon on the day of the debate.¹⁹ Members should remove their names from the list if they become aware in advance that they are unlikely to be able to stay until the end of a debate (see paragraph 4.32).

4.26 Any member whose name is not on the published list may still take part, if time allows, by speaking ‘in the gap’; that is, before the winding-up speeches. They should inform the Table of their wish to do so, and have their name added in manuscript to the list. Any such speaker is expected to be brief (not longer than four minutes each or, in debates with a speaking limit of less than four minutes, not longer than that limit),²⁰ and should not take up time allotted to the winding up speeches (for which see paragraph 6.68). Members speaking in the gap are subject to the same rules on attendance at debate as members whose names are included in the speakers list.

4.27 It is not in order for a member to speak after the mover of a motion or an amendment has exercised their right of reply, except when the House is in committee.²¹ It is not in order for members to continue the debate on a motion or a question for short debate after the Government's reply has been given, save for questions to the minister ‘before the minister sits down’.²²

4.28 When at the end of a debate the Question has been put, no member may speak.²³

¹⁷ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1966–67; 2nd Rpt 1971–72.

¹⁸ <https://www.lordswhips.org.uk/speakers-lists>

¹⁹ Procedure 4th Rpt 2013–14.

²⁰ Procedure 3rd Rpt 1995–96.

²¹ Procedure 1st Rpt 1978–79.

²² Procedure 1st Rpt 1977–78.

²³ SO 28.

¹³ Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70.

¹⁴ [Administration and Works Committee 2nd Rpt 2010–12.](#)

¹⁵ [Administration and Works Committee 2nd Rpt 2010–12.](#)

¹⁶ SO 27.

Interruption of speeches

4.29 A member of the House who is speaking may be interrupted with a brief question for clarification. Giving way accords with the traditions and customary courtesy of the House. It is, however, recognised that a member may justifiably refuse to give way, for instance when moving an amendment or motion, or in the middle of an argument, or to repeated interruption, or in time-limited proceedings when time is short. Lengthy or frequent interventions should not be made, even with the consent of the member speaking.

Speaking more than once

4.30 No member may speak more than once on any motion, except the mover in reply, or a member who has obtained the leave of the House. Such leave may be granted only to:

- a member to explain a material point of their speech, without introducing any new subject matter;
- the Senior Deputy Speaker, or in their absence a Deputy Chairman, and the Chair of a select committee on the report of such a committee; or
- a minister of the Crown.

4.31 When the House is in committee there is no restriction on the number of times a member may speak.²⁴

Attendance at debate

4.32 A member of the House who is taking part in a debate (including general debates and debates on amendments or motions) should attend the start, end and greater part of that debate.²⁵ In addition, it is considered discourteous for members not to be present for at least the opening speeches, the speeches before and after their own, and for the winding-up speeches. Ministers may decide not to answer, orally or in writing, points made by a speaker who does not stay to hear the minister's closing speech.

24 SO 29.

25 Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70; 1st Rpt 1987–88; 3rd Rpt 1995–96; [1st Rpt 1998–99](#); [1st Rpt 2002–03](#).

Each day of a debate on the King's Speech is treated as a separate debate and thus a member who is taking part in the debate on any given day should be present for at least the opening speeches, the speeches before and after their own, and for the winding-up speeches on that day.

Members who believe that they are unlikely to be able to stay to the end of a debate should not seek to participate in it (and if the debate has a speakers' list, should remove their names from the list).

4.33 It follows from the preceding paragraph that a member who is unable to be present at a debate should not seek to have their speech read by another member; nor should members read speeches on behalf of other members who are not present at a debate.

4.34 There are reasons for these customs. Members who have missed the speeches before their own will not know what has already been said and so points may be repeated or missed. Members who leave soon after speaking are lacking in courtesy to others, who may wish to question, or reply to, points they have raised. Debate may degenerate into a series of set speeches if speakers do not attend throughout.

4.35 It is, however, recognised that some members may have commitments related to the committee work of the House which may prevent them from being able to attend as much of the debate as might otherwise be expected.

Virtual participation by disabled members

4.36 Members who are physically unable to attend the House on grounds of long-term disability may apply²⁶ for 'eligible member status'. If this is granted they may participate either in person or virtually in proceedings in the Chamber or in Grand Committee.²⁷

4.37 Virtual participation is subject to certain constraints. Eligible members may choose to participate virtually in all business of which there is sufficient notice:

- (a) in business with a speakers' list, eligible members should indicate that they wish to take part remotely when signing-up to speak;
- (b) in business without a speakers' list, eligible members should indicate their wish to take part remotely by a time agreed by the usual channels the previous working day.

26 Applications for eligible member status are considered and decided by the Additional Support Group, appointed by the Commission.

27 SO 24A.

4.38 Eligible disabled members who have given notice of their wish to intervene in oral questions, and, where there is sufficient notice to allow virtual participation, oral statements or repeated urgent questions are called on by the Lord Speaker at an appropriate point. This means that backbench remote participants, like those who are physically present, are not guaranteed an opportunity to speak, though it is expected that the sense of the House, assisted by the Leader of the House, will support their continuing full participation.²⁸ In other business with no speakers' list, there is a fixed point at which eligible members participating remotely are called by the member on the Woolsack.²⁹

4.39 Eligible members may vote electronically or by telephone whether on or off the parliamentary estate.³⁰

Length of speeches

4.40 The House has resolved "That speeches in this House should be shorter".³¹ Long speeches can create boredom and tend to kill debate.

4.40A In debates at all stages on public bills other than second reading, all members opening or winding are expected to keep within 15 minutes, with the exception of ministers winding up who are expected to keep within 20 minutes. Other speakers are expected to keep within 10 minutes.

4.41 In other debates where there are no formal time limits,³² members opening or winding up, from either side, are expected to keep within 20 minutes. Other speakers are expected to keep within 15 minutes, but shorter advisory limits may be adopted for backbench speakers (including those moving an amendment to a motion), with a view to managing the business on a given day. Such advisory limits are advertised on Today's List and the annunciators.

4.41A The limits described in the preceding paragraphs are guidelines. The House expects them to be observed, but on occasion a speech of outstanding importance, or a ministerial speech winding up a long debate, may exceed them.

28 Procedure and Privileges [4th](#) and [5th](#) Rpts 2021–22.

29 [Procedure and Privileges 1st Rpt 2021–22](#).

30 See paragraph 7.11 (chapter 7).

31 LJ (1964–65) 386.

32 For length of speeches in time-limited proceedings see paragraph 6.68; in questions for short debate see paragraph 6.47.

4.42 Clocks are installed under the galleries to time the length of speeches. The clocks are used principally to record:

- the length of speeches in all debates except debates on delegated legislation where there is no speakers' list;
- the total time taken for oral questions and debates on delegated legislation where there is no speakers' list; and
- for ministerial statements, the length of the statement itself, the frontbench exchanges and the backbench exchanges.³³

4.43 During debates in which speeches are time-limited, the clock display changes colour and flashes when a time limit or an advisory speaking time on a speech has been reached.

Reading of speeches

4.44 The House has resolved that the reading of speeches is "alien to the custom of this House, and injurious to the traditional conduct of its debates".³⁴ It is acknowledged, however, that on some occasions, for example ministerial statements, it is necessary to read from a prepared text. In practice, some speakers may wish to have 'extended notes' from which to speak, but it is not in the interests of good debate that they should follow them closely.³⁵

Languages other than English

4.45 Languages other than English should not be used in debate, except where necessary. The use of the Welsh language is permitted for the purpose of committee proceedings held in Wales.³⁶ Committees may take oral evidence in another language, or in British Sign Language (BSL), through interpretation; and accept written evidence originating in another language or BSL if accompanied by a translation into English.³⁷ Such an approach should be adopted only when the alternative would be to lose the opportunity to hear key evidence.

33 Procedure 6th Rpt 1971–72; 1st Rpt 1982–83.

34 LJ (1935–36) 241.

35 Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70; 4th Rpt 1992–93.

36 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2008–09](#).

37 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2015–16](#).

Reference to visitors

4.46 It is not customary for visitors to be referred to, whether in the public gallery or in any other part of the Chamber, except for the purpose of a motion for the withdrawal of all visitors.³⁸

Speaking on behalf of outside interests

4.47 When speaking in the House, members speak for themselves and not on behalf of outside interests. They may indicate that an outside body agrees with the substance of their views but they should not read out extended briefing material from such bodies.³⁹

References in debate to the House of Commons

References to the House of Commons and its members

4.48 The House of Commons may be referred to by name, rather than as “*the other place*” or “*another place*”.

4.49 Members of the House of Commons are referred to by their names, and not by reference to their constituencies.⁴⁰ Ministers may be referred to by their ministerial titles. Additional descriptions such as “*Right Honourable*”, “*Honourable*” and “*Learned*” are not used, except when referring to ministerial or party colleagues in the House of Commons as “*Right Honourable*” or “*Honourable*” friends.

Personal criticism of members of the House of Commons

4.50 No member of the House of Commons should be mentioned by name, or otherwise identified, for the purpose of criticism of a personal, rather than a political, nature. Public activities by members of the House of Commons outside their parliamentary duties may be referred to.

Criticism of Commons proceedings

4.51 Criticism of proceedings in the House of Commons or of Commons Speaker’s rulings is out of order, but criticism may be made of the institutional structure of Parliament or the role and function of the House of

Commons (see also paragraphs 6.20 and 6.22, in relation to the wording of questions).

Maiden speeches⁴¹

4.52 It is usual for a member making a maiden speech not to be interrupted and to be congratulated by the next speaker only,⁴² on behalf of the whole House, plus the front benches if they wish.⁴³ It is therefore expected that a member making a maiden speech will do so in a debate with a speakers’ list, so that the House may know that the conventional courtesies apply. In return, the maiden speaker is expected to be short (within the advisory speaking time or, if there is none, less than 10 minutes) and uncontroversial. The maiden speaker should refrain from expressing views in terms that would ordinarily provoke interruption. Maiden speeches are marked as such in the Official Report.⁴⁴

4.53 Members of the House who have not yet made their maiden speech may not table oral questions or questions for short debate, or introduce bills, table amendments or add their name to amendments, but they may table questions for written answer and act as a supporter for an introduction.

Conduct in the House during maiden speeches

4.54 When a maiden speech is being made, and during the following speaker’s congratulations, members of the House are expected to remain in their seats and not leave the Chamber. Those entering the Chamber are expected to remain by the steps of the Throne or below the Bar.

Valedictory speeches⁴⁵

4.55 A member who has given written notice of their resignation under section 1 of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014 may make a valedictory speech before the resignation takes effect. Such speeches are subject to the same guidance, and attract the same courtesies, as maiden speeches. Valedictory speeches are marked in the Official Report.

41 Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70.

42 In a time-limited debate, no extra time is allocated to the speaker following a maiden speech.

43 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2006–07](#).

44 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2013–14](#).

45 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2014–15](#).

38 Procedure 1st Rpt 1980–81.

39 Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70; 4th Rpt 1992–93.

40 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1991–92; 1st Rpt 1992–93.

Appellations⁴⁶

4.56 The proper ways of referring to other members of the House in debate are given in the table below. There is no need to include the name of the member being referred to if their identity is clear from the context.

4.57 When any peer who has a higher title than that by virtue of which they sit in Parliament is named in any record of proceedings of the House or of a committee, the higher title alone is used. When such a peer takes the oath of allegiance, the title or dignity by which they sit in Parliament is added in brackets.⁴⁷

Member	Appellation
Archbishop of the Church of England	"the most reverend Primate, the Archbishop of ..."
Bishop of the Church of England	"the right reverend Prelate, the Bishop of ..."
Duke	"the noble Duke, the Duke of ..."
Marquess	"the noble Marquess, Lord ..."
Earl	"the noble Earl, Lord ..."
Countess	"the noble Countess, Lady ..."
Viscount	"the noble Viscount, Lord ..."
Baron	"the noble Lord, Lord ..."
Baroness or Lady	"the noble Baroness, Lady ..." or "the noble Lady, Lady ..."
Members with rank of Admiral of the Fleet, Field Marshal or Marshal of the Royal Air Force, members who have held the office of Chief of the Defence Staff, and holders of the Victoria or George Cross	"the noble and gallant ..." (service rank is not referred to) ¹
Law Officers of the Crown, judges of superior courts in the United Kingdom (High Court and above), ² former holders of these offices or former Lords of Appeal ³	"the noble and learned ..."

Archbishops of other churches who are members of the House	"the noble and most reverend ..."
Bishops of other churches who are members of the House	"the noble and right reverend ..."
Former archbishops or bishops who are members of the House	"the noble and right reverend ..." ¹⁴
Fellow member of a party or group	"my noble friend" (instead of one of the above descriptions)
Relatives	"my noble kinsman/kinswoman ..." or "my noble relative ..." (precise relationship is not mentioned)

1. Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70; 2nd Rpt 1988–89.

2. Procedure 1st Rpt 1964–65; 1st Rpt 1969–70.

3. As defined in the Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876. The Act was repealed with effect from 1 October 2009, but members who formerly fell within the definition of "Lord of Appeal" under that Act remain entitled to the appellation "noble and learned".

4. Procedure 1st Rpt 1974–75.

Personally insulting and offensive speeches (SO 31)

4.58 When debate becomes heated, it is open to any member of the House to move "*that the Standing Order on Personally insulting and offensive speeches be read by the Clerk*". Standing Order 31 can be read only on a motion agreed to by the House, and this motion is debatable. The motion is rare.⁴⁸

"That the noble Lord be no longer heard"

4.59 If in a speech a member is thought to be seriously transgressing the practice of the House, it is open to another member to move "that the noble Lord be no longer heard". It is not necessary for there to be a Question before the House before this motion is moved. The motion, however, is very rare; it is debatable and seldom needs to be decided on Question since members generally conform to the sense of the House as soon as this sense becomes clear.⁴⁹

48 The last time such a motion was moved was 10 March 1998 (HL Deb. col. 167).

49 The last time that a member moved "*That the noble Lord be no longer heard*" was 15 July 2011 (HL Deb. col. 1031).

46 Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70.

47 SO 7.

4.60 The effect of agreeing to this motion is to prohibit the member in question from speaking further on the Question before the House which was being debated, but not on any subsequent Question.

The next business motion

4.61 A member who does not wish the House to record an opinion on a motion may, at any time during the course of the debate once the Question has been put, move “*That the House do proceed to the next business*”.⁵⁰ Use of this motion is very rare and any member who intends to move it is encouraged to give notice.

4.62 A next business motion supersedes the original motion before the House and, if it is agreed to, the Question on the original motion is not put, and the debate ends. If it is disagreed to, the debate on the original motion is resumed and the Question is put in the usual way.

4.63 The next business motion is debatable and, since it cannot be debated without reference to the original motion, the subject matter of both motions may be debated together.

4.64 The next business motion is not allowed on an amendment; although, after an amendment has been agreed to, it may be moved on the original motion as amended. It may not be moved in any committee of the House.

Closure⁵¹

4.65 The Closure, that is, the motion “*that the Question be now put*”, is not debatable and so requires an immediate conclusion. It can only be moved once the Question on the motion before the House has been put for the first time. If carried, it compels the House at once to come to a decision on the original motion. It should be an exceptional procedure,⁵² so when a member seeks to move the Closure, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair draws attention to its seriousness, and gives the member concerned the opportunity to reconsider, by reading the following paragraph to the House before the Question is put:

50 Procedure 5th Rpt 1971–72.

51 Procedure 1st Rpt 1960–61; 6th Rpt 1970–71.

52 Although it was used six times on 4 September 2019, during a debate on a business of the House motion tabled by the Leader of the Opposition.

[To be read slowly] “*I am instructed by order of the House to say that it will only accept the motion “That the Question be now put” in circumstances where it is felt to be the only means of ensuring the proper conduct of the business of the House; further, if a member who seeks to move it persists in his intention, the practice of the House is that the Question on the motion is put without debate.*”

4.66 If the member of the House who is seeking to move the Closure persists, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair must put and complete the Question forthwith without debate, in the following terms: “The Question is that the Question be now put.”

4.67 If the Closure is carried:

- (a) the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair remains standing after announcing the result and immediately puts and completes the original Question without further debate;
- (b) the original motion cannot be withdrawn because the House has decided that the Question be now put; and
- (c) the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair may not put any other Question until the original Question has been disposed of.

Sub judice

4.68 The privilege of freedom of speech in Parliament places a corresponding duty on members to use the freedom responsibly. This is the basis of the *sub judice* rule. Under the rule both Houses abstain from discussing the merits of disputes about to be tried and decided in the courts of law.

4.69 The House of Lords adopted a resolution on *sub judice* on 11 May 2000. The resolution, as amended, is as follows:

“That, subject to the discretion of the Lord Speaker,⁵³ and to the right of the House to legislate on any matter or to discuss any delegated legislation, the House in all its proceedings (including proceedings of committees of the House) shall apply the following rules on matters *sub judice*:

53 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2006–07](#).

- (1) Cases in which proceedings are active in United Kingdom courts shall not be referred to in any motion, debate or question.
- (a) (i) Criminal proceedings are active when a charge has been made or a summons to appear has been issued, or, in Scotland, a warrant to cite has been granted.
- (ii) Criminal proceedings cease to be active when they are concluded by a verdict and sentence or discontinuance, or, in cases dealt with by courts martial, after the conclusion of the mandatory post-trial review.
- (b) (i) Civil proceedings are active when arrangements for the hearing, such as setting down a case for trial,⁵⁴ have been made, until the proceedings are ended by judgment or discontinuance.
- (ii) Any application made in or for the purposes of any civil proceedings shall be treated as a distinct proceeding.
- (c) Appellate proceedings, whether criminal or civil, are active from the time when they are commenced by application for leave to appeal or by notice of appeal until ended by judgment or discontinuance.

But where a ministerial decision is in question,⁵⁵ or in the opinion of the Lord Speaker a case concerns issues of national importance such as the economy, public order or the essential services, reference to the issues or the case may be made in motions, debates or questions.

- (2) Specific matters which the House has expressly referred to any judicial body for decision and report shall not be referred to in any motion, debate or question, from the time when the Resolution of the House is passed, until the report is laid before the House.

54 There is no longer a procedure of 'setting down' a case for trial in civil procedure. Civil proceedings are now considered active when a date for a hearing has been fixed.

55 This covers a judicial review in which a minister is the defendant.

- (3) For the purposes of this Resolution—
- (a) matters before Coroners Courts or Fatal Accident Inquiries shall be treated as matters within paragraph (1)(a); and
- (b) “question” includes a supplementary question.”⁵⁶

4.70 The House has agreed that the practice governing motions and questions relating to matters *sub judice* should be similar in both Houses of Parliament.⁵⁷ It is desirable that each House should be in the same position to debate a *sub judice* matter when the circumstances warrant it.

4.71 The rules governing *sub judice* do not apply to bills, Measures or delegated legislation or to proceedings on them. Nor do they apply to matters being considered by departmental inquiries and the like; but it is recognised that Parliament should not generally intervene in matters where the decision has been delegated to others by Parliament itself.

4.72 The Lord Speaker must be given at least 24 hours' notice of any proposal to refer to a matter which is *sub judice*. The exercise of the Lord Speaker's discretion may not be challenged in the House.⁵⁸

4.73 Members should also respect United Kingdom court orders which are no longer *sub judice* and should be careful that in exercising their undoubted right to free speech in Parliament they have due regard to the relationship between Parliament and the courts. The clerks are available to give advice. Members should also bear in mind their personal responsibility to respect the provisions of primary legislation.

Ministerial accountability

4.74 The House has resolved that the following principles should govern the conduct of ministers of the Crown in relation to Parliament:

- (1) ministers have a duty to Parliament to account, and be held to account, for the policies, decisions and actions of their departments and executive agencies;
- (2) it is of paramount importance that ministers should give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any

56 LJ (1999–2000) 389.

57 Procedure 1st Rpt 1963–64.

58 Procedure 1st Rpt 1994–95; [Report of the Select Committee on the Speakership of the House of Lords, HL Paper 92, 2005–06.](#)

inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister;

- (3) ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest;
- (4) ministers should require civil servants who give evidence before parliamentary committees on their behalf and under their directions to be as helpful as possible in providing accurate, truthful and full information; and
- (5) the interpretation of “public interest” in paragraph (3) shall be decided in accordance with statute and the Government’s *Code of Practice on Access to Government Information*;⁵⁹ and compliance with the duty in paragraph (4) shall be in accordance with the duties and responsibilities of civil servants set out in the *Civil Service Code*.⁶⁰

Members and employees of public boards

4.75 Members of the House of Lords who are members of, or employed by, public boards, executive agencies or other public bodies,⁶¹ whether commercial or non-commercial in character, are not by reason of such membership debarred from exercising their right to speak in the House of Lords, even on matters affecting the bodies with which they are associated; and it is recognised that, in the last resort, only the members concerned can decide whether they can properly speak on a particular occasion.⁶² Such members are subject to the normal rules on registration and declaration of interests (see paragraph 5.1).

4.76 The following guidance (known as the ‘Addison Rules’), based upon that given in 1951 by the then Leader of the House, Viscount Addison, after consultation and agreement between the parties, may be helpful to

members of the House who are considering whether or not to take part in a particular debate.⁶³

- (a) when questions affecting public boards⁶⁴ arise in Parliament, the Government alone are responsible to Parliament. The duty of reply cannot devolve upon members of public boards who happen to be members of the House of Lords;
- (b) it is important that, except where otherwise provided, public boards should be free to conduct their day-to-day administration without the intervention of Parliament or ministers. If board members who happen also to be members of the House of Lords were to give the House information about the day-to-day operations of the board or to answer criticism respecting it, the House would in fact be exercising a measure of parliamentary supervision over matters of management. It would also be difficult for the responsible minister not to give similar information to the House of Commons;
- (c) there is no duty upon board members to speak in any debate or to answer questions put to them in debate. Nor should the fact that a member spoke in a particular debate be regarded as a precedent for that member or any other member to speak in any other debate; and
- (d) the foregoing applies only to debates relating to public boards. Experience acquired as a member of a public board will often be relevant to general debates in which the same considerations do not arise, and the contributions of board members who are members of the House may be all the more valuable because of that experience.

59 This Code was superseded by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and had no effect after 1 January 2005.

60 HL Deb. 20 March 1997, cols 1055–62; LJ (1996–97) 404.

61 This general term is deemed to include non-departmental public bodies, non-ministerial government departments and executive agencies.

62 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1970–71.

63 HL Deb. 21 March 1951, col. 1241.

64 The outdated term “public board” should be deemed to include non-departmental public bodies, non-ministerial government departments and executive agencies.

CHAPTER 5

Members' conduct

5.1 Members' conduct in the course of their parliamentary duties is governed by a Code of Conduct, and an accompanying Guide to the Code of Conduct.¹ The full text of the Code is as follows:

Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords

Introduction

1. The House of Lords is the second chamber of the United Kingdom Parliament. As a constituent part of Parliament, the House of Lords makes laws, holds government to account and debates issues of public interest.
2. Membership of the House is not an office and does not constitute employment; most members' primary employment is or has been outside Parliament. In discharging their parliamentary duties members of the House of Lords draw substantially on experience and expertise gained outside Parliament.
3. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is:
 - (a) to provide guidance for members of the House of Lords on the standards of conduct expected of them in the discharge of their parliamentary duties. Save for paragraphs 18 to 25, the Code does not extend to members' performance of duties unrelated to parliamentary proceedings, or to their private lives. Paragraph 18 sets out the standards of conduct required of members in their treatment of those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities, whether on the parliamentary estate or elsewhere.
 - (b) to provide the openness and accountability necessary to reinforce public confidence in the way in which members of the House of Lords perform their parliamentary duties.

¹ See <http://www.parliament.uk/hl-code>.

4. Members are to sign an undertaking to abide by the Code as part of the ceremony of taking the oath upon introduction and at the start of each Parliament.
5. This Code applies to all members of the House of Lords who have taken the oath and signed the undertaking in that Parliament and are not either:
 - (a) on leave of absence;
 - (b) suspended from the service of the House; or
 - (c) statutorily disqualified from active membership.

However, when on the parliamentary estate or using the facilities or services of Parliament, all current and retired members are subject to the provisions on (i) bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct and (ii) the use of facilities and services, regardless of their membership status. All current members are also subject to the provisions on imprisonment.

6. The Lord Speaker, the Senior Deputy Speaker and the Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees are subject to the Code of Conduct in the same way as all other members of the House and, in order to avoid any perception of conflict of interest, are also subject to additional requirements. They are expected, during their period in office, to lay aside any financial interests falling within categories 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8, as defined in the Guide to the Code of Conduct. A candidate for office may ask the Conduct Committee for a derogation from these rules in exceptional circumstances to enable them to retain an interest or interests in one or more of these categories. The Committee may grant a derogation if it deems that requiring the member to give up the interest in question (a) is not necessary for them to perform the office effectively and impartially and (b) would in all the circumstances also be disproportionate. Interests held by an office-holder's spouse or partner are subject to the same requirements as interests held by the spouse or partner of any other member of the House.

General principles

7. By virtue of their oath, or affirmation, of allegiance, members of the House have a duty to be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty The King, His heirs and successors, according to law.
8. In the performance of their parliamentary duties, members of the House shall base their actions on consideration of the public interest, and shall

resolve any conflict between their personal interest and the public interest at once, and in favour of the public interest.

9. Members of the House:
 - (a) must comply with the Code of Conduct;
 - (b) should act always on their personal honour in the performance of their parliamentary duties and activities;
 - (c) must never accept or agree to accept any financial inducement as an incentive or reward for exercising parliamentary influence;
 - (d) must not seek to profit from membership of the House by accepting or agreeing to accept payment or other incentive or reward in return for providing parliamentary advice or services.
10. Members of the House should observe the seven general principles of conduct identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. These principles will be taken into consideration when any allegation of breaches of the provisions in other sections of the Code is under investigation and should act as a guide to members in considering the requirement to act always on their personal honour:
 - (a) *Selflessness*: holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
 - (b) *Integrity*: holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
 - (c) *Objectivity*: holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
 - (d) *Accountability*: holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
 - (e) *Openness*: holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

- (f) *Honesty*: holders of public office should be truthful.
 - (g) *Leadership*: holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.
11. Members of the House should observe the principles set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code of respect, professionalism, understanding others' perspectives, courtesy, and acceptance of responsibility. These principles will be taken into consideration when any allegation of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is under investigation.

Rules of conduct

12. In order to assist in openness and accountability members shall:
- (a) register in the Register of Lords' Interests all relevant interests, in order to make clear what are the interests that might reasonably be thought to influence their parliamentary actions;
 - (b) declare when speaking in the House, or communicating with ministers or public servants, any interest which is a relevant interest in the context of the debate or the matter under discussion;
 - (c) act in accordance with any rules agreed by the House in respect of financial support for members or the facilities of the House.
13. The test of relevant interest is whether the interest might be thought by a reasonable member of the public to influence the way in which a member of the House of Lords discharges his or her parliamentary duties: in the case of registration, the member's parliamentary duties in general; in the case of declaration, his or her duties in respect of the particular matter under discussion.
14. The test of relevant interest is therefore not whether a member's actions in Parliament will be influenced by the interest, but whether a reasonable member of the public might think that this would be the case. Relevant interests include both financial and non-financial interests.
15. Members are responsible for ensuring that their registered interests are accurate and up-to-date. They should register any change in their relevant interests within one month of the change.

16. A member must not seek by parliamentary means to confer exclusive benefit on an outside body or person (a) in which he or she has a financial interest (including by way of salary, fees, shareholding or other arrangement) or (b) in return for payment or reward.
17. Members are not otherwise debarred from participating in proceedings in regard to which they possess relevant interests, financial or non-financial; but such interests should be declared fully. In participating in such proceedings they shall resolve any conflict between their personal interest and the public interest at once, and in favour of the public interest.
18. Members are required to treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities (including parliamentary proceedings) with respect and courtesy. Behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of this Code.
19. New members must, within three months of introduction, arrange to attend one of the seminars established by the House to raise awareness of, and to prevent, bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. In addition, members returning from Leave of Absence or disqualification who have not previously attended such a seminar must, within three months of their return, arrange to do so. A failure to arrange to attend a seminar within the specified period is a breach of this Code.
20. Members must, within 10 working days of being notified by the relevant authority, inform the Clerk of the Parliaments if they are:
- arrested in connection with a criminal offence;
 - charged with a criminal offence;
 - placed under investigation by a body which regulates the occupation which they practise; or
 - placed under investigation for an alleged breach of the Ministerial Code.
21. Members must, within 10 working days of being notified by the relevant authority, inform the Clerk of the Parliaments if they are:
- convicted of a criminal offence;
 - found in breach of rules governing the occupation which they practise; or
 - found in breach of the Ministerial Code.

22. If either paragraph 20 or 21 applies, members who are the subject of an investigation under this Code must also so inform the Commissioner for Standards either at the start of the Code investigation or, if the external investigation begins after the Commissioner has launched their own investigation, as soon as possible.
23. Members must inform the Chair of the Conduct Committee if they receive a sentence of imprisonment, suspended or not, within 10 working days of the sentence being handed down.
24. A member sentenced to imprisonment in the United Kingdom, whether the sentence is suspended or not, shall be deemed to have breached the Code. If the sentence does not engage the provisions of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014, a case shall be referred to the Conduct Committee for it to recommend a sanction.
25. A member sentenced to imprisonment outside the United Kingdom, whether the sentence is suspended or not, shall be presumed to have breached the Code; such a case shall be referred to the Conduct Committee for it to consider whether the presumption should apply in that case and, if it should, for the Committee to recommend a sanction.

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct

26. House of Lords Commissioners for Standards are appointed to investigate alleged breaches of this Code, or of the rules governing members' financial support or use of parliamentary facilities. Commissioners decide on alleged breaches independently of one another. Any investigation is conducted in accordance with procedures set out in the Guide to the Code of Conduct, and during the investigation the member must adhere to any restrictions on their access to the facilities and services of the House which the Commissioner may impose. The Commissioner may also inform the complainant and the relevant senior managers of any such restrictions.
27. After investigation the Commissioner makes a report of their findings. If the member is found not to have breached the Code, or if the member and the Commissioner have agreed remedial action, the report is normally published only on the Commissioner's webpages. The Commissioner may make it a condition of any agreement on remedial action which includes training that the member must adhere to specific restrictions on their access to the facilities and services of

the House until the training is complete, and the member must adhere to any such restrictions so agreed. The Commissioner may inform the relevant senior managers of any such restrictions. The Commissioner has discretion to submit a report on cases resolved through remedial action to the Conduct Committee. If the member is found to have breached the Code and remedial action is inappropriate or has not been agreed, the Commissioner's report including any recommended sanction goes to the Conduct Committee. The member concerned has a right of appeal to the Conduct Committee against the Commissioner's findings and any recommended sanction. In a case of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, the complainant has a right of appeal to the Conduct Committee against the Commissioner's findings.

28. The Conduct Committee, having considered any appeal, and having agreed any appropriate sanction, reports its conclusions to the House. For the most serious sanctions, the final decision rests with the House.
29. In assessing, investigating, and adjudicating allegations of non-compliance with this Code, the Commissioner and the Conduct Committee shall:
 - (a) recognise as a primary consideration the constitutional principle of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings, including but not limited to the need for members to be able to express their views fully and frankly in parliamentary proceedings;
 - (b) act in accordance with the principles of natural justice and fairness.
30. Members shall co-operate, at all stages, with any investigation into their conduct, or that of any member of staff they sponsor, by or under the authority of the House.
31. No member shall lobby a member of the Conduct Committee in a manner calculated or intended to influence their consideration of a complaint of a breach of this Code.

Advice and review

32. The operation of the Register is overseen by the Conduct Committee, assisted by the Registrar of Lords' Interests. The Registrar is available to advise members of the House, and may consult the Committee when necessary.

33. A member who acts on the advice of the Registrar in determining what is a relevant interest satisfies fully the requirements of the Code of Conduct in that regard. However, the final responsibility for deciding whether or not to participate in proceedings to which that interest is relevant rests with the member concerned. A member who realises that he or she has failed to register or declare a relevant interest should contact the Registrar for advice.
34. The Conduct Committee keeps the Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Code of Conduct under regular review. Recommended changes are reported to the House and take effect when agreed by the House.

Revisions to the Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Code of Conduct

5.2 The operation and wording of the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Code of Conduct are kept under review by the Conduct Committee. The Code and Guide have been agreed by resolution of the House, and are binding upon members. Any changes to the Code and Guide must therefore be reported to the House and no changes can take effect until agreed by the House. Copies of the up-to-date text of the Code and Guide are available online, from the Printed Paper Office or from the Registrar of Lords' Interests. The Registrar is available to advise members on the rules governing members' conduct.

Enforcement

5.3 The procedure for investigating complaints is set out in full in the Guide to the Code of Conduct. In summary, responsibility for investigating alleged breaches of the Code rests with the House of Lords Commissioners for Standards, who are independent officers appointed by the House as a whole. Each complaint is investigated by one Commissioner only. Following their investigation, the Commissioner makes a report of their findings of fact and offers their own conclusion on whether the Code has been breached. If the Commissioner finds a member to have breached the Code, and remedial action is inappropriate or has not been agreed, then they make recommendations to the Conduct Committee on any sanction that should be applied. The Conduct Committee considers the Commissioner's report and any recommended sanction, together with any appeal by the member against the finding or the proposed sanction. In cases of alleged bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, the complainant also has the right to

appeal against the Commissioner's finding. Having heard any appeal, the Conduct Committee reports to the House. The agreement of the House is required if a serious sanction is proposed.² In such cases, the report and the resolution relating to sanction are decided without debate.³

Disciplinary powers

5.4 The House possesses an inherent power to discipline its members; the means by which it chooses to exercise this power falls within the regulation by the House of its own procedures. The duty imposed upon members, by virtue of writs of summons, to attend Parliament, is subject to various implied conditions, which are reflected in the many rules governing the conduct of members which have been adopted over time by the House.

5.5 The House also has a statutory power to pass standing orders under which it may by resolution expel a member or suspend a member for the period specified in the resolution.⁴ Standing Order 11 states that a motion to suspend or expel a member must follow a recommendation from the Conduct Committee that the member be expelled or suspended (as the case may be) because the member has breached the Code of Conduct. A motion to suspend or expel a member must state that, in the opinion of the House, the conduct giving rise to the resolution occurred on or after 26 June 2015 (the date the House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015 came into force) or occurred before 26 June 2015 and was not public knowledge before that time. A motion to suspend a member must specify the period for which the suspension is to last (which may be until the occurrence of a specified event). Notice must be given of a motion to expel or suspend a member. Expulsion or suspension takes effect as soon as the House has agreed the motion.

5.6 In the event of a member being suspended, the member concerned is expected to leave the Chamber without delay.⁵ Suspended members have no access to the precincts of the House of Lords estate (including as guests) or to services provided to members. Suspended members' security

2 Serious sanctions are: denial of access to specific facilities or services of the House, including services that support parliamentary activity; removal from membership of select committees; denial of access to the system of financial support for members; suspension from the service of the House; and expulsion from the House.

3 SO 68.

4 House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015, s. 1.

5 Procedure Committee minutes 18 May 2009.

passes are cancelled, as are those of their staff, spouses and partners. Suspended members are ineligible to claim financial support from the House during the period for which they are suspended, are not entitled to receive parliamentary papers from the Printed Paper Office, and cannot use any parliamentary ICT applications or Library research services.⁶

5.7 For members who retire or resign before a report recommending their suspension or expulsion from the House is agreed, the withdrawal of their access privileges is automatic.⁷ In the case of suspension, the withdrawal of access privileges is for the duration of the proposed suspension, although the Commission may agree a longer period in exceptional circumstances; and in the case of expulsion, the withdrawal is permanent.

5.8 In addition to suspension and expulsion, the House may, on the recommendation of the Conduct Committee, agree the following sanctions on a member:

- (a) denial of access to specific facilities or services of the House, including services that support parliamentary activity;
- (b) removal from membership of select committees; and
- (c) denial of access to the system of financial support for members.⁸

These sanctions can be applied for any period of time and may be applied in addition to a sanction of suspension.⁹

6 House Committee minutes 19 May 2009 and [3rd Rpt 2014–15](#).

7 [House of Lords Commission 2nd Rpt 2019–21](#).

8 [Guide to the Code of Conduct](#), paragraph 188.

9 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2013–14](#).

CHAPTER 6

Statements, questions and motions

Statements

Personal statements

6.1 Members may by leave of the House make a short factual statement of a personal character, such as a personal apology, a correction of information given in a speech made by them in the House or a reply to allegations made against them in the House. Personal statements are usually made at the beginning of business and are not debatable.

Ministerial statements (oral)¹

6.2 Statements by ministers on matters of public importance may be made by leave of the House without notice.² Such statements are commonly synchronised in the two Houses. Information on timings is displayed on the annunciators.

Timing

6.3 If the responsible minister is a member of the House of Commons, the statement is made first in that House and may be repeated in the House of Lords. The timing is agreed through the usual channels. Where a statement has been made in full to the House of Commons and made available in the Printed Paper Office before it is due to be repeated in the House of Lords, the minister in the Lords may (with the agreement of the usual channels) draw the attention of the House to the statement made earlier without repeating it. This is normal practice when a statement is repeated on the next or a later day. The House then proceeds immediately to the period for exchanges with the Opposition front bench or benches. In such circumstances, the text of the statement is reproduced in full in the Official Report.³

1 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1984–85.

2 SO 34.

3 [Procedure 8th Rpt 2010–12](#). See HL Deb. 3 December 2014, cols 1322–34.

6.4 If the responsible minister is a member of the House of Lords, the statement is usually made after questions (or, on Fridays, at the beginning of business).

6.5 If the House is in committee, it is resumed on the motion of a member of the Government for the purpose of hearing the statement. When the statement and exchanges following it are finished, the House again resolves itself into a committee, on the motion of the Lord in charge of the bill. On days when there are two balloted debates or time-limited debates, any Commons statement repeated in the House is normally taken between the two debates. Only in exceptional circumstances are such debates interrupted for a statement.

6.6 There is no limit on the number of ministerial statements that can be made in one day, but lengthy interruption of the business of the House is not desirable.

Discussion on a statement

6.7 Ministerial statements are made for the information of the House and, although brief questions⁴ from all quarters of the House are allowed, statements should not be made the occasion for an immediate debate.⁵ The time for the Opposition front bench or benches and the minister's reply to them should be limited to 20 minutes;⁶ ministers should not, however, cut short their replies, even if this means going beyond the 20-minute limit.⁷ The period of questions and answers which then follows for backbench members should not exceed 20 minutes from the end of the minister's initial reply to the front benches.⁸ If a debate upon a statement is desired, a notice should be tabled for a later date.

6.8 As a matter of courtesy, members who wish to ask questions on an oral statement should be present to hear the whole of the statement read out.⁹

4 [Procedure 8th Rpt 2010–12.](#)

5 SO 34; often restated by the Procedure Committee, most recently in [1st Rpt 2002–03.](#)

6 [Procedure 1st Rpt 1998–99.](#)

7 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2000–01.](#)

8 Procedure 1st Rpt 1989–90; 1st Rpt 1994–95; [Procedure and Privileges 1st Rpt 2023–24.](#) On 26 January 2004, additional time was allowed for an intervention by the Lord Chief Justice (HL Deb. col. 12). On 10 June 2009 and 17 May 2011, the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers was permitted to intervene during the time for the front benches (HL Deb. col. 638) (HL Deb. col. 1261). The time allowed for backbenches may be extended by agreement of the usual channels.

9 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2010–12.](#)

Publication in Hansard

6.9 Where a statement contains material which is too lengthy or too complicated to be given orally in the House, the additional material may be published in *Hansard* without being given orally.¹⁰

Written statements

6.10 Written statements may be made when the House is sitting, by ministers, or the Senior Deputy Speaker.¹¹ Notice is not required. Written statements may also be published online and in editions of *Hansard* produced when the House is not sitting. Written statements are available online¹² as soon as they are made and are published in *Hansard*.¹³ The digital copy of written statements is the definitive record copy.¹⁴

Commons urgent questions repeated as statements

6.11 When the answer to an urgent question tabled in the Commons is, by agreement between the usual channels, to be repeated in the Lords, it is repeated in the form of a statement, synchronised with the answer in the Commons.¹⁵ The repetition of the answer is followed by 10 minutes of question and answer, to which the rules governing comparable exchanges on private notice questions apply.¹⁶ The minister making the statement should not be interrupted, save for points of clarification. The official Opposition usually have the first opportunity to ask questions following such a statement.

10 Procedure 4th Rpt 1963–64; 3rd Rpt 1984–85; 1st Rpt 1987–88.

11 Apart from making written statements on behalf of the Administration, the Senior Deputy Speaker can also make written statements on behalf of the Administration and the Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission ([Procedure 2nd Rpt 2019–21](#)).

12 <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements>.

13 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2003–04.](#)

14 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2013–14.](#)

15 Where proceedings on the answer to an urgent question take place the next day or subsequently, the answer is not normally repeated.

16 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2012–13](#); [5th Rpt 2012–13.](#)

Questions and motions

Questions and motions: general principles

6.12 Questions and motions are expected to be worded in accordance with the practice of the House. The clerks are available to assist members in drafting questions and motions, and the advice tendered by the clerks should be accepted.¹⁷ However, there is no official who has authority to refuse a question or motion on the ground of irregularity. Members are responsible for the form in which their questions and motions appear in *House of Lords Business*, subject to the sense of the House which is the final arbiter.

6.13 It is open to any member of the House to call attention to a question or motion which has appeared on the day's order paper or in the future business section of *House of Lords Business*, and to move that leave be not given to ask the question or move the motion, or to move that it be removed from *House of Lords Business*. Such a motion should only be used in the last resort; it is debatable and is decided by the House.¹⁸

Questions

The nature of parliamentary questions

6.14 The purpose of parliamentary questions is to elicit information from the Government of the day, and thus to assist members of both Houses in holding the Government to account. The House has resolved that it is of "paramount importance" that ministers should give "accurate and truthful" information to Parliament, and that they be as "open as possible" in answering questions.¹⁹ Such requirements are inherent in ministerial accountability to Parliament. A parliamentary question is not a "request for information" under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Form and scope of questions

6.15 Parliamentary questions should relate to matters of government responsibility.²⁰ Questions should be as short and clear as possible, and

precise in their requests for information. Statements of fact should be included in questions only to the extent necessary to elicit the information sought. Questions should be worded neutrally, and should not presuppose their own answer. They should not contain expressions of opinion or argument. It is not in order to italicise or underline words in the text of motions or questions in order to give them emphasis.²¹

6.16 Questions are normally addressed to "*His Majesty's Government*", rather than to a particular department or minister. It is for the Government to decide which department or minister should answer a particular question. There are certain exceptions, including oral questions addressed to Lords ministers who are full members of Cabinet, which may be taken in a designated question time. Such questions are addressed to "*the Secretary/ Minister of State for [department]*" (see paragraph 6.25). For questions addressed to the Leader of the House or the Senior Deputy Speaker see paragraph 6.21.

6.17 In drafting a question, thought should be given to the nature and scope of the response:

- Oral questions are not intended to give rise to debate, and should be drafted in such a way that the minister can make their initial reply in no more than 75 words. Proceedings on each question, including supplementary questions and answers, are limited to ten minutes.
- Questions for written answer should usually be answerable using no more than 500 words.²² The Government apply a "disproportionate cost threshold", currently set at £850,²³ to written questions, and may decline to answer questions where the cost of answering would exceed this figure.

What makes a question inadmissible?

6.18 Questions are generally regarded as inadmissible if they fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Questions that cast reflections on the Sovereign or the Royal Family.
- Questions that relate to matters *sub judice*.

17 Procedure 1st Rpt 1985–86.

18 LJ (1982–83) 108.

19 LJ (1996–97) 404.

20 The only exception to this rule is questions relating to the procedure or administration of the House itself.

21 Procedure 1st Rpt 1985–86; 9th Rpt 1970–71.

22 [Procedure 5th Rpt, 2013–14](#).

23 HL Deb. 8 February 2012, col. WS21–22.

- Questions that relate to matters for which the Church of England is responsible.²⁴
- Questions that relate to matters devolved to the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd Cymru or the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- Questions that contain an expression or a statement of opinion, or whose purpose is to invite the Government to agree to a proposition or to express an opinion.
- Questions that are phrased offensively. The principles of Standing Order 31 (personally insulting and offensive speeches to be avoided) also apply.

Government responsibility

6.19 In addition, questions on matters for which the Government are not responsible are regarded as inadmissible. In judging government responsibility, members should take account of the following guidance:

- Questions should relate to ministers' official duties, rather than their private affairs or party matters.
- Where government functions are delegated to an executive agency, accountability to Parliament remains through ministers. When a minister answers a parliamentary question, orally or in writing, by reference to a letter from the chief executive of an agency, the minister remains accountable for the answer, which attracts parliamentary privilege, and criticism of the answer in the House should be directed at the minister, not the chief executive.
- Questions should not ask about opposition party policies.
- Questions should not ask the Government for a legal opinion on the interpretation of statute or of international law, such matters being the competence of the courts.
- Questions should not ask about matters which are the particular responsibility of local authorities or the Greater London Assembly.
- Questions should not ask about the internal affairs of another country (save for questions about human rights or other matters covered by international conventions to which the United Kingdom is party).²⁵

24 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1988–89.

25 See also *Erskine May*, p. 361.

- In general, questions should not contain accusations against individuals. The names of individuals or bodies are not introduced into questions invidiously or for the purpose of advertisement.
- Questions should not ask the Government about the accuracy of statements in the press, where these have been made by private individuals or bodies.
- Questions should not ask about events more than 30 years ago without direct relevance to current issues.
- The tabling of questions on public utilities, nationalised industries and privatised industries is restricted to those matters for which the Government are in practice responsible.
- Questions should not be hypothetical, and should address issues of substance. Questions which are “trivial, vague or meaningless”²⁶ are not tabled.

Questions relating to the business of either House

6.20 The Government are not responsible for the business or decisions of either House of Parliament. Questions should not criticise the decisions of either House.

6.21 In respect of the House of Lords, questions may be addressed to certain members of the House as holders of official positions but not as members of the Government. Thus the Leader of the House has been questioned on matters of procedure, and the Senior Deputy Speaker on matters falling within the duties of their office or relating to the House of Lords Commission, other domestic committees, the Restoration and Renewal Client Board²⁷ and the Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission.²⁸

6.22 Questions are not tabled about the internal affairs of the House of Commons. Questions should not ask about House of Commons select committee or joint committee reports to which the Government have yet

26 *Erskine May*, p. 365.

27 R&R Client Board minutes, 17 October 2022. Private notice questions, topical oral questions, and topical questions for short debate to the Senior Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Restoration and Renewal Client Board, are not admissible (Procedure 1st Rpt 2019–21).

28 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2019–21](#). The Senior Deputy Speaker can only respond to written questions on behalf of the Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission.

to publish their response.²⁹ Nor do questions usually refer to evidence given before a Commons or joint committee.

Wording of questions

6.23 The clerks can advise on how questions may be amended to conform to House style—for instance, the use of punctuation and abbreviations, the standard form for references to previous answers, and so on. Questions should use plain English and should generally be understandable without reference to other documents (with the exception of *Hansard*).

Question time

6.24 Question time in the House of Lords takes place at the start of business on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The time allocated for normal and topical oral questions is 40 minutes.³⁰

6.25 Once each sitting month, on a fixed day of the week, secretaries of state sitting in the House of Lords, or departmental ministers in the House of Lords who are full members of the Cabinet, answer oral questions addressed to them in their ministerial capacity.³¹ The normal practice is that three questions lasting up to 30 minutes are asked, immediately after oral questions, though these arrangements may be varied.³² The process for selecting such questions, by ballot, is described in paragraph 6.36. Except where indicated in the following paragraphs, the procedure for asking secretary of state's questions is identical to that for normal oral questions.

Tabling oral questions

6.26 Oral questions, marked * in *House of Lords Business*, are asked for information only, and not with a view to stating an opinion, making a speech or raising a debate.³³ The arrangements for tabling such questions are as follows:

- oral questions are drawn from a ballot³⁴ run by the Table Office at 1 pm on the date four weeks ahead of the day on which they are to be asked (e.g. questions to be asked on Monday 31 March will be drawn from the ballot and tabled on Monday 3 March);
- entries for the oral questions ballot may be submitted to the Table Office in person, by telephone, by email, or by a person authorised on a member's behalf, at any time after the previous ballot is closed;
- a member may submit only one question for inclusion in each oral questions ballot;
- if the oral questions ballot falls on the same day as the separate ballot for topical questions, a member may enter a question in both ballots but the questions should be on different subjects;
- members cannot 'roll over' submitted questions from one day to the next: questions must be re-submitted for each ballot;
- if, by the time the ballot is drawn, fewer questions have been submitted than there are slots available, the remaining slots will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis;
- in the event of the day four weeks before a sitting day being a public holiday in England, the ballot will take place on the next working day;
- no oral question may be tabled less than 24 hours before the start of the sitting at which it is due to be asked (or after 2.30pm on Friday for Monday);
- the number of oral questions is limited to four;
- no member of the House may have more than one oral question on the order paper at any one time,³⁵ but topical questions and Secretary of State's questions are excluded from this rule;
- no member of the House may table more than seven oral questions each year.³⁶

29 Questions may not be asked about reports by the National Audit Office until the Government have responded to a House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report on the issue.

30 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2021–22](#).

31 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2009–10](#), [8th Rpt 2010–12](#); [Procedure and Privileges 7th Rpt 2019–21](#).

32 [Procedures and Privileges 1st Rpt 2023–24](#).

33 SO 33.

34 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2015–16](#), [1st Rpt 2021–22](#).

35 [Procedure 1st Rpt 1998–99](#).

36 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2012–13](#); [2nd Rpt 2015–16](#).

The limit was increased to 14 for the long 2017–19 session ([Procedure 1st Rpt 2017–19](#)). This limit was then reset on 1 June 2019 ([Procedure 6th Rpt 2017–19](#)).

Asking the question

6.27 Oral questions are asked by leave of the House. The form of words to be used in asking a question is:

“My Lords, I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name on the order paper.”³⁷

6.28 If a member of the House is not present to ask a question, the question may be asked by another member with the permission of the member named on the order paper.³⁸ The form of words to use in this circumstance is:

“On behalf of my noble friend/the noble Lord, Lord X, and with their permission, I beg leave to ask the question standing in his/her name on the order paper.”

6.29 On such occasions, the member who is in fact to ask the question should inform the Table, who will inform the Government. The unanimous leave of the House is required for one member’s question to be asked by another when the authority of the member named on the order paper has not been given.³⁹ If the Lord Speaker knows that an oral question is not going to be asked, they inform the House before they call the first question;⁴⁰ the remaining questions are each limited to ten minutes.

Ministers’ replies and supplementary questions

6.30 Ministers’ initial answers should not generally exceed 75 words. Supplementary questions should be short and confined to not more than two points.⁴¹ If a supplementary question exceeds these guidelines, the minister need answer only the two main points. Supplementary questions should be confined to the subject of the original question, and ministers should not answer irrelevant questions.⁴² The essential purpose of supplementaries is to elicit information, and they should not incorporate

37 Procedure 1st Rpt 1967–68.

38 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1984–85.

39 SO 40(2).

40 [Procedure 1st Rpt 1999–2000](#).

41 Procedure 1st Rpt 1984–85; 1st Rpt 1987–88.

42 Restated in [Procedure 1st Rpt 2002–03](#).

statements of opinion. They should not be read. The member who tabled the question has no automatic right to ask a final supplementary question.

6.31 Members should not take up the time of the House during question time by making trivial declarations of non-financial and non-registerable interests. Questioners should not thank the Government for their answers, nor ministers thank questioners for their questions.⁴³

6.32 Where a minister’s answer contains material that is too lengthy or too complicated to be given orally in the House, it may be published in *Hansard*.⁴⁴

Topical (balloted) oral questions

6.33 The fourth space for an oral question each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday is reserved for a question which is topical. The questions are chosen by ballot.⁴⁵

6.34 Members may enter the ballot even if they already have one oral question on the order paper; but they may not enter the ballot if they already have an oral question on the order paper for the day concerned. No member may ask more than four⁴⁶ topical oral questions in one year. The clerks discourage members from tabling questions which are clearly not topical. In checking that questions are topical, account will be taken of the level of recent mainstream news coverage, including online sites and mainstream regional publications. Clerks indicate to members which questions have already been tabled for ballot. No more than one question on a subject may be accepted for inclusion in the ballot and priority is given to the first which is tabled. The wording of a topical question may not be altered after it has been tabled in such a way as to change the topic of the question. Alterations for clarity are permitted, as long as they are made at least 24 hours before the question is to be asked.

43 [Procedure 6th Rpt 2010–12](#).

44 Procedure 4th Rpt 1963–64.

45 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2001–02](#); [3rd Rpt 2003–04](#).

46 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2001–02](#); [3rd Rpt 2003–04](#), [6th Rpt 2017–19](#).

The ballot

6.35 The timetable for the ballot for topical questions during any sitting week is:

Day question is to be asked	Ballot opens	Ballot drawn	Question appears in <i>HL Business</i>
Tuesday	Previous Wednesday, after oral questions	Friday, 1pm	Monday or Tuesday morning
Wednesday	Previous Thursday, 3pm	Monday, 1pm	Tuesday morning
Thursday	Previous Friday, 3pm	Tuesday, 1pm	Wednesday morning

All questions for the ballot should be submitted to the Table Office.

The ballot for Secretary of State's questions

6.36 Questions addressed to secretaries of state or Cabinet-level departmental ministers are selected by means of a ballot. The ballot is drawn three working days before the questions are due to be asked, and the ballot opens one week before the questions are drawn. Exact timings are set out in *House of Lords Business*.

Private notice questions⁴⁷

6.37 A private notice question (PNQ) gives members of the House the opportunity to raise urgent matters on any sitting day. A PNQ should be submitted in writing to the Lord Speaker by 12 noon on the day on which it is proposed to ask it, or by 9.30am on Thursdays, Fridays and any other days when oral questions are taken before 1pm. The decision whether the question is of sufficient urgency and importance to justify an immediate reply rests with the Lord Speaker, after consultation.⁴⁸

6.38 PNQs are taken immediately after oral questions, or on Friday at a time agreed by the Lord Speaker, the Lord asking the question and the usual channels. They should not be made the occasion for immediate

debate.⁴⁹ Proceedings on PNQs follow the rules for oral questions. In particular, supplementary questions should be short and confined to not more than two points. Proceedings on a PNQ are limited to 15 minutes. For these reasons it may at times be more convenient for the House if the PNQ procedure is not used but instead the Government or Senior Deputy Speaker makes a statement on the matter which the PNQ is intended to raise. Circumstances in which statements may be more appropriate than PNQs include: when a long answer is required; when the responsible minister is a member of the House of Lords; and when the House of Commons is not sitting.⁵⁰ PNQs are not taken on the day of State Opening.

Questions for written answer

6.39 Members may also table questions for written answer.⁵¹ Questions may be tabled only on sitting days and on tabling days during recesses. There is one tabling day each week in the House of Lords when the House of Commons sits but the House of Lords does not, plus a tabling day on the first Monday in October.⁵² Guidance on the wording of written questions is given at paragraphs 6.12–6.23. Answers to written questions are published online.

6.40 When a minister undertakes in the House to write to a member on a matter of general interest to the House, it is open to that member or any other member to ensure that the minister's reply is available to the House by putting down a question for written answer.⁵³

Answers

6.41 Written questions, including those tabled on tabling days during a recess, are expected to be answered within 10 working days.⁵⁴ Answers are sent to members via the electronic question and answer system.⁵⁵ They are published online on the day they are answered and in a collated daily report

49 SO 34.

50 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1990–91.

51 SO 42; Procedure 1st Rpt 1990–91.

52 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2014–15](#). The Leader of the House has discretion to vary the standard pattern of dates, by agreement with the usual channels, in case of exceptional recess dates.

53 Procedure 7th Rpt 1971–72.

54 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2009–10](#).

55 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2013–14](#). The Leader of the House has asked Lords ministers to send members signed paper copies of answers in addition to using the electronic system.

47 SO 34; Procedure 1st Rpt 1959–60; 5th Rpt 1971–72.

48 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2005–06](#); [2nd Rpt 2009–10](#).

on the next sitting day. Questions which are unanswered when Parliament is prorogued are answered by ministers writing to the member who asked the question. Any such answers are not published. Where appropriate, written questions may be answered on the day on which they are tabled. The following criteria are used to determine whether a written answer is admissible:⁵⁶

- Only substantive answers to questions are admissible. Except where, due to shortage of time, answers cannot be prepared in response to questions tabled within five working days of the end of a session, holding answers are not permitted.
- Answers should not exceed 500 words, although the Editor of Debates has discretion to exceed this in exceptional cases.
- Answers should be complete and comprehensible and should not rely on references to external documents or web pages.
- Up to three electronic attachments may be included with an answer. In the interests of long-term accessibility, supporting documents should be included as attachments rather than by means of hyperlinks (which may break in future). Electronic attachments will be published on the parliamentary website but will not be published in *Hansard* (the Library will print attachments on demand).
- Electronic attachments should be referred to in the substantive answer so that readers of hard copy know that they exist. A note indicating where readers can find the additional material will be inserted in the text of *Hansard*.
- Tables will be printed only if submitted in such formats as are approved from time to time by the Editor of Debates. Tables not in approved formats may be included as one of the electronic attachments.
- Visual material such as graphs, charts or maps may be included in an electronic attachment.

6.42 The Leader of the House advises on individual cases of difficulty.⁵⁷

56 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2013–14](#).

57 Procedure Committee minutes, 4 April 2000.

Limits on number of written questions

6.43 Members may table six written questions on any one day and a maximum of 12 written questions per sitting week.⁵⁸ The tabling of a series of different requests for information in the form of a single question is deprecated.⁵⁹

Questions for short debate

6.44 A question for short debate is distinguishable from a motion in that there is no right of reply.⁶⁰ Questions for short debate are drawn from a ballot conducted by the Table Office every five sitting weeks.⁶¹ Entries for the ballot may be submitted at any time and are published in *House of Lords Business*. A member may only submit one entry to each ballot and may only ask one question for short debate per calendar year.

6.45 The first four entries drawn from the ballot are debated in Grand Committee on a Thursday. No more than two of the four questions for short debate may be asked to the same department, and questions cannot be asked to departments with business in the Chamber that day. Only backbench and Crossbench entries are eligible to be tabled for debate in Grand Committee.

6.46 In addition to the four entries drawn for debate in Grand Committee, a supplementary list of questions for short debate is published in *House of Lords Business*. These may include frontbench entries (which are identified as such in *House of Lords Business*), and may be taken during a lunch break, dinner break or as last business at the discretion of the Government Whips' Office. These questions for short debate are published in the order that they are drawn from the ballot. It is expected that they will be debated in that order, subject to the availability of the member asking the question and the business in the Chamber on the day proposed. There is no guarantee that time will be found for every question on the supplementary list and questions that have not been asked will be removed when the next ballot is drawn. QSDs from the reserve list may be asked after the next

58 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1988–89; [3rd Rpt 2006–07](#); [11th Rpt 2010–12](#).

59 Procedure 1st Rpt 1977–78.

60 SO 35.

61 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2021–22](#).

ballot is drawn, as long as they have been tabled for a named day before that ballot takes place.

Timing of questions for short debate

6.47 Questions for short debate taken in the Chamber are entered last on the order paper.⁶² More than one question for short debate should be put down only on a day when business appears to be light. They are taken either as last business (in which case they are subject to a time limit of one and a half hours⁶³) or during the lunch or dinner break (in which case they last for a maximum of one hour⁶⁴). Thus questions for short debate should be limited in scope.⁶⁵

6.48 Once every five weeks when the House is in session, a Grand Committee sits for four hours to consider four questions for short debate tabled by backbenchers.⁶⁶ Other questions for short debate may be taken in Grand Committee with the agreement of those concerned, and are time-limited to one or one and a half hours.⁶⁷ The Grand Committee normally adjourns at the end of any QSD that does not take up the full time allotted to it, resuming for the next QSD at the previously advertised time.

Topical questions for short debate

6.49 In a normal session, on every Thursday from the beginning of the session until the end of January, there is a topical question for short debate between the general debates (or after the general debate if there is only one), unless otherwise agreed.⁶⁸ The topical question for short debate is chosen by ballot.

6.50 Only backbench and Crossbench members may enter the ballot and a member may initiate only one topical question for short debate

per year.⁶⁹ The test of topicality is whether the subject has received news coverage in at least two mainstream media outlets, including online sites and mainstream regional publications, on either of the two days that the ballot was open or over the preceding weekend.⁷⁰ The same subject may not be debated as a topical question for short debate more than once in a six-month period. No more than one question on a subject may be accepted for inclusion in the ballot and priority is given to the first which is tabled. The clerks advise members on the interpretation and application of this guidance.

6.51 The ballot is drawn at 12 noon on Tuesday for Thursday of the following week. The ballot is open from 10am on Monday until 12 noon the following day.⁷¹ Members should table entries anew for each ballot; undrawn questions are not automatically entered into the next ballot. If there is no entrant in a ballot, or if none of the entries is topical, the slot falls.

Guidance on the conduct of questions for short debate

6.52 The questioner is guaranteed 10 minutes and the minister 12 minutes. The remaining time is divided equally between all speakers on the list; there is no guaranteed time for Opposition frontbenchers. If the list of speakers is small, the maximum allocation for all speeches is 10 minutes, except for the minister, who is still guaranteed 12 minutes.

6.53 No member may speak more than once except with the leave of the House. If a member does speak more than once it should be only for the purpose of explaining a material point in his or her speech and not to introduce new subjects for debate.⁷²

- The form of words used when asking the question is: “*My Lords, I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name on the order paper*”.
- The member who asks the question has no right of reply since no motion has been moved.

62 SO 38(9). There is an exception for balloted topical questions for short debate on Thursdays, which are entered after the first motion for general debate.

63 Procedure 1st Rpt 1994–95.

64 Procedure 3rd Rpt 1993–94.

65 [Procedure 8th Rpt 2010–12](#).

66 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2013–14](#). A question for short debate relating to a report of an investigative select committee is eligible for debate during such an extended Grand Committee sitting ([Procedure 3rd Rpt 2013–14](#)).

67 Resolution of the House 31 January 2005; [Procedure 5th Rpt 2006–07](#).

68 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2013–14](#).

69 The limit was increased to two for the long 2017–19 session ([Procedure 1st Rpt 2017–19](#)) and was then reset on 1 June 2019 ([Procedure 6th Rpt 2017–19](#)).

70 A question relating to a report of an investigative select committee is eligible for entry into the ballot as a topical question for short debate (subject to the same criteria as other entrants, including in respect of topicality) ([Procedure 3rd Rpt 2013–14](#)).

71 When this period would open on a bank holiday, the ballot will open at 10am on the Tuesday, to be drawn at 12 noon on the following Wednesday.

72 SO 29(2).

- It is not in order for members to continue the debate after the Government's reply has been given, except for questions to the minister before the minister sits down.

Motions

General

6.54 In a normal session every Thursday⁷³ from the beginning of the session until the end of January⁷⁴ is set aside for general debates. The House has agreed that it is desirable that there should be regular debates on general topics, and on select committee reports, in prime time.⁷⁵

6.55 Motions are tabled on the order paper in the name of one member only.

- The leave of the House is not sought when a motion is moved. The form of words used is: "*I beg to move the motion standing in my name on the order paper*".⁷⁶
- Every motion, after it has been moved, must be proposed in the form of a Question from the Woolsack before debate takes place upon it.
- Motions, other than for the Humble Address in reply to the King's Speech, are not seconded.
- At the conclusion of the debate, after every member who wishes to speak has spoken, the mover has the right to a short reply. At the end of their short speech in reply, the mover may either withdraw the motion or press it. If it is pressed, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair then completes the Question on the motion, if necessary reading its terms.
- It is contrary to the practice of the House for a Question once decided to be put again in the same session.

6.56 General guidance on the wording of questions and motions, and on government responsibility, may be found at paragraphs 6.12–6.23.

⁷³ [Procedure 6th Rpt 2005–06.](#)

⁷⁴ [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2010–12.](#)

⁷⁵ [Procedure 5th Rpt 2001–02.](#)

⁷⁶ If a member of the House is absent when a motion standing in their name is called and has authorised another member to act on their behalf, that member may do so, explaining the situation. Otherwise, the motion cannot be proceeded with on that day unless unanimous leave is granted by the House. See paragraph 3.41.

6.57 The two types of motion are:

- resolutions; and
- 'take note' motions.

Resolutions⁷⁷

6.58 Resolutions may be put down in cases where a member wishes the House to come to a definite decision on a subject, if necessary on a vote. A resolution, if passed, constitutes the formal opinion or decision of the House on the matter. Resolutions, unlike 'take note' motions (for which see the following section) may be amended.

6.59 Resolutions begin with the words "To move to resolve ..." or "To move that this House ...". While it is in order to incorporate statements of opinion or the demonstration of a point of view in resolutions, or in amendments to resolutions, argumentative or intemperate language should be avoided. The wording should be concise and, in the case of amendments, relevant to the subject-matter of the original motion.

Motions to take note

6.60 Most debates take place on a motion "That this House takes note of ...". This formula enables the House to debate a subject without coming to any positive decision. Such motions are usually agreed to, since they are neutral in wording, and there is neither advantage nor significance in opposing them. The opinion of the House is expressed in the speeches made in the debate rather than on a division. The formula is regularly used for debates on the general debate day and for select committee reports. It is also appropriate when a minister wishes to put down a neutral motion.

6.61 Take note motions should be short and neutrally phrased to avoid provocative or tendentious language, although members are not prevented from advancing controversial points of view in the course of debate. A take note motion should not include a statement of opinion or demonstrate a point of view. Take note motions are not amendable.⁷⁸

6.62 Debates on take note motions may be held in Grand Committee;⁷⁹ the proceedings are the same as those that take place in the Chamber.

⁷⁷ Procedure 1st Rpt 1985–86.

⁷⁸ LJ (2010–12) 1688.

⁷⁹ [Procedure 9th Rpt 2010–12.](#)

Balloted debates

6.63 One Thursday in each month, from the start of the session to the end of December,⁸⁰ is set aside for two balloted debates, unless otherwise agreed.⁸¹ These balloted debates are limited to five hours in total,⁸² and their subjects should be narrow enough to be debated within the time limit. These debates may be initiated only by backbench and Crossbench members and a member may initiate only one balloted debate per session.⁸³

6.64 The choice of the two subjects is made by ballot, which is carried out by the Table Office, two or three weeks before the debates are due to take place. A member wishing to initiate a balloted debate must give notice by tabling the motion in *House of Lords Business* under Motions for Balloted Debate. It is not in order to put down a motion for a balloted debate which is the same, or substantially the same, as a motion that is already entered for the ballot.⁸⁴ Members should table motions anew for each ballot; undrawn motions may not be entered into the next ballot automatically.⁸⁵ A member may not enter into the ballot a motion on a subject on which the member has a question for short debate in *House of Lords Business*.⁸⁶ It is assumed, unless notice to the contrary is given to the Table Office, that any member who has a motion down for the ballot is willing and able to move his or her motion on the day appointed.

6.65 The purpose of these debates is to provide a forum for discussion rather than questions which the House may decide on a division. They always take place on 'take note' motions, which should be worded neutrally.

6.66 When a motion has been set down for a particular day, it may be amended in form but not in substance: a member who has been successful in the ballot may not substitute another subject for that originally proposed.

80 [Procedure 6th Rpt 2010–12](#).

81 Procedure 1st Rpt 1974. They were formerly called "short debates".

82 If one balloted debate has considerably more speakers than the other balloted debate when the speakers' lists close, the usual channels may agree to time-limit the debate with more speakers to three or three and a half hours and the debate with fewer speakers to the remaining portion of the five hours with the consent of the member in whose name each debate is tabled. (Procedure 2nd Rpt 2021–22).

83 The limit was increased to two for the long 2017–19 session ([Procedure 1st Rpt 2017–19](#)) and was then reset on 1 June 2019 ([Procedure 6th Rpt 2017–19](#)).

84 Procedure 5th Rpt 1974–75.

85 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2013–14](#).

86 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2013–14](#).

Time-limited debates⁸⁷

6.67 The House may limit debates, either in the Chamber itself or in Grand Committee, to a specific number of hours. Time limits are automatically applied to general party debates and balloted debates, with the time allocations agreed in the usual channels and with the members moving the motions based on the number of speakers signed up to each debate.⁸⁸ For other debates, a business of the House motion in the name of the Leader of the House (of which notice is required) must be moved before the start of the debate if a time limit is to be applied. Within the overall limit, the amount of time allotted to particular speakers is calculated in advance and stated on the speakers' list.

6.68 Speaking time is allocated equally between all the speakers on the speakers' list, subject to a guaranteed minimum number of minutes being given to the mover of the debate, the official Opposition frontbencher or frontbenchers and the minister replying. The table below shows these guaranteed minimum allocations of time for debates of various lengths, in minutes.

	Length of debate		
	Four hours or over	Two hours or over	Less than two hours
Mover	20	15	12
Opposition frontbencher(s)	12	10	8
Minister replying	25	20	15

6.69 If the number of speakers on the speakers' list is small, every speaker enjoys an equal speaking time (up to the recommended maximum of 15 minutes for any speech), except for the minister in reply who has at least the guaranteed minimum time set out in the table.

6.70 At the appropriate time, whoever is speaking is expected to give way to the front benches.

87 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1983–84; 2nd Rpt 1990–91; 3rd Rpt 1992–93.

88 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2021–22](#).

6.71 The clocks in the Chamber show the number of minutes and seconds that have already elapsed since the start of each speech. When a time limit on a speech has been reached the clock display changes colour and flashes.

6.72 Speakers in time-limited debates should respect the time guidelines and keep their speeches short, so that all those who wish to speak may do so. Members may also speak briefly in the gap (for a maximum of four minutes) if time allows, subject to the guidance set out in paragraph 4.26. During time-limited debates, speeches should be interrupted only if time allows.

6.73 If time-limited debates are interrupted by other business, for example by a statement or, in Grand Committee, by a division in the Chamber, the time limit is extended correspondingly and an appropriate announcement made to the House or Grand Committee.

6.74 If the debate on a motion is still continuing at the end of the time allotted to it, the Clerk at the Table rises, and the member on the Woolsack brings the debate to an end by either putting the Question forthwith or asking whether the mover of the motion wishes to withdraw it.⁸⁹

Amendments to motions

6.75 A motion for debate, other than a ‘take note’ motion, may be amended with or without notice.

6.76 In principle, the discussion of an amendment to a motion is a separate debate, which must be concluded before the House returns to the original motion (or the original motion as amended). However, in practice, once a motion and an amendment to it have been moved, a single debate takes place on the motion and on any amendments that have been tabled to the motion and the principle embodied in Standing Order 29 (No Lord to speak more than once to a motion) applies to the debate as a whole. Once the first amendment has been moved, the rest of the debate takes place on that amendment, and the members in whose names the motion and any subsequent amendments stand speak in this debate to indicate the reasons why they prefer their own form of words. When the first amendment has

⁸⁹ SO 36(1).

been disposed of, any remaining amendments and the original motion (as amended) are usually put and decided without further debate.⁹⁰

6.77 The following principles apply to a debate during which amendments, and possibly amendments to amendments, are proposed to a motion:

- a motion, an amendment to the motion, and any amendment to the amendment, are normally each moved and proposed in the form of a Question from the Woolsack before they can be further debated, though in some cases it may be for the convenience of the House to hear speeches from the opposition front benches before the first amendment is called;
- a member of the House who moves a motion, an amendment to it or any amendment to the amendment, may speak for that purpose and has a right of reply on their motion or amendment;
- a member whose motion is sought to be amended by one or more proposed amendments may make separate speeches dealing with each amendment;
- a member who has neither moved the original motion nor any amendment to it may speak once on the motion and once on any amendment or on any amendment to that amendment; and
- a member who moves an amendment should not speak separately on the original motion, but has a right of reply on their amendment.

6.78 At the end of the debate on an amendment to a motion, the member on the Woolsack states the terms of the original motion and of the amendment and then puts the Question:

“That this amendment be agreed to”.

6.79 If there is an equality of votes in a division on such an amendment, the amendment is disagreed to.

6.80 If there is more than one amendment to a motion, the amendments are dealt with in the order in which they relate to the motion, or, if they relate to the same place in the motion, in the order in which they were tabled.

⁹⁰ For the application of these principles to the procedure on amendments to second reading motions, see paragraph 8.47.

6.81 If amendments are moved to an amendment, such amendments are dealt with in the order in which they stand on the order paper, in the same manner as if they were amendments to a motion, until all are disposed of. Then the original amendment is dealt with.

6.82 If any amendment is agreed to, at the end of the debate the member on the Woolsack puts the Question:

“That the original motion, as amended, be agreed to”.

Committees on motions

6.83 On rare occasions when the House considers that the structure of debate set out in paragraphs 6.75–6.82 is too restrictive, it can go into committee on a motion, so that the limit on the number of times a member may speak is removed. The motion to do so may be moved without notice.

Adjournment of debates lasting more than one day

6.84 A motion for the adjournment of a debate may be moved at any time during the debate without notice and may be debated. When it has been arranged in advance for a debate to be adjourned (for example, the debate on the King’s Speech), it is usual for its adjournment to be moved at the end of the sitting. The adjourned business may be taken later the same day, or taken as first business on another day.⁹¹

Withdrawal of motions and amendments

6.85 If, at the conclusion of the debate, the mover decides not to seek the opinion of the House, they ask leave to withdraw the motion or amendment. A motion or amendment may be withdrawn only by unanimous leave of the House, though it is rare for any objection to be made.

6.86 The member in whose name the motion stands should conclude the debate by saying:

“I beg leave to withdraw the motion [or amendment]”.

6.87 No formal motion for withdrawal is made and no formal Question is put. The member on the Woolsack asks the House:

“Is it your Lordships’ pleasure that the motion [or amendment] be withdrawn?”

6.88 A single dissenting voice is sufficient to prevent withdrawal.⁹² If there is none, the member on the Woolsack adds:

“The motion/amendment is, by leave, withdrawn.”

6.89 If any member dissents, the member on the Woolsack must put the Question on the motion or amendment.

91 SO 43.

92 SO 30.

CHAPTER 7

Divisions

General principles

7.1 At the end of a debate on a motion or amendment which has not been withdrawn, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair puts the Question to the House (*"The Question is ..."*) and then says:

"As many as are of that opinion will say "content". The contrary "not-content"."

If there is a response from only one side, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair then says:

"The Contents [Not-contents] have it."

The Question is agreed to or disagreed to accordingly.

7.2 If there is a response from both sides, but one side appears more numerous than the other, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair says:

"I think the Contents [Not-contents] have it."

If this expression of opinion is not challenged, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair says:

"The Contents [Not-contents] have it."

The Question is then decided accordingly. A motion or amendment that is decided in the negative without a division taking place is described as having been 'negatived'.

7.3 If this expression of opinion is challenged, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair may repeat it until the challenge is abandoned or until satisfied that a division is inevitable.¹ This process is known as 'collecting the voices'. If the challenge is maintained, even by only one member, a division must be called.² The member on the Woolsack or in the Chair

¹ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1981–82.

² SO 52.

instructs the Clerk to begin a division. Once the division has been launched the Clerk rises and bows, and the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair says:

“Voting is now open. Clear the Bar.”

7.4 The area immediately behind the Bar of the House, and the division lobbies, are then cleared of visitors. The galleries, the space within the rails around the Throne, the parliamentary officials’ box, the officials’ box, and the seats below Bar are not cleared, unless the House so orders. The doors at the ends of the division lobbies are locked.

7.5 During the three minutes after the order has been given for the Bar to be cleared, two Tellers are appointed by the members wishing to vote “content” and two by those wishing to vote “not-content”. The Tellers give their names in at the Table where they receive their Tellers’ wands and they state to the Clerk whether they are appointed by the Contents or the Not-contents.³

7.6 One Teller from each side goes to each lobby. Once two Tellers are in place in a lobby, the doors at the exit from the lobby are unlocked. At the end of three minutes, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair again puts the Question, and if the doors at the exit from one or both lobbies have yet to be unlocked, they are unlocked at this point.

7.7 If only one side replies when the Question is repeated after three minutes, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair says:

“The Contents [Not-contents] have it.”

and no division takes place.

7.8 If one or more voices from each side shouts “content” and “not-content”, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair proceeds with the division by saying:

“The Contents will go to the right by the Throne. The Not-contents to the left by the Bar.”

7.9 Members wishing to vote “content” go through the door to the right of the Throne through the lobby on the spiritual side (the “Content Lobby”), and re-enter the House through the door beyond the Bar of

³ The procedure to be followed if the correct number of Tellers is not appointed is set out at paragraphs 7.21–7.22.

the House. Members wishing to vote “not-content” go through the door beyond the Bar into the lobby on the temporal side (the “Not-content Lobby”) and re-enter the House through the door to the left of the Throne. Within the lobbies members vote by presenting a valid security pass to one of the pass-readers. The pass-readers are activated when the division is called, and members may start to vote immediately; but they must remain in the lobbies until Tellers are in place and the exits from the lobbies are opened, so that they pass the Tellers on their way out. Members do not bow to the Tellers.⁴ Members who are parents of children below school age may, if necessary, take them through the lobby while voting.

7.10 A member may, usually on the ground of disability, vote in the Chamber, by presenting a valid security pass to the Clerk.⁵ The Clerk in the Chamber also takes the vote of the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair.

7.11 Under SO 24A members who, by virtue of long-term disability, are eligible to participate virtually in proceedings of the House may cast their votes electronically (using the House’s electronic voting system).⁶ They must do so within eight minutes of a division being called.

7.12 Except as provided for in Standing Order 24A, to cast a vote a member must present a valid security pass either to one of the pass-readers, or to the Clerk in the Chamber.⁷ A member may vote in a division even if not in the House to hear the Question put.⁸

⁴ Procedure 1st Rpt 1969–70.

⁵ SO 53.

⁶ In 2020, as part of its adoption of hybrid procedures during the Covid 19 pandemic, the House introduced a system of electronic voting. Under this system, Tellers were not appointed, and members, having logged onto their parliamentary account, were able to use mobile devices to cast their votes electronically. For a fuller description see the 12th edition of the Procedure and Privileges Committee’s Guidance on Hybrid House and Hybrid Grand Committee, 15 July 2021: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6772/documents/73239/default/>. From 6 September 2021 members (with the exception of those eligible to participate remotely under SO 24A) were required when voting to confirm that were doing so for a place of work on the parliamentary estate (Procedure 1st Rpt, 21–22).

⁷ SO 52(3).

⁸ In 2011 the House resolved, in respect of proceedings in the Grand Committee on the Welfare Reform Bill taking place in Committee Room 4A, that members with restricted mobility who (a) had given advance notification to the Clerk of the Parliaments, and (b) were present in the Grand Committee by the time the Question was repeated three minutes after a division in the House being called, should be entitled to vote in their places in the Grand Committee. See LJ (2010–12) 1480. A similar procedure was agreed for members with restricted mobility on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability Committee for divisions which took place during committee meetings (Minutes of Proceedings, 8 July 2015).

7.13 At the end of eight minutes from the time when the Bar is ordered to be cleared, or longer at the discretion of the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair,⁹ the House or committee is again informed of the Question which is the subject of the division. The doors of the Chamber are locked and the time allowed for voting by eligible members under SO 24A closes automatically; from that moment only members who are already in the Chamber or the lobbies may vote.¹⁰ When the Tellers are satisfied that all members who wish to vote in their respective lobbies have done so, they return to the Table. When both sets of Tellers have returned to the Table the Clerk deactivates the pass-readers. The Clerk imports the voting figures for the pass-readers and for members voting under SO 24A, and adds the votes of any members voting in the Chamber, before handing the result to one of the Tellers for the winning side. That Teller gives it to the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair who reads it to the House or committee in this form:

“There have voted:

content:—

not-content:—

And so the Contents [Not-contents] have it.”

7.14 The three other Tellers remain at the Table until the numbers have been announced, at which point all four hand back their wands.

7.15 For details of the procedures to be followed by Tellers, see appendix A.

7.16 Division lists showing how members voted are published online. They are included in *Hansard* and in the Journals.¹¹

Voting in wrong lobby and voting in both lobbies

7.17 Any member who by mistake votes in the wrong lobby may go to the Clerk at the Table before the end of the division and request to change their vote. Their vote is taken by the Clerk, who will inform the Tellers. Members may not vote in both lobbies: if they attempt to do so, the pass-reader in the second lobby will not record their vote, but will display a

message inviting them to go to the Clerk at the Table if they wish to change their vote.¹²

Votes of the Lord Speaker, Senior Deputy Speaker and Chairman

7.18 The Lord Speaker and Senior Deputy Speaker are expected not to vote.¹³ The Deputy Speaker, or Deputy Chairman, may vote, but does not have a casting vote.

Discrepancies

7.19 The result that is announced in the House is authoritative, unless corrected by a further announcement to the House. If a discrepancy is discovered after the result of a vote has been announced, the corrected figures should be reported to the House as soon as possible. If this correction involves the reversal of a decision of the House and the House has taken further action on the basis of the mistaken announcement, any proceedings taken on the basis of that announcement should be voided.

Insufficiency of Tellers

7.20 If, after three minutes from the time when the Bar is ordered to be cleared, one side has appointed Tellers, but no Teller, or only one Teller, has been appointed by the other side, a division cannot take place;¹⁴ and the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair declares the Question decided in favour of the side which has appointed two Tellers, using the following words:

*“My Lords, Tellers for the Contents [Not-contents] have not been appointed pursuant to Standing Order No. 52. A division, therefore, cannot take place, and I declare that the Not-contents [Contents] have it.”*¹⁵

7.21 If both sides fail to appoint Tellers, a division cannot take place and the Question is decided in accordance with SO 55. The member on the Woolsack or in the Chair informs the House:

“My Lords, Tellers have not been appointed either for the Contents or for the Not-contents pursuant to Standing Order No. 52. A division, therefore, cannot

⁹ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1992–93.

¹⁰ Members who are already queuing to enter the Chamber when the Question is repeated after eight minutes are allowed to enter the Chamber before the doors are locked.

¹¹ SO 57.

¹² SO 54.

¹³ [Procedure 4th Rpt 2005–06](#).

¹⁴ SO 52(2).

¹⁵ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1968–69.

take place, and in accordance with Standing Order No. 55 [... adding the appropriate formula which will be supplied by the Clerk at the Table].”

Equality of votes

7.22 If the Contents and Not-contents are equal in number,¹⁶ or if both sides fail to appoint Tellers, the Question is decided on the principle contained in SO 55 that legislation is allowed to proceed in the form which is before the House unless there is a majority in favour of rejecting or amending it; and that other motions are rejected unless there is a majority in their favour.¹⁷ If there is an equality of votes on a division, the Clerk delivers the result to the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair, who reads out the numbers of those voting in the normal way and announces the result as follows:

- (a) on a motion for a stage of a bill, or on an amendment to such a motion:
“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that no proposal to reject a bill shall be agreed to unless there is a majority in favour of such rejection, I declare the motion agreed to [the amendment disagreed to].”
- (b) on an amendment to a bill:
“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that no proposal to amend a bill in the form in which it is before the House shall be agreed to unless there is a majority in favour of such an amendment, I declare the amendment disagreed to.”
- (c) on an amendment to an amendment:
“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that the Question before the House shall be resolved in the negative unless there is a majority in its favour, I declare the amendment to the amendment disagreed to.”
- (d) on the Question in Committee of the whole House that “a clause stand part” of a bill or that “this be a schedule” to a bill, since the effect of resolving this Question in the negative would be to amend the bill:

“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that no proposal to amend a bill in the form in which it is before the House shall be agreed to unless there is a majority in favour of such amendment, I declare the Question resolved in the affirmative.”

- (e) on consideration of a Commons amendment, since the form of the bill before the House is taken to be the bill as amended by the Commons:
“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that no proposal to amend a bill in the form in which it is before the House shall be agreed to unless there is a majority in favour of such amendment, I declare the Commons amendment agreed to.”
- (f) on a motion to insist, or not to insist, on an amendment to which the Commons have disagreed, since the form of the bill before the House is taken to be the bill as amended by the Commons:
“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that no proposal to amend a bill in the form in which it is before the House shall be agreed to unless there is a majority in favour of such amendment, I declare the amendment not insisted on.”
- (g) on a motion to approve an affirmative instrument:
“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that no proposal to reject subordinate legislation shall be agreed to unless there is a majority in favour of such rejection, I declare the motion agreed to.”
- (h) on a prayer to annul a statutory instrument, a resolution to annul a special procedure order, or an amendment to a motion to approve an affirmative instrument, the effect of which would be to reject the instrument:
“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that no proposal to reject subordinate legislation shall be agreed to unless there is a majority in favour of such rejection, I declare the motion/amendment disagreed to.” and

¹⁶ Procedure 1st Rpt 1962–63.

¹⁷ SO 55 superseded the ancient rule, “*Semper praesumitur pro negante*”.

- (i) on any other motion or amendment:
“There being an equality of votes, in accordance with Standing Order No. 55, which provides that the Question before the House shall be resolved in the negative unless there is a majority in its favour, I declare the motion/amendment disagreed to.”

Quorum on divisions

General and procedural questions

7.23 There is no quorum for divisions on general or procedural questions.¹⁸

Bills and subordinate legislation

7.24 The quorum is 30 for divisions on bills and subordinate legislation, including procedural motions that arise in the course of legislative business, such as adjourning a debate or resuming the House. There is, though, no quorum for incidental motions such as “that the noble Lord be no longer heard”.

7.25 If fewer than 30 members vote in a division on a bill or amendment or on any Question for the approval or disapproval of subordinate legislation, the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair declares the Question not decided, as follows:¹⁹

- (a) On a stage of a bill, on an amendment to a motion relating to such a stage, or on a motion to approve or annul subordinate legislation:
“As it appears that fewer than thirty members have voted, in accordance with Standing Order No. 56, I declare the Question not decided and the debate thereon stands adjourned.”
The debate on the undecided Question is adjourned to a subsequent sitting. The House proceeds to the next business on the order paper. Members who have spoken are permitted to speak again on any subsequent proceedings.²⁰

¹⁸ Procedure 1st Rpt 1958–59.

¹⁹ SO 56.

²⁰ Procedure 1st Rpt 1963–64.

- (b) In Committee of the whole House:
“As it appears that fewer than thirty members have voted, in accordance with Standing Order No. 56, I declare the Question not decided; and, pursuant to the Standing Order, the House will now resume.”

The debate on the undecided Question is adjourned to a subsequent sitting and the House is resumed. The next business on the order paper is taken. On any subsequent proceedings in committee on the bill, the committee proceeds with the consideration of the Question on which no decision was taken because of the absence of a quorum. Members who have spoken are permitted to speak again on any subsequent proceedings.

- (c) On the consideration of an amendment to a bill at any stage other than Committee of the whole House:
“As it appears that fewer than thirty members have voted, in accordance with Standing Order No. 56, I declare the Question not decided and the further proceedings on the bill stand adjourned.”

The debate on the amendment and the remaining proceedings on the stage of the bill in question are adjourned to a subsequent sitting. The House proceeds to the next business on the order paper. Members who have spoken are permitted to speak again on any subsequent proceedings.

Contingency arrangements

7.26 If the pass-reader voting system is unavailable, divisions are conducted as normal, with the exception that the names of members voting are recorded manually by staff in the lobbies. The votes are also counted by the Tellers and when all members have voted the Tellers and staff agree on the final result. The Tellers then report this figure to the Clerk at the Table, who adds the figures for members voting under SO 24A, and for any members voting in the Chamber, before handing the result to one of the Tellers for the winning side.

7.27 Divisions may also in certain circumstances be deferred until an appropriate time on a succeeding day. Decisions on deferral are taken by the usual channels, consulting staff of the House as necessary, once it has become clear that the pass-reader voting system is not functioning.

CHAPTER 8

Public bills

Stages of a public bill

8.1 Public bills in the House of Lords have five main stages:

- introduction and first reading;
- second reading;
- committee;
- report;
- third reading and passing.

Further stages may also be necessary as a result of disagreement between the two Houses (see paragraphs 8.166–8.191).

Successive stages of a bill to be taken on different days

8.2 Under SO 44, no two stages of a bill may be taken on one day, except if a bill is not amended in Committee of the whole House, in which case the report stage may be taken immediately. So, if it is intended to take more than one stage of a bill on one day, other than the report stage of a bill which has not been amended in Committee of the whole House, SO 44 must be suspended or dispensed with; SO 84 requires that notice of this must be given. If SO 44 is set aside, then manuscript amendments are permitted at third reading despite SO 47, unless the House provides otherwise.¹

8.3 SO 84 also provides that on occasions of grave national emergency a bill may be passed through all its stages on one day without notice.²

¹ [Procedure 4th Rpt 2019–21](#). Business of the House motions not only to dispense with what is now SO 44 but to timetable proceedings on a bill were tabled in September 2019. See HL Deb., 4 September, col. 1011 and 5 September, col. 1148.

² This happened on 23 Feb 1972: LJ (1971–72) 159.

Recommended minimum intervals between the stages of a bill

8.4 The following minimum intervals between stages of public bills should be observed:³

- (a) two weekends between first reading and the debate on second reading;⁴
- (b) 14 days from second reading to the start of the committee stage;
- (c) on all bills of considerable length and complexity, 14 days from the end of the committee stage to the start of report stage;
- (d) three clear sitting days between the end of report stage and third reading.⁵

8.5 When these minimum intervals are departed from, notice is given by means of a § against the bill in *House of Lords Business*. However, such notice is not required when SO 44 has been suspended or dispensed with.

8.6 For any legislation subject to expedited procedures ('fast-tracked') the explanatory notes accompanying the legislation will contain a full explanation of the reasons for using a fast-track procedure.⁶

8.7 Reasonable notice should whenever possible be given for consideration of Commons amendments, taking into account the number and scale of amendments and the availability of papers relating to them.⁷

Carry-over

8.8 Subject to the following paragraph, any public bill which does not receive Royal Assent in the session in which it is introduced falls at the end of that session.

8.9 The two Houses have agreed that government public bills can be 'carried over' from one session to the next in the same way as private and

hybrid bills, if they have not left the House in which they originated.⁸ A bill originating in the Commons may also be carried over in the Lords if it has received pre-legislative scrutiny in either House.⁹ In the Lords:

- eligibility of bills for carry-over is settled by informal discussion through the usual channels;
- bills are carried over by specific motions;¹⁰
- a Commons bill carried over in the Commons is treated in the same way as any other bill brought from the Commons;
- a bill that has been carried over falls if it does not reach the statute book by the end of the second session.

8.10 A bill carried over is re-introduced in its latest form, with updated explanatory notes and a new human rights statement. The carry-over procedure does not apply to public bills over a dissolution.

Introduction and first reading

8.11 Any member may introduce a bill without notice and without leave.

8.12 A member wishing to introduce a bill should inform the Legislation Office not later than the working day before the day of introduction, and should discuss the bill with the Office in draft. The final text must be handed in to the Office before introduction. See paragraph 8.31 for the introduction of private members' bills at the start of each session. New bills may be introduced on State Opening day only if it is the last sitting day before a weekend.

Interests, matters *sub judice* and devolution

8.13 A full declaration of any interests relevant to a bill should be made at least on the occasion of the member's first intervention at each stage of the bill's progress. In the case of a bill, the subject-matter against which the

3 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1976–77.

4 Including if the debate is held in Grand Committee.

5 The 14-day periods are inclusive of the day on which the previous stage is concluded. The three-day period is exclusive.

6 HL Deb. 15 December 2009, col. WS238.

7 Procedure 1st Rpt 1987–88; 1st Rpt 1991–92.

8 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 1997–98](#). In the Lords, the Constitutional Reform Bill [HL] was carried over from session 2003–04 to 2004–05, and the Trusts (Capital and Income) Bill [HL] from 2010–12 to 2012–13. Two bills were carried over from 2017–19 to 2019. In the Commons, the power to carry over has been used more frequently.

9 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2001–02](#). That report said, "In the case of the Lords carrying-over a Commons bill, in order to avoid the Parliament Acts being implemented, the Commons should be invited to agree, before the Lords agrees to the carry-over, to a formal direction that section 2 of the Parliament Act 1911 should not apply to the bill in the ensuing session."

10 See for instance Minutes of Proceedings, 5 & 9 September, 15 & 16 October 2019.

relevance of an interest must be judged is the bill as a whole. Repetition of declarations of interest within committee and report stage is unnecessary. There may however be circumstances in which a further declaration is appropriate, for example if an interest which is tangential to the bill as a whole nevertheless has a strong relevance to a particular amendment.¹¹

8.14 The rules governing matters before the courts (*sub judice* – see chapter 4) do not apply to bills or Measures or to proceedings on them.

8.15 The powers of the House to legislate on devolved matters are unaffected by the devolution legislation.¹²

8.16 The Government stated in 1998 that “Westminster would not normally legislate with regard to matters within the competence of ... [a devolved] parliament without the consent of that parliament.”¹³ This convention was later put into statute in respect of Scotland¹⁴ and Wales.¹⁵ Where it is more convenient for legislation on devolved matters to pass through the UK Parliament, the relevant devolved legislatures are invited to consider a Legislative Consent Motion by the relevant devolved administration. Decisions of the Scottish Parliament, Senedd Cymru or the Northern Ireland Assembly to pass (or reject) a Legislative Consent Motion on a bill before the House are highlighted by means of an italic note in the order paper and in the list of bills in progress in *House of Lords Business*.¹⁶ When it is known that legislative consent to a bill has been sought by the Government, this is also noted in the list of bills in progress.¹⁷ For ministerial statements before third reading, see paragraph 8.156.

11 [Guide to the Code of Conduct](#).

12 Scotland Act 1998, s. 28(7); Northern Ireland Act 1998 s. 5(6); Government of Wales Act 2006, ss. 93(5), 107(5).

13 HL Deb. 28 October 1998, cols 1947–52. This was reflected in the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between the UK Government and the devolved administrations, paragraph 14 of which stated: “The United Kingdom Parliament retains authority to legislate on any issue, whether devolved or not. It is ultimately for Parliament to decide what use to make of that power. However, the UK Government will proceed in accordance with the convention that the UK Parliament would not normally legislate with regard to devolved matters except with the agreement of the devolved legislature. The devolved administrations will be responsible for seeking such agreement as may be required for this purpose on an approach from the UK Government.”

14 Scotland Act 1998, s. 28(8), inserted by s. 2 of the Scotland Act 2016.

15 Government of Wales Act 2006, s. 107(6), inserted by s. 2 of the Wales Act 2017.

16 [Procedure and Privileges 4th Rpt 2022–23](#).

17 [Procedure and Privileges 4th Rpt 2022–23](#).

Procedure on introduction: Lords bills

8.17 A member who wishes to present a bill rises at the beginning of public business after oral questions and after any formal business or (exceptionally) at the end of the day’s public business,¹⁸ and introduces the bill by saying:

“My Lords, I beg to introduce a bill to [long title of bill]. I beg to move that this bill be now read a first time.”

8.18 The Question is put from the Woolsack. The first reading of a bill is agreed to without dissent or debate, both as a matter of courtesy and because the House has no knowledge of the contents of the bill until it is published.

8.19 A bill may be introduced by a member on behalf of another member.

Procedure on introduction: Commons bills

8.20 A bill which has been introduced in the Commons and which has passed through all its stages in that House is brought to the Lords by a Commons clerk with a message stating that the Commons have passed the bill. The message is read by the Clerk at the Table as soon as the item of business in progress has ended, and the first reading of the bill (whether a government bill or a private member’s bill) is moved immediately by a government whip.

8.21 The first reading of a bill brought from the Commons is agreed to without discussion, both as a matter of courtesy to the Commons and because at this stage no member has formally taken charge of it.

8.22 The member taking charge of a Commons bill should inform the Legislation Office.

Bills brought up and published when Lords not sitting

8.23 A bill passed by the Commons may be brought to the Lords when the Lords are not sitting (whether adjourned during pleasure or for the day¹⁹). Under SO 49, if it is for the convenience of the House, it is deemed to have been brought from the Commons on that day and the bill and any explanatory notes may be published before first reading.

18 SO 39(3).

19 [Procedure 4th Rpt 2019–21](#).

Publishing of bills and explanatory notes

8.24 After the first reading of a bill an order is made for the bill and any explanatory notes to be published. By convention, Supply and Appropriation Bills are not printed for the Lords. On occasion other bills may not be republished, including bills which are to be taken through the House urgently.

8.25 A bill introduced in the Lords is endorsed with the name of the member of the House who has introduced it. It is not the practice to add other names. A bill brought from the Commons is not endorsed with the name of the member taking charge of the bill.

Explanatory notes

8.26 For most government bills explanatory notes are produced by the responsible department at the time the bill is introduced. Such notes include the legal and policy background, and the financial implications of the bill. Notes must be neutral in tone and must not seek to promote the bill or the policy underlying it.²⁰ Explanatory notes are also produced for Commons amendments to Lords bills. In some cases departments may prepare notes for private members' bills, with the consent of the member in charge of the bill, whose authority must be communicated to the Legislation Office before the notes can be published. Explanatory notes may also be produced by private members themselves: members should submit a draft to the Legislation Office before introduction in order to ensure that these are in proper form. For many bills, the Government also produce separate impact assessments, outlining economic, social and environmental impacts of the policy.

Statements on public bills

8.27 Under s. 19 of the Human Rights Act 1998 the minister in charge of a government bill must make a statement before second reading as to whether in their view the provisions of the bill are compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights, and publish the statement in such manner as they consider appropriate.²¹ The statement is usually set out on the cover page of a bill as first published for each House; where bills are not published for the Lords the statement is publicised by means of a written statement.

8.28 Under s. 20 of the Environment Act 2021, the minister in charge of a government bill must make a statement before second reading if in their view the bill contains provision which, if enacted, would be environmental law, and publish the statement in such manner as they consider appropriate. The statement is usually set out on the cover page of a bill as first published for each House; where bills are not published for the Lords the statement is publicised by means of a written statement.

8.28A Under section 13C of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the minister in charge of a government bill must make a statement before second reading if in their view the bill contains provision which, if enacted, would affect trade between Northern Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom. The statement is usually set out on the cover page of a bill as first published for each House; where bills are not published for the Lords the statement is publicised by means of a written statement.

Notice of subsequent stages

8.29 Scheduling of business is co-ordinated by the office of the Government Chief Whip. The member in charge of a bill gives notice of a date for each stage in *House of Lords Business*.

8.30 Any member may move any stage of a bill on behalf of the member in charge of the bill (with their authority or unanimous leave – see paragraph 3.41). Bills, once introduced, are in the possession of the House and not in the sole ownership of the member in charge.²²

Private members' bills

8.31 A ballot is conducted to determine the order of private members' bills to be introduced at the beginning of each session in accordance with the following procedure. The ballot is held two working days after State Opening. Members submit a long and short title to the Legislation Office by 4pm on the previous working day (i.e. the day after State Opening), but a full text is not necessary. Ballot entries may be submitted before State Opening. No more than 25 bills are drawn from the ballot. Two bills are introduced each sitting day in the order that they are drawn, beginning a week after the

²⁰ [Procedure 2nd Rpt 1997–98](#).

²¹ This requirement does not apply to private members' bills.

²² HL Deb. 19 July 1989, cols 788–91; [Procedure 3rd Rpt 1992–93](#).

ballot. Bills and any explanatory notes are published in order of introduction, subject to readiness and not necessarily straight after introduction. A bill may be published with a long title which is wider than the scope of the bill, but not vice versa.²³

8.32 A member who wishes to enter the ballot should discuss drafting with the Legislation Office well before the day of State Opening. A member may enter only one bill into the ballot, and a member may not submit for entry to the ballot a bill of identical or substantially similar effect to a bill already entered. A member may use a first reading 'slot' determined by the ballot to introduce only the bill entered into the ballot. The 'slot' may not be handed to another member.

8.33 After all the first reading slots allocated by the ballot have been taken or lapsed, members may introduce bills in the usual way (see paragraph 8.12). Such bills are prepared for introduction on a first come-first served basis, with a queue opening at 10am the working day after the last ballot bill is published (or not proceeded with), and introduced when ready for publication.

8.34 There is no procedural distinction between government bills and private members' bills, save in respect of carry-over, human rights and environmental law statements, and third reading statements about legislative consent. In practice the House normally accords priority to proceedings on government bills except where private members' bills are not expected to give rise to debate. But there is no concept of government or private members' 'time' in the Lords, nor any specific time when government or private members' bills are taken.

Commons bills not taken up within twelve sitting days

8.35 Under SO 48, if a bill brought from the Commons remains for twelve sitting days without any member giving notice of a date for second reading, it cannot be proceeded with except after eight days' notice. Motions to dispense with SO 48 have been agreed to.²⁴

²³ [Procedure and Privileges 7th Rpt 2019–21.](#)

²⁴ 1 Aug 1980, 24 July 2000.

Withdrawal of bills

8.36 A Commons bill may not be withdrawn in the House of Lords.

8.37 At any time after first reading, a bill originating in the House of Lords may, with the agreement of the House, be withdrawn by the Lord who presented it. This may be achieved by the member in charge of the bill, having moved the motion for a stage of the bill, begging leave to withdraw that motion. Unanimous leave of the House is required for any motion to be withdrawn, so a single dissenting voice prevents leave being given and the Question must in that case be put and decided. The granting of leave to withdraw a stage of a bill is treated as withdrawal of the bill, unless the member in charge indicates that they intend to proceed with the bill on another day.

8.38 If a bill is between stages, a separate motion, of which notice is given, should be tabled, "That the bill be withdrawn". Such a motion does not require unanimous agreement.

Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee

8.39 All bills other than consolidation and supply bills are considered by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee, which reports to the House in relation to any delegated powers they contain. These reports are highlighted by means of an italic note against a bill in *House of Lords Business*. The Committee aims to report before committee stage; the House is under no obligation to delay proceedings if the Committee has not reported by that time. If time allows, the Committee may also report on government amendments, if these involve significant delegated powers.²⁵

Constitution Committee

8.40 The Constitution Committee examines the constitutional implications of all public bills coming before the House. The Committee aims to report before committee stage; the House is under no obligation to delay proceedings if the Committee has not reported by that time. Constitution Committee reports may be highlighted by means of an italic note against a bill in *House of Lords Business*.

²⁵ [Procedure 1st Rpt 1999–2000.](#)

Pre-legislative scrutiny

8.41 Government bills published in draft may be considered and reported on, before they are introduced, by a select or joint committee appointed for that purpose. At least 3–4 months (excluding long recesses) are normally required to hear evidence and report. Such 'pre-legislative scrutiny' does not eliminate any stages when the bill itself is considered by the House.

Lords bills and Commons financial privilege

8.42 Under Commons SO No. 80, a Lords bill which would impose or alter a charge upon the people (i.e. taxation) or upon public funds (i.e. spending) requires a privilege amendment (see paragraphs 8.158–8.159); and a Lords bill which would do so as its main object may proceed in the Commons only as a government bill. A supply bill ('bill of aids and supplies') cannot start in the Lords.

Second reading

8.43 The second reading is the stage at which the general principles of the bill are considered. The member in charge says "*My Lords, I beg to move that this bill be now read a second time*" and makes the case for the bill. In debate, other members may indicate, in general terms, how the bill might be amended, but discussion of points of detail should normally be left to the committee stage.

Opposition to second reading

8.44 A bill may be opposed on second reading by an amendment to the effect "That this House declines to give the bill a second reading." The amendment may add a reason (a 'reasoned amendment'). The agreement of the House to such an amendment, with or without a reason, means rejection of the bill. The Question as amended is not put, and the bill is removed from the list of bills in progress in *House of Lords Business*.

8.45 It is possible to oppose the motion "That this bill be now read a second time", without tabling an amendment, but this is uncommon, because notice of such opposition, which is desirable in the interests of good order, cannot be given on the order paper.

Second reading agreed to with amendment

8.46 Amendments may be moved which do not seek to negative the second reading but invite the House to put on record a point of view in agreeing to it.

8.47 Notice is required on the order paper of any amendment to the motion for second reading. If notice has been given of more than one amendment, they are dealt with in the order in which they relate to the motion, or, if they relate to the same place in the motion, in the order in which they were tabled. In such cases it is usual for the whole debate to take place on the first amendment, and for the members who tabled the other amendments to speak in this debate. When the debate is concluded, the Question is put on each amendment successively. The Question on the original motion or on the original motion as amended is then finally put and decided.

Motion for adjournment of second reading debate

8.48 A second reading debate may be adjourned, with or without notice or reasons. A motion to adjourn the debate, if agreed to, does not prevent the motion for the second reading being put down for a subsequent day.

Consideration in a second reading committee

8.49 Second reading debates on certain Law Commission bills are held in a second reading committee.²⁶ Following first reading, a motion is tabled, with at least three sitting days' notice, to refer the bill to a 'second reading committee'. The committee, which has unlimited membership and functions like a Grand Committee, debates the bill with no formal time limit,²⁷ and reports to the House that it has considered it. The second reading motion is then normally taken without debate in the House, though it remains possible, in the event of opposition, for amendments to be tabled or a vote to take place on the motion. Such Law Commission bills are normally committed to a special public bill committee (see paragraph 8.119).

²⁶ [Procedure 1st Rpt 2007–08; 2nd Rpt 2010–12](#). Scottish Law Commission bills are also eligible.

²⁷ The overall time limit for Grand Committee applies. If it is reached, debate is adjourned.

Debate in Grand Committee before second reading

8.50 With agreement of the House, bills may be referred to Grand Committee for debate before second reading.²⁸ Such agreement is sought through a business of the House motion of which the usual notice is given on the order paper. The House is then invited to give the Bill a formal second reading in the Chamber, any time from the next sitting day. An italic notice of this may appear in *House of Lords Business* once a Business motion is agreed, and formal notice is annotated “(Debated in Grand Committee on [date])”. It is not expected that this will be the occasion of further debate, but any member may speak²⁹ and amendments to the motion may be tabled. It is not expected that this procedure will be used frequently. Any such debate requires consultation with the usual channels and agreement by the House. It is expected that this procedure will be more appropriate for shorter, less complex and less controversial bills. Where a speakers’ list is expected to exceed the capacity of the Moses Room, the procedure is unlikely to be appropriate. The rule that no more than one bill may be considered in Grand Committee on a single day applies. Debate in Grand Committee counts as part of second reading for the purposes of Standing Orders 44 (no two stages on one day) and 48 (notice of second reading of Commons bills). Second reading debates are not formally time limited but the overall time limit for Grand Committee applies; if it is reached, debate is adjourned. Amendments to the bill may not be tabled until after formal second reading.

Commitment

8.51 After second reading, either immediately or at a later date, bills are committed to a committee on a motion in the name of the member in charge. Bills are usually committed to a Committee of the whole House or a Grand Committee. The forms of words are “*That this bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House*” or “*to a Grand Committee*”.

8.52 Any bill may be committed to a Grand Committee, but bills which are unlikely to attract amendments and which would have their committee stage discharged on the day of the committee stage are not committed to Grand Committees.

8.53 It is in order for parts of a bill to be committed to a Committee of the whole House and parts to a Grand Committee.³⁰ In such cases the two committees must sit consecutively; usually the Committee of the whole House sits first and reports the part of the bill committed to it before the Grand Committee meets. Separate amendment sheets and marshalled lists are published for each set of proceedings. When both committees’ proceedings are concluded an order is made that the bill be republished as amended.

8.54 In certain cases bills may be committed to other types of committee. These include special public bill committees and select committees, which are described at paragraphs 8.114–8.130.

8.55 The House sometimes wishes, after committing a bill to one kind of committee and possibly making some progress, to commit it to another instead. The motion is “*That [the bill be reported from the [original committee] in respect of proceedings up to [Clause x, amendment y or date]; and that] the order of commitment of [date] be discharged and [the remainder of] the bill be committed to a [new committee].*”³¹

Committee negatived

8.56 In order to save the time of the House, supply bills and money bills are not usually committed. This is the invariable practice in the case of supply bills and the normal practice for money bills.³² Immediately after the second reading the member in charge moves “*That this bill be not committed*” and the Question is put. If it is agreed to, the next stage is third reading. A bill which has not been committed is described as having had its committee stage ‘negatived’. If Committee negatived is intended for a bill which is not a supply or money bill, SO 45 must be dispensed with and an italic notice to this effect is put on the order paper.³³

Instructions

8.57 Instructions to any committee on a bill may be moved after second reading.

30 LJ (2011–12) 312; LJ (2014–15) 260.

31 See Minutes of Proceedings, 12 October 2020.

32 SO 45(1); Procedure 1st Rpt 1970–71.

33 [Procedure 4th Rpt 2019–21](#).

28 [Procedure and Privileges 5th Rpt 2021–22](#). The procedure can be applied to a private member’s bill.

29 Including a member who spoke in Grand Committee.

8.58 Instructions may be either mandatory or permissive. The most common mandatory instruction directs the committee to consider the clauses and schedules in an order other than that of the bill. Permissive instructions enable a committee to do something that it could not otherwise do, such as divide a bill into two.

Amendments

Tabling of amendments

8.59 Amendments may be moved in committee, on report and on third reading. The following section describes the general procedure for dealing with amendments. Issues specific to particular stages are described in the sections relating to those stages.

8.60 Amendments may be tabled with the Legislation Office at any time after the conclusion of the preceding stage of the bill. When second reading and committee stage are expected to take place on the same day, or in other situations by agreement, amendments are accepted before second reading. The late tabling of amendments is strongly deprecated since members have only a limited time to consider them and, if necessary, move amendments to them.³⁴ Amendments, like bills, are drafted in a gender-neutral way so far as practicable.

8.61 Amendments to be published the next working day³⁵ should be tabled between 10am and 4pm on any working day. Amendments may be tabled with the duty clerk during recesses, between 10am and 4pm.

Explanatory statements

8.62 At committee and report stages and third reading, members may add an explanatory statement of up to around 50 words to each of their amendments or notices of intention to oppose clause stand part. The practice is voluntary and quite often may be unnecessary. Such statements should neutrally describe the intended effect of the amendment or the purpose for which it has been tabled. They should not be phrased as an argument for its adoption. Where more than one member has signed an amendment, any explanatory statement is attributable to the lead member, who is solely responsible for authorising its content and any subsequent

changes. The Legislation Office will assist with drafting explanatory statements but the accuracy of the content is the responsibility of the lead member.³⁶

8.63 Explanatory statements may be used to indicate whether a member believes their amendment is linked to or consequential on another. However, such statements merely express the member's view on the matter, which will ultimately be a decision for the House. An explicitly stated link between two amendments may affect whether an amendment is subject to the 'decided issue' rule for third reading amendments (see paragraph 8.153). For amendments at third reading, explanatory statements may be used to indicate how the amendment fulfils one of the three principal purposes of such amendments (see paragraph 8.152).

8.64 Explanatory statements are printed immediately after the amendment to which they relate on any daily sheet of amendments and on each relevant marshalled list. Statements added after the amendment has been published, or subsequently amended, are not normally published until the next marshalled list. Explanatory statements are not starred.

Admissibility of amendments

8.65 The House observes the following general rules regarding the admissibility of amendments:

- (a) amendments must be relevant to the subject matter of the bill³⁷ and amendments to a clause or schedule must be relevant to the clause or schedule to which they are proposed;
- (b) amendments proposed at any stage must not be inconsistent with a previous decision taken at that stage,³⁸ except where alternative amendments are proposed to the same place in the bill;
- (c) amendments to a schedule are not in order if they go beyond the scope of, or are contrary to, the relevant clause which has been agreed to;
- (d) amendments to the long title are not in order unless they are to rectify a mistake in the original title, to restate the title more

36 [Procedure 6th Rpt 2017–19](#).

37 See HL Deb. 6 February 1968, cols 1075–86.

38 SO 46.

34 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1976–77.

35 This refers to hard copy. Online publication usually takes place the night before.

clearly or to reflect amendments to the bill which are relevant to the bill but not covered by the former title;

- (e) clause headings, and headings placed above parts of the bill or above groups of clauses, are technically not part of the bill and so are not open to amendment. Punctuation is also technically not part of the bill.

8.66 The subject matter or scope of a bill represents the reasonable limits of its collective purposes, as defined by its existing clauses and schedules. Where a bill has one or two purposes, only amendments relating to those purposes, or touching on matters closely connected with them, are relevant. Where a bill has three or more purposes, amendments directed to objects not specifically covered by the bill, but broadly germane to its subject-matter, may be relevant. A bill's scope is not determined by its titles or altered by things said in debate or amendments to the motion for second reading. Instructions to extend the scope of a bill (that is, to make admissible amendments which would otherwise be excluded by the rules of relevance) are not in order.³⁹

8.67 The Legislation Office advises on whether an amendment is admissible and it is expected that this advice will be taken. If a member insists on tabling an amendment which the Legislation Office has advised is inadmissible, that Office writes to the Leader of the House, copying the advice to the other leaders, the chief whips and the Convenor. The Leader of the House draws the House's or Committee's attention to the advice as soon as the amendment is called, and asks the member and the House or Committee to endorse the advice of the Legislation Office. The reason for this is that the admissibility of an amendment can ultimately be decided only by the House or Committee itself, there being no authority that can in advance rule an amendment out of order. If the amendment is moved and pressed, the House decides in the usual way; there is no separate decision on admissibility.

8.68 Tabling amendments to bills originating in the House of Commons is unprofitable if such amendments appear to be material and intolerable infringements of Commons financial privilege, in that they impose a charge not covered by the terms of the money or Ways and Means resolutions in the Commons, unless there is reason to believe that the Commons will pass

a supplementary financial resolution (see paragraph 8.192). Advice may be obtained from the Legislation Office.

Publishing of amendments

8.69 All amendments to a particular bill tabled on the same day are published overnight and are not numbered at this stage. The names of members supporting an amendment appear above it, up to a maximum of four names, or five if the member in charge of the bill adds their name.⁴⁰

Rules of marshalling

8.70 Subject to the rules listed below, amendments are published in the order of their page, line and word references in the bill, taking account of any instruction that has been tabled. The rules are as follows:

- (a) amendments to any preamble and the long title, in that order, are taken last;
- (b) amendments to leave out words take precedence over amendments to leave out the same words and insert others;
- (c) amendments to leave out a shorter block of text (e.g. lines 1–5) take precedence over amendments to leave out a longer block of text (e.g. lines 1–20);
- (d) amendments to leave out any block of text other than a complete clause or schedule come before amendments to that text;
- (e) amendments to a clause or schedule are considered before an amendment to leave out a clause or schedule and substitute another;
- (f) because each clause and schedule must be stood part of the bill in committee, a proposal to leave out a clause or schedule in committee is not tabled as an amendment, but a statement of intention to oppose the Question that the clause or schedule stand part of the bill. Notice is usually given of such intention in italics, without being numbered, on the marshalled list. On report and third reading an intention to leave out a clause or schedule is indicated by tabling an amendment;⁴¹

⁴⁰ Procedure 1st Rpt 1974–75.

⁴¹ See HL Deb. 11 June 1964, cols 986–1001; Procedure 1st Rpt 1983–84.

³⁹ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1990–91.

- (g) the Question that the clause or schedule stand part of the bill or (on report or third reading) an amendment to leave out the clause or schedule is considered after all amendments to the clause or schedule (including an amendment to leave out the clause or schedule and substitute another);
- (h) at committee stage, amendments to divide a clause or schedule are taken after the clause or schedule has been stood part of the bill;⁴²
- (i) at committee stage, amendments to transpose a clause or clauses, or part of a clause or schedule, to another place in the bill are taken after the clause or schedule (or the last of the affected clauses or schedules) has been stood part of the bill;⁴³
- (j) amendments to insert a new clause are considered at the place in the bill where it is proposed that the new clause is to be inserted;⁴⁴
- (k) amendments to amendments are marshalled immediately after the original amendment, in the order in which they relate to the text of the original amendment;
- (l) where alternative amendments are tabled to the same place in the bill, they are marshalled in the order in which they are tabled, except that priority is given to an amendment tabled by the member in charge. Where it is not possible to determine the order of tabling, the Legislation Office may devise another method, e.g. a ballot, to determine the marshalling order. If a logical order applies, it may be followed, starting with the amendment closest to the existing text. A decision may be taken on each amendment in turn notwithstanding SO 46, even if the second amendment is in substitution for the first amendment to which the House or committee has already agreed.

8.71 Accordingly amendments are marshalled as follows:

Clause 1

⁴² See HL Deb. 21 January 1997, col. 586, and 21 Nov 2017, col. 93.

⁴³ See HL Deb. 20 July 1995, col. 468.

⁴⁴ In case of an instruction to consider schedule B after clause A, new clauses after A are normally considered after A, not after B.

Amendment No.

1. Page 1, line 5, leave out subsection (1)
2. Page 1, line 5, leave out subsection (1) and insert—“(1) —”
3. Page 1, line 6, leave out “word”
4. Page 1, line 6, leave out “word” and insert “words”
5. Page 1, line 6, after “word” insert “usually”
6. Page 1, line 7, leave out “4” and insert “5”
7. Page 1, line 7, leave out “4” and insert “6”
8. Page 1, line 7, leave out “4” and insert “7”

(If amendment 6 is agreed to, the Question is put on amendment 7 thus:

“Page 1, line 7, leave out “5” and insert “6””

and on amendment 8 thus:

“Page 1, line 7, leave out “5” [or “6”] and insert “7””.)

9. Leave out Clause 1 and insert the following new Clause—“[text of new Clause]”

10. Lord A gives notice of his intention to oppose the Question that Clause 1 stand part of the bill [at committee] or

Leave out Clause 1 [at report or third reading]

11. Transpose Clause 1 to after Clause 46

Marshalled lists

At committee and report stages

8.72 Two working days before consideration of a bill is due to take place, all amendments are numbered and published as a ‘marshalled list’, arranged in the order they will be considered, taking account of any instruction. If further amendments are tabled on the day before the day of consideration they are published on supplementary sheets or are incorporated in a revised marshalled list. Any amendments not previously published, and amendments altered since they were last published, are marked with a ★, but are

otherwise treated identically to other amendments.⁴⁵ When the stage is not completed in one day, further amendments may be tabled, which are published on sheets supplementary to the marshalled list and on further marshalled lists. Once published in a marshalled list, an amendment cannot be withdrawn before it is called, unless the list is reissued for a further day.⁴⁶

At third reading

8.73 Marshalled lists for third reading are produced in the same way as those for committee and report, except that amendments must be tabled by the working day before the stage. The list is usually published on the day of the stage.

Manuscript amendments

8.74 Whenever possible, amendments should be tabled in time for inclusion in the marshalled list. However, except on third reading,⁴⁷ it is in order to move, as manuscript amendments, amendments of which notice has not been given on the marshalled list or on a supplementary sheet. Occasionally a manuscript amendment is justified, even in the course of debate, for instance to correct an amendment already tabled or when an amendment under consideration is objected to and it is clear that with slight alteration of language it would become acceptable. However, manuscript amendments should rarely be moved, since other members of the House will not have had an opportunity to consider them and may be deprived of the opportunity of moving amendments to them.

8.75 When a manuscript amendment is moved, the text of the amendment is read out both by the mover and by the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair when putting the Question. The member on the Woolsack may, with the leave of the House, dispense with this requirement if the amendment is very lengthy.

Procedure on amendments

8.76 There is no selection of amendments. The clauses in the bill are proceeded with in sequence, unless an instruction varying the sequence has

⁴⁵ But see paragraph 8.60.

⁴⁶ Procedure 1st Rpt 1962–63.

⁴⁷ SO 47. If SO 44 is set aside, then manuscript amendments are permitted at third reading despite SO 47, unless the House provides otherwise.

been agreed to. Each amendment on the marshalled list and each manuscript amendment is called in turn by the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair, subject only to pre-emption (see paragraph 8.80). An amendment which has been tabled need not be moved, but if none of the members named as supporters of the amendment moves it any other member may do so.⁴⁸

8.77 After the member moving the amendment has spoken the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair puts the text of the amendment to the House or the committee. The debate on the amendment follows, at the end of which the member who moved the amendment either begs leave to withdraw it or invites the House or committee to agree to it. The member on the Woolsack or in the Chair must put the Question that the amendment be agreed to if the member who has moved the amendment does not beg leave to withdraw, or if leave to withdraw is not unanimous. For remote participation by eligible disabled members, see paragraph 4.36.

8.78 Amendments to amendments are taken after the original amendment has been moved and put for the first time. When any such amendments have been disposed of, the Question on the original amendment, or the original amendment as amended, is decided. If the original amendment is not moved, amendments to it are not called.

8.79 If a member whose amendment is called wishes to speak, other than to say “*Not moved*”, he or she must move the amendment, and the member on the Woolsack or in the Chair must put it to the House or committee. This allows others to speak too. It is not in order to make a detailed speech and then to say “*Not moved*”.

Guidance on speaking at amending stages

8.79A Members taking part in debate at an amending stage should not use their speech simply to summarise or repeat at length points made by others. They should not make “second reading” speeches or make discursive interventions which are not relevant to the amendment(s) under discussion. A member need not be present at earlier stages of consideration of a bill to contribute to debate. Whether or not a member was present for earlier stages of consideration of a bill, their contribution should reflect the purpose of the current stage.

⁴⁸ HL Deb. 21 March 1984, col. 1325. The same applies to motions at consideration of Commons amendments ([Procedure 5th Rpt 2017–19](#)).

8.79B A member speaking more than once at Committee stage should not repeat points they have already made. Members (other than the Minister) pressing or withdrawing an amendment should normally be brief and need not respond to all the points made during the debate, nor revisit points made when moving the amendment.

8.79C For length of speeches on amendments, see paragraphs 4.4I and 4.4IA.

Pre-emption

8.80 If an amendment has been pre-empted by one previously agreed to by the House, e.g. because the text proposed to be amended has been left out of the bill, the amendment will not be called. The member on the Woolsack or in the Chair alerts the House to this possibility when calling the pre-empting amendment if it is expected to be moved, otherwise when putting the text of the pre-empting amendment after it has been moved.

Grouping of amendments

8.81 In order to avoid repetition, related amendments are often grouped and debated together. Lists of such groupings are prepared by agreement between the members tabling the amendments and the Government Whips' Office before each day's proceedings commence on a bill. Groupings are informal but helpful to the House and de-grouping is discouraged once each day's groupings have been published.⁴⁹ A single debate is then usually conducted on the whole group of amendments (not necessarily consecutive or in the same member's name) when the first amendment in the group is called. But each amendment in the group must be called, moved (if desired) and disposed of separately at its place in the marshalled list. Proceedings on later amendments in a group are often formal but further debate may take place and an amendment previously debated with others in a group may be moved at its place in the bill.⁵⁰ When proceedings on later amendments in a group are formal, the amendments are moved as follows:

“My Lords, I have already spoken to this amendment. I beg to move.”

8.82 If the first amendment in a group is agreed to, it does not follow that the other amendments in the group will all be agreed to, unless they are

49 [Procedure and Privileges 1st Rpt 2021–22](#).

50 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1976–77; 1st Rpt 1987–88.

directly consequential. It is a matter for the House or committee to judge in each case how the decision on the first amendment affects the others.

Effect of groupings on third reading amendments

8.83 A member who believes that an amendment at committee or report stage has been wrongly grouped should make this clear in debate. Otherwise, under the rule against reopening at third reading an issue which has previously been decided, members may be precluded from retabling the same or very similar amendments at third reading, if another amendment in the group was voted on or negated at committee or report stage (see paragraph 8.153).⁵¹

Amendments moved *en bloc*

8.84 Amendments may be moved formally *en bloc* (i.e. together) provided that:

- they appear consecutively on the marshalled list;
- at committee stage, they all relate to the same clause or schedule;
- they have already been spoken to; and
- no member objects.

8.85 If any member objects⁵² to amendments being moved *en bloc* they must be moved separately to the extent desired. A vote cannot take place on amendments moved *en bloc*. Amendments may not be withdrawn *en bloc*. Practice is different at consideration of Commons amendments; see below.

Proceedings in Committee of the whole House

8.86 A Committee of the whole House is, in fact, the House itself in a less formal guise. It is presided over from the Chair,⁵³ and conducts its business according to more flexible rules of procedure. It meets in the Chamber and any member may take part. Each proposed clause and schedule must be agreed to ('stood part of the bill') at Committee stage in order to proceed.

51 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1991–92.

52 Objection is registered by brief intervention; there is no debate.

53 Under SO 61 the Lord Speaker may preside over Committee of the whole House.

8.87 The member in charge of the bill moves, and the Question is put:

“That the House do now resolve itself into a committee upon the bill.”

8.88 This motion is sometimes used as an opportunity for a general discussion on the procedure to be followed in committee or on whether to go into committee at that time. The motion may be opposed by reasoned amendment or by an amendment to postpone the committee stage or to discharge the order of commitment and to commit the bill instead to another committee, though opposition to the motion seldom occurs. When the committee stage lasts more than one day, the motion moved on a subsequent day *“That the House do again resolve itself into a committee upon the bill”* may provide an opportunity to raise matters relating to the progress of the bill. The rejection of a motion to go into committee does not represent the rejection of the bill, but merely the rejection of the proposition that the bill be considered that day.

8.89 When the motion that the House go into committee has been agreed to, the member on the Woolsack leaves the Woolsack and takes the Chair at the Table of the House.⁵⁴

Powers and duties of member in the Chair

8.90 The powers and duties of the member in the Chair are the same as those of the Lord Speaker or Deputy Speaker when the House is sitting (see paragraph 4.7). They are generally confined to the calling on of clauses, schedules and amendments and putting the Question. The member in the Chair also makes the formal report of the committee to the whole House. The member in the Chair (other than the Lord Speaker or Senior Deputy Speaker) may vote but does not have a casting vote.

Powers of Committee of the whole House

8.91 A Committee of the whole House can only consider those matters which have been referred to it, including any instruction given by the House. Where a bill has been committed to a committee, the whole bill is the committee's order of reference. A Committee of the whole House may interrupt its proceedings informally but has no power to take other business, adjourn the sitting or adjourn consideration of a bill to a future sitting; to do any of these the House must be resumed on motion.

Procedure in Committee of the whole House

8.92 SO 29, which forbids a member to speak more than once to any motion, does not apply when the House is in committee.⁵⁵ A next business motion (see paragraph 4.64) is not permitted.

Clause stand part

8.93 As soon as amendments to each clause have been disposed of, the member in the Chair puts the Question that the clause (or the clause as amended) stand part of the bill. On this Question a general debate on the clause may take place. Any member who wishes to leave out the clause speaks to this Question. Warning of such opposition will normally have been given by means of an italic notice on the marshalled list, and if there is no italic notice any member who wishes to speak on 'clause stand part' should inform the member in the Chair. Once a clause has been disposed of, the committee cannot return to it and consider it further.

8.94 Where there are several consecutive clauses to which no amendment has been set down, the Question is put on all of them *en bloc*. If members wish to speak to one of these clauses or move a manuscript amendment they may do so when the clauses are called; but in this case they should warn the member in the Chair of their intention, and that clause will then be dealt with separately.

Postponement of clauses

8.95 Clauses or parts may be postponed on a motion made to that effect of which notice has been given; they may also be postponed as the result of an instruction. A clause may be postponed without notice after consideration of it has begun but it may not be postponed if it has already been amended.

Schedules

8.96 The schedules to the bill are considered in order after the clauses (unless there is an instruction to the committee to take them in a different order) and are dealt with in the same manner as clauses.

⁵⁴ SO 61.

⁵⁵ See also SO 61.

Preamble and long title

8.97 As soon as the clauses and schedules have been disposed of, the member in the Chair puts without any motion being moved the Questions on any preamble to the bill and on the long title. Amendments to the preamble and long title may be moved before each of these Questions is put.

8.98 Consequential or drafting amendments to the long title are frequently agreed to; no others are allowed (see paragraph 8.65). Preambles may be omitted in committee and also amended, and it is in order to insert a preamble in a bill where none exists.

House resumed during committee stage

8.99 If the committee stage is not completed at one sitting, it is necessary for a member (usually a government whip) to move *“That the House be resumed”*. When this motion has been agreed to, the member in the Chair leaves the Chair and goes to the Woolsack. The House goes into committee again either later on the same day (on occasions when the House has been resumed in order to take other business) or on a future day.

8.100 When it is agreed that there should be a break during a committee stage, and there is no other business to be taken, the House is not resumed and adjourned formally but the committee simply adjourns without Question put until a time announced by a government whip.

8.101 When the committee stage is resumed, the committee proceeds from the point in the bill where it left off.

Conclusion of proceedings in committee

8.102 When the committee stage is completed the member in the Chair states that the committee’s proceedings have concluded and that the House will now resume.⁵⁶ They then go to the Woolsack to report the bill to the House.⁵⁷ If the bill has been amended, an order is made for the bill to be republished as amended, and the report stage takes place (“the report is received”) on a later date.

⁵⁶ [Procedure 4th Rpt 2014–15](#).

⁵⁷ Or, if the Lord Speaker or another Deputy Speaker takes over the Woolsack, the Lord who was in the Chair may report the bill from the Government front bench.

Report received immediately

8.103 If the bill is reported without amendment, the member in charge of the bill may immediately move *“That this report be now received”*. If this is agreed to, the next stage is third reading. It is, however, common for a separate report stage to be taken on a later date even when the bill has not been amended in committee.⁵⁸ This ensures that there is an opportunity to amend the bill before third reading.

Order of commitment discharged

8.104 If no amendments have been set down to a bill and it appears that no member wishes to move a manuscript amendment or to speak to any clause or schedule, the member in charge may move that the order of commitment (or recommitment) be discharged.⁵⁹ This motion may be moved only on the day the committee stage is set down for and notice must be given on the order paper.

8.105 The member in charge of the bill says:

“My Lords,

I understand that no amendments have been set down to this bill, and that no noble Lord has indicated a wish to move a manuscript amendment or to speak in committee.

Unless, therefore, any noble Lord objects, I beg to move that the order of commitment be discharged.”

8.106 The Question is then put: *“That the order of commitment be discharged.”* If this Question is agreed to, the next stage of the bill is third reading.

8.107 If any member objects, however, this Question cannot be completed and the member in charge of the bill must at once move *“That the House do now resolve itself into a committee upon the bill.”* If this is agreed to, the House goes into committee in the usual way.

8.108 For the purposes of SOs 38(5) and 44, the discharge of the order of commitment constitutes a stage of a bill. Unless SO 44 has been

⁵⁸ Procedure 1st Rpt 1956–57.

⁵⁹ SO 45(2).

suspended or dispensed with, third reading may not be taken on the same day as that on which the order of commitment has been discharged.

Bill reported forthwith

8.109 Where no amendment has been set down to a bill and no member of the House has indicated a wish to speak, but the order of commitment has not been discharged, the House goes into committee. The member in the Chair then says:

“[Short title]—My Lords, I understand that no amendments have been set down to the bill, and that no noble Lord has indicated a wish to move a manuscript amendment or to speak in committee. With the agreement of the committee, I will now report the bill to the House without amendment.”

8.110 Members who wish to speak to any of the clauses or schedules or to move a manuscript amendment should indicate their intentions on this Question, in which case the member in the Chair must put the clauses and schedules in the usual way. If no member indicates a wish to speak, the member in the Chair says *“the House will now resume,”* and returns to the Woolsack to report the bill.

Proceedings in Grand Committee

8.111 The proceedings and forms of words for amendments and clauses in Grand Committee are identical to those in a Committee of the whole House save that no votes may take place. Normally only one bill per day may be considered in Grand Committee. Amendments, which may be tabled and spoken to by any member, are published and circulated as for Committee of the whole House.

8.112 As divisions are not permitted in Grand Committee, decisions to alter the bill may only be made by unanimity. Thus when the Question is put, a single voice against an amendment causes the amendment to be negatived.⁶⁰ If there is opposition to an amendment, it should be withdrawn, to enable the House to decide the matter on report. An amendment put to a decision by the mover and negatived may not be retabled at report. For the same reason the Question that a clause or schedule stand part cannot be disagreed to unless there is unanimity; provided there is a single voice in favour, the clause or schedule must be agreed to.

8.113 Unless the House orders otherwise, the next stage of a bill reported from a Grand Committee is report.

Other committee procedures for public bills

8.114 Certain other procedures have been developed to scrutinise public bills, either instead of or additional to proceedings in Committee of the whole House or Grand Committee. These include a special public bill committee, and a select or joint committee.

8.115 The purpose of these procedures is to enable more detailed examination of bills to take place, involving the hearing of evidence.

8.116 Unless the House orders otherwise, the next stage of a bill reported from a special public bill committee is report; but a bill reported from a select or joint committee is recommitted to a Committee of the whole House, unless the committee has recommended that the bill should not proceed.

8.117 Bills may be considered under these procedures only if the House has agreed to a particular order of commitment. It is usual for such a motion to be moved immediately after the second reading has been agreed to. However, a motion to commit a bill to a select or joint committee may be moved at any time before third reading; and a motion that the order of commitment to a Committee of the whole House (or to a Grand Committee) be discharged and that an alternative order be made may be moved any day before the committee stage begins. Notice is required of any such motion.

8.118 The members of a special public bill committee, or a select or joint committee, are subsequently appointed by the House on the recommendation of the Committee of Selection.

Special public bill committee

8.119 Special public bill committees are empowered to take written and oral evidence on bills before considering them clause by clause in the usual way. Uncontroversial Law Commission bills are normally committed to a special public bill committee,⁶¹ but the procedure may also be used for any bill irrespective of the House of origin.⁶²

61 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2007–08; 2nd Rpt 2010–12.](#)

62 [Procedure 1st Rpt 1994–95.](#)

60 See paragraph 7.2.

8.120 A bill is committed to a special public bill committee by a motion moved after second reading by the member in charge. The membership of the committee is proposed by the Committee of Selection, and the Government have a majority over the other parties, with remaining places held by the Crossbench members. It has been the practice for the relevant minister and frontbench spokespeople from the other parties to be members. Any member of the House who is not a member of the committee may attend any public meeting of the committee, and may speak and move amendments, but may not vote.⁶³

8.121 Unlike select committees empowered to take evidence, a special public bill committee is not normally given powers such as those to appoint advisers or to travel.⁶⁴ The committee may sit whether the House is sitting or not.⁶⁵

8.122 The relevant government department produces with the bill a summary of the consultation undertaken, with an indication of representations received and changes made. The evidence-taking usually begins with the minister giving evidence, following which the minister rejoins the committee on the other side of the table. Special public bill committees must conclude their taking of evidence within a 28-day period beginning with the date on which they are appointed, excluding any adjournment of the House for more than three days.

8.123 Amendments may be tabled in the usual way at any time after second reading. There is an interval after the conclusion of the evidence taking, to enable members of the committee, and others, to table amendments. Notice of the proceedings is given on the order paper and amendments for consideration in such proceedings are published and circulated as for a Committee of the whole House. The committee then meets to consider any amendments tabled. Proceedings are not time-limited. The Senior Deputy Speaker may take the Chair for these proceedings if desired (but may not vote, not being a member of the committee).

8.124 Special public bill committees, when considering amendments, follow the procedure of a committee stage in the Chamber as closely as

63 SO 64.

64 On 22 Jan 2013 the special public bill committee on the Partnerships (Prosecution) (Scotland) Bill [HL] was given power to travel. The special public bill committee on the Insurance Bill [HL] was given power to appoint a specialist adviser on 25 November 2014.

65 Procedure 3rd Rpt 1970–71; 2nd Rpt 1987–88.

possible, including rules on remote participation. Members speak standing and, so far as they can, observe the same degree of formality as in the Chamber. The committee may vote on amendments and motions: if the Question cannot be decided by collecting the voices, the Clerk reads out the names of the members of the committee. Each member when their name is called replies “*content*”, “*not-content*” or “*abstain*”. If a division in the House is called the committee adjourns for 10 minutes.

8.125 If the bill is amended, it is published in the usual way. The committee does not publish a report: its outputs are the bill as amended, the verbatim report of its proceedings and the written and oral evidence that it has received.

Bill committed to select or joint committee

8.126 A public bill (other than a consolidation bill which is referred automatically after second reading to the Joint Committee on Consolidation etc. Bills under SO 50) may be committed to a select committee or a joint committee when detailed investigation or the hearing of evidence is considered necessary or desirable. To achieve this a motion is moved that a bill be committed to a select committee or that a joint committee be appointed to consider the bill. Such a motion is usually moved immediately after second reading but is admissible at any stage before third reading. If the bill has previously been committed to a Committee of the whole House or Grand Committee, the order may be discharged and an order made to commit the bill instead to a joint or to a select committee. A motion may be tabled to commit a part of a bill to a select committee. If the bill is referred to a joint committee a message is sent to the House of Commons informing them and desiring their agreement.⁶⁶ A bill may be committed to a select committee on another bill.

8.127 The method of appointment and powers of the committee are the same as for a special inquiry committee on a general subject (see paragraph 11.3); but the bill forms the committee’s order of reference and defines the scope of the inquiry.

8.128 When the committee has completed its deliberations, it makes a report to the House on the provisions of the bill, recommending whether or not it should proceed. The committee usually gives reasons in a report

66 LJ (1958–59) 97. This was the bill for the Highways Act 1959, a bill “to consolidate with amendments”.

similar to a report on a general subject. The committee has no power to put an end to the bill. If it considers that the bill should proceed, the committee reports it with such amendments as it thinks fit, and the bill is then recommitted to a Committee of the whole House in the form in which it has been reported. When a committee makes amendments, formal minutes of proceedings are required to record the amendments made. The minutes of proceedings serve as the authority for making the amendments and republishing the bill as reported. If the committee considers that it should not proceed, it reports the bill accordingly, without amendment.

8.129 When a select committee reports that a bill should not proceed, the bill is not recommitted to a Committee of the whole House. The bill remains in the list of bills in progress in *House of Lords Business* until the end of the session under the heading “Reported from the select committee that the bill should not proceed”. The House normally acquiesces in a report from a select committee recommending that a bill should not proceed, and no further proceedings on the bill take place. If a bill is to proceed, a motion, of which notice is required, has to be agreed that the bill be recommitted to a Committee of the whole House. A bill may also be recommitted to a committee which has reported that it should not proceed.⁶⁷

8.130 If a committee is unable to complete its consideration of the bill, it makes a special report to that effect and reports the bill without amendment.

Recommitment

8.131 A bill which has been referred to a select or joint committee is, after being reported by that committee, recommitted to a Committee of the whole House unless the select or joint committee has reported that the bill should not proceed. Consolidation bills and hybrid bills are the most common examples of bills which are recommitted.

8.132 Other bills may, on motion (which is debatable and of which notice is required) moved at any time between committee and third reading, be recommitted to a Committee of the whole House or Grand Committee in their entirety, or in respect of certain clauses or schedules. This course is adopted when it is desirable to give further detailed consideration to the

⁶⁷ LJ (1854–55) 277, 234. Members were added to the committee on recommitment.

bill or certain parts of it without the constraints on speaking which apply on report and third reading; for instance:

- when substantial amendments are tabled too late in the committee stage to enable them to be properly considered;
- where there is extensive redrafting; or
- where amendments are tabled at a later stage on subjects which have not been considered in committee.

This procedure reserves to the report stage its proper function as an opportunity to review and perfect the bill as amended in committee.

8.133 A motion that the House resolve itself into a committee on recommitment on a bill may be debated and opposed in the same way as the motion to go into committee. Procedure on recommitment is the same as on commitment. The next stage of any bill or part of a bill subject to recommitment is report stage. However, the minimum interval between committee and report does not apply between recommitment and report.

8.134 SO 45(2) provides for the order of recommitment to be discharged on the same conditions as apply to the order of commitment.

Consideration in Committee of the whole House at later stages of bills

8.135 In exceptional circumstances a member may move without notice that the House consider particular amendments (including Commons amendments) in Committee of the whole House without recommitting the bill.⁶⁸ The effect, in accordance with SO 61, is to give greater “freedom of debate” with regard to those amendments. When consideration of the specific amendments is concluded the House is resumed, and proceedings continue without further interruption; the bill is not formally reported to the House, and no report or third reading stage follows. The decisions of the committee in respect of the amendments have the same effect as decisions taken by the House itself.

Report stage

8.136 If a bill has been amended in Committee of the whole House, the report stage cannot be taken until a later day, unless SO 44 has been suspended or dispensed with.

⁶⁸ LJ (2008–09) 868.

8.137 The motion “That this report be now received” may be objected to and debated and voted on; an amendment may be moved to postpone the report until a specified time; or a reasoned amendment⁶⁹ may be moved in opposition to the motion or to record a particular point of view in assenting to the motion.

Amendments on report

8.138 When the Question that the report be now received has been agreed to, any amendments are called in the usual way. Notice of these is given in the same way as for committee, and the same practices apply for marshalling and grouping. The proceedings are confined to dealing with amendments, either in the order in which they relate to the bill or in a particular sequence agreed to in advance by order of the House.

Repeat amendments⁷⁰

8.139 Amendments identical (or of identical effect) to amendments pressed to a decision by the mover⁷¹ and defeated in committee (including in Grand Committee) may not be retabled on report. However, an issue which has been debated and decided in committee can be reopened, provided that the relevant amendment is more than cosmetically different from that moved in committee.

8.140 An amendment agreed to on a division in committee may not be reversed on report except with the unanimous agreement of the House. A clause or schedule stood part (or left out) on a division in committee may not be removed (or reinstated) on report except with the unanimous agreement of the House.

8.141 Decisions of committees where only certain members of the House can vote (such as select committees or special public bill committees) are not subject to these restrictions.

Amendments grouped and *en bloc*

8.142 As in committee, amendments may be grouped, and a member may ask leave to speak to a number of related amendments. Likewise

69 See paragraphs 8.44–8.46.

70 [Procedure 1st Rpt 1998–99](#).

71 This rule does not apply if the mover seeks leave to withdraw.

consecutive amendments may be moved formally *en bloc* but without any need to confine them within a clause or schedule.

Opposition to clause or schedule

8.143 The Question that clauses and schedules stand part is not put on report, so a proposal to leave out a clause or schedule appears as an amendment. Such an amendment should not be tabled if the purpose underlying the amendment is to initiate a general debate, rather than a genuine desire to leave out the clause or schedule: it may, however, be appropriate when, for instance, a member wishes to learn the outcome of an undertaking given in committee.⁷²

Manuscript amendments

8.144 Manuscript amendments are not out of order on report, but the disadvantages and inconvenience are even greater than at committee stage.

Rules of debate on report

8.145 On report no member may speak more than once to an amendment, except the mover of the amendment in reply or a member who has obtained leave of the House, which may only be granted to:

- a member to explain themselves in some material point of their speech, no new matter being introduced;
- the member in charge of the bill; and
- a minister of the Crown.⁷³

8.146 Only the mover of an amendment or the member in charge of the bill speaks after the minister on report except for short questions of elucidation to the minister or member in charge or where the minister speaks early to assist the House in debate.⁷⁴

8.147 Arguments fully deployed in Committee of the whole House or in Grand Committee should not be repeated at length on report.⁷⁵

72 Procedure 9th Rpt 1970–71.

73 SO 29.

74 Procedure 1st Rpt 1987–88.

75 Procedure 2nd Rpt 1976–77.

Conclusion of proceedings on report

8.148 When the amendments have been disposed of, the bill is republished if amended,⁷⁶ and awaits its third reading on a day to be fixed.

Third reading and passing

8.149 Amendments may be moved after third reading has been agreed to and before the motion that this bill do now pass.⁷⁷ Third reading itself is normally confined to the formal motion “That this bill be now read a third time”. In exceptional circumstances a non-fatal amendment to the motion for third reading may be tabled, for instance to delay third reading so as to allow more time for amendments to be tabled. Notice of such an amendment is required. In all other circumstances, the motion for third reading is taken formally, without debate. Any general debate on or opposition to the bill at this stage normally takes place on the subsequent motion “That this bill do now pass”.

Notice of amendments

8.150 Notice of amendments must be given no later than the day before, in sufficient time to enable them to be published and circulated.⁷⁸ Manuscript amendments are not in order unless SO 44 has been suspended or dispensed with, in which case they are in order despite SO 47 unless the House provides otherwise. Marshalled lists of amendments are published on the day of third reading itself, rather than the day before as for other stages.

Admissibility of amendments

8.151 The practice of the House is normally to resolve major points of difference by the end of report stage, and to use third reading for tidying up the bill.⁷⁹

8.152 The principal purposes of amendments on third reading are:

- to clarify any remaining uncertainties;
- to improve the drafting; and

- to enable the Government or the member in charge to fulfil undertakings given at earlier stages of the bill, or to enable others to test their willingness to do so.

8.153 An issue which has been fully debated and voted on or negatived at a previous stage of a bill may not be reopened by an amendment on third reading.⁸⁰ The term “issue” is wider than a specific amendment. Thus where amendments have been grouped and debated together at an earlier stage of the bill it is assumed that all amendments in the group relate to the same “issue”.

8.154 Where the Legislation Office considers that amendments fall clearly outside the guidance, including, for example, amendments which are identical, or very similar, to ones tabled and withdrawn at committee or report (unless tabled to give effect to government undertakings), or amendments raising completely new major issues, it will advise the member concerned. If the member tables the amendments notwithstanding this advice, the Legislation Office sends notification of these amendments to all members of the usual channels and to the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers. They may then draw the matter to the attention of the House; it is for the House itself to decide what action to take.⁸¹

8.155 In all other respects the procedure on third reading is the same as that on report.

Legislative consent

8.156 When legislative consent arises and has been refused, or not yet granted by the time of third reading, a minister should orally draw it to the attention of the House before third reading commences. In doing this the minister should set out the efforts that were made to secure consent and the reasons for the disagreement.⁸² Such statements are not debateable; issues can be raised on Bill Do Now Pass. This procedure does not apply to Lords-starting private members’ bills.⁸³

⁷⁶ Or occasionally the amendments rather than the whole bill, as in the case of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill, 21 Jan 2020.

⁷⁷ Procedure 1st Rpt 1980–81.

⁷⁸ SO 47.

⁷⁹ [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2005–06](#).

⁸⁰ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1976–77.

⁸¹ [Procedure 1st Rpt 2006–07](#).

⁸² [Procedure 4th Rpt 2019–21](#).

⁸³ [Procedure and Privileges 2nd Rpt 2021–22](#).

Further proceedings after third reading

8.157 If the amendments are not disposed of on the same day as third reading, further proceedings after third reading are taken on a later day.

Privilege amendment

8.158 On third reading of a bill originating in the House of Lords whose provisions may infringe the privileges of the House of Commons with regard to the control of public money, a 'privilege amendment' is made by silent minute entry.⁸⁴ The amendment consists of a new subsection, inserted at the end of the final clause of the bill, in the following form:

“() Nothing in this Act shall impose any charge on the people or on public funds, or vary the amount or incidence of or otherwise alter any such charge in any manner, or affect the assessment, levying, administration or application of any money raised by any such charge.”

8.159 When the bill is published for the Commons these words appear in bold type. They satisfy the requirement of Commons SO 80(a); the Commons, if they mean to pass the bill, leave out the subsection by amendment and thus make the imposition of the charge their own act.

Passing

8.160 The motion “That this bill do now pass” is moved immediately after third reading has been agreed to or, if amendments have been tabled, as soon as the last amendment has been disposed of. The motion is usually moved formally. It may be opposed, and reasoned or delaying amendments, of which notice must be given, may be moved to it, but in other circumstances there is normally no substantive debate. Any remarks should be brief and should not seek to reopen debates at previous stages of the bill.⁸⁵

House bills

8.161 When a bill is passed by the House in which it has been introduced, a print of the bill, incorporating all the amendments made by that House, is made. This is called the House bill and it is sent to the other House accompanied by a message seeking that House's agreement to it. Any

amendments made in either House in the subsequent passage of the bill are marked into the House bill, which is returned to the other House with a further message. The House bill constitutes the formal record of what each House has done in respect of a bill and is the authority on which each House prints the text of a bill or any amendments brought from the other.

8.162 Each time a bill is sent from one House to the other the House bill is endorsed by the Clerk of that House.⁸⁶ The appropriate formulae, in Norman French, are given in appendix H.

Bill sent or returned to Commons

8.163 When a bill originates in the Lords, the House bill is endorsed and signed by the Clerk after third reading and sent to the Commons with a message seeking their agreement to it. The Commons publish the bill in the form in which it appears in the House bill.

8.164 If the Lords agree to a Commons bill without amendment, proceedings on the bill are at an end. A message is sent to the Commons so informing them and the bill awaits the Royal Assent. The bill itself is only returned to the Commons if it is a supply bill and the Royal Assent is to be signified by Commission (see appendix F).

8.165 Where a Commons bill is amended in the Lords, the amendments are marked into the House bill which is then endorsed by the Clerk and sent back to the Commons with a message seeking the Commons' agreement to the Lords amendments. The Commons then publish the Lords amendments.

Consideration of Commons amendments

Initial Commons amendments to a Lords bill

8.166 If the Commons pass a Lords bill without amendment, or if the only amendment made by the Commons is to remove the privilege amendment, the Commons return it with a message. In the latter case the Commons amendment is deemed to be considered and agreed to without any proceedings taking place on it in the Chamber, and a message is sent to the Commons informing them of the Lords' agreement. The bill then awaits the Royal Assent.

⁸⁴ [Procedure 4th Rpt 2019–21.](#)

⁸⁵ [Procedure 1st Rpt 1998–99; 4th Rpt 2014–15.](#)

⁸⁶ In the absence of the Clerk of the Parliaments, the Clerk Assistant or any other Table clerk may endorse or sign a bill on their behalf.

8.167 If the Commons amend the bill in any other respect, the amendments (including any privilege amendment) are published and circulated. If the bill is returned when the House is not sitting (including when it is adjourned during pleasure), the amendments may be published pursuant to SO 49(2).

Notice of consideration of Commons amendments

8.168 When possible, reasonable notice should be given for the consideration of Commons amendments; but, if necessary, they may be considered forthwith on the day they are received if a motion for that purpose is agreed to.⁸⁷ In such circumstances it is usual to give notice by means of an italic note on the order paper.

Response to Commons amendments

8.169 When a bill is returned from the Commons with amendments, it is only those amendments which are before the House. The other parts of the bill are no longer at issue, having been agreed to by both Houses, and cannot be amended except by a 'consequential amendment', that is, an amendment immediately consequent upon the acceptance or rejection of a Commons amendment. So further amendments proposed at this stage are only admissible if they are relevant to a Commons amendment.

8.170 In dealing with a Commons amendment the following options are open to the Lords:

- to agree to the Commons amendment, (a) without amendment, (b) with amendment, (c) with a consequential amendment to the bill, or (d) with an amendment instead of words left out of the bill by the Commons;
- to disagree to the Commons amendment (a) without offering an alternative or (b) with an alternative to it (an amendment 'in lieu') or (c) with an amendment to words so restored to the bill.

Tabling responses to initial Commons amendments to a Lords bill

8.171 Motions to agree with initial Commons amendments to a Lords bill are not published. Amendments to Commons amendments are tabled and published in the usual way. An amendment to a Commons amendment takes the same form as any other amendment to an amendment (see

87 Procedure 1st Rpt 1987–88. SO 39(4).

paragraph 8.78). But a proposal to disagree to a Commons amendment or to put forward an amendment instead, in lieu or to words restored takes the form of an amendment to the motion that the House do agree with the Commons in their amendment.⁸⁸ The name of only one member tabling an amendment or motion on consideration of Commons amendments is published and explanatory statements are not used.

8.172 A marshalled list is published on the day on which the amendments are to be taken. In some cases, where it is of assistance to the House, the text of the Commons amendments, or of the relevant ones, is reproduced on the marshalled list. Manuscript amendments are not out of order but the disadvantages and inconveniences are as great as on report.⁸⁹

Procedure on initial consideration of Commons amendments to a Lords bill

8.173 Each Commons amendment is called from the Woolsack in the order in which it relates to the bill, unless the House orders differently. The member in charge of the bill normally moves that the House do agree with the Commons in their amendment, and the debate and decision follow as usual (see paragraph 8.77). An amendment to a Commons amendment is moved as soon as the Question on the Commons amendment has been put for the first time. A motion to disagree to a Commons amendment or to propose an amendment in lieu etc. is moved as an amendment to the motion to agree with the Commons amendment. If a motion to disagree is agreed to, there are no further proceedings on the original motion. If a motion to disagree is withdrawn or disagreed to, the Question is put on the original motion that the House do agree with the Commons in their amendment.

8.174 If the member in charge of the bill wishes to move that the House disagree with a Commons amendment, or to make an alternative proposal, the procedure above does not apply and the motion is moved as a motion in its own right and not as an amendment to a motion to agree.

8.175 It is possible simply to oppose a motion to agree or disagree with a Commons amendment but more orderly to table an amendment, both to give notice and to ensure that the House makes a positive decision on each Commons amendment.

88 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 1999–2000.](#)

89 Procedure 1st Rpt 1989–90.

8.176 If the member in charge of the bill wishes to move that the House do agree or disagree to some or all of the Commons amendments *en bloc*, and there is no other motion or amendment tabled to those amendments, they explain their intentions and ask leave of the House to do so when the first is called. If there is no objection the Question is put accordingly. If there is objection the Question must be put separately on each amendment to the extent desired.

8.177 If during consideration of Commons amendments, a member of the House with a proposition on the marshalled list is absent or says “*Not moved*”, any other member of the House may move it.⁹⁰

8.178 The Legislation Office provides a brief for all movers of amendments and motions at these stages.

Commons amendments agreed to

8.179 If all the Commons amendments are agreed to without amendment, a message to that effect is sent to the Commons and the bill awaits Royal Assent.

Other outcomes of consideration of Commons amendments

8.180 When the Lords do anything other than agree to Commons amendments, the bill is returned to the Commons with a message to that effect.

8.181 If the Commons do anything other than accept the Lords amendments, and send the bill back accordingly, it then becomes the turn of the Lords to consider the Commons amendments and/or reasons. At this and any subsequent stages all propositions are drafted as motions identified with a letter. Related amendments appear together on the marshalled list and may, if appropriate, be debated and decided together on the basis of a single motion. A set of amendments treated in this way is referred to as a ‘package’. Packaging should be distinguished from grouping, whereby motions are debated together but are decided separately, like amendments at earlier stages.⁹¹

⁹⁰ [Procedure 5th Rpt 2017–19.](#)

⁹¹ [Procedure 1st Rpt 2004–05.](#)

Commons amendment agreed to with amendment

8.182 When the Lords agree to a Commons amendment with an amendment, the Commons can agree to the Lords amendment, or agree to it with amendments, or disagree to it with or without proposing an alternative.

Commons amendment disagreed to

Amendment in lieu of Commons amendment

8.183 The Lords can disagree to a Commons amendment but propose an amendment in lieu of it. When the bill goes back to the Commons they can agree to the Lords amendment in lieu, or agree to it with an amendment, or disagree to it with or without proposing an alternative.

8.184 If the Commons amend the Lords amendment in lieu, or propose an alternative to it, the Lords can agree to the Commons amendment with or without amendment, propose a new alternative or insist on their original amendment.

Disagreement to Commons amendment with a reason

8.185 If the Lords disagree to a Commons amendment (or insist on a Lords amendment) without proposing an alternative they have to give a reason for their disagreement. A notional ‘reasons committee’ is appointed to do this; members are not named and the committee does not meet. The reason is given as “because the Lords wish the Commons to consider the matter again” and entered into the Minutes of Proceedings accordingly.⁹²

Further communications between the two Houses

8.186 When any Lords amendments have been considered by the Commons, the bill is sent back to the Lords:

- with the Lords amendments agreed to, in which case the bill is ready for Royal Assent; or
- with the Lords amendments agreed to with amendments, or disagreed to with amendments in lieu; or
- with the Lords amendments disagreed to with reasons.

⁹² [Procedure and Privileges 1st Rpt 2021–22.](#)

8.187 In considering a Lords response to Commons amendments the Commons may insist on their amendments with a reason; or not insist on their amendments; or not insist on their amendments, but propose others in lieu. The reason, or new amendments, are then considered by the Lords with the same options as before, except that where the Commons reject a Lords amendment and the reason given by the Commons is financial privilege (see paragraph 8.192) the Lords do not insist on their amendment.

8.188 If the Commons insist, it is still open to the Lords not to insist on their disagreement, and thus to accept the Commons amendments, or not to insist on their disagreement but to amend the Commons amendments or propose alternatives.

8.189 If one House insists on an amendment to which the other has disagreed, and the other insists on its disagreement, and neither has offered alternatives, then 'double insistence' has occurred and the bill is lost. However, there is no binding rule of order which governs these proceedings in either House, and, if there is a desire to save a bill, some variation in the proceedings may be devised in order to do so.⁹³

8.190 Double insistence can be avoided by 'packaging' responses to different amendments in a single motion, provided the sending House clearly signals the package and the receiving House accepts its validity. Packages from the Commons are considered by the Lords only if they are confined to single or closely related issues, not disparate issues joined together simply for convenience. Where packages are confined to single or closely related issues, the double insistence rule applies to the whole package and not to individual amendments within it. If a bill is returned from the Commons with a clearly identified package of amendments, the bill is placed on the Lords' order paper for possible consideration, even if there is a double insistence on part of that package. If the package concerns a single or closely related issue, the Lords will consider it. If the package is not confined to a single or closely related issue, the Lords may refuse to consider it and the bill is then lost.⁹⁴

8.191 If communications are still continuing at the end of a session, the bill is lost.

93 *Erskine May*, 30.25. For an example see the proceedings on the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill on 11 May 2004.

94 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2004–05](#) and a prior statement by the Clerks of the two Houses (Official Report, 21 July 2004, columns WS19–WS21).

Lords amendments and Commons financial privilege

8.192 Each House of Parliament is guardian of its own privileges. It alone may invoke them. Until it does so, the other House is free to act as it thinks fit. With regard to Commons financial privilege, the Lords may properly make amendments to Commons bills (other than supply bills) which, when they come to be considered by the Commons, are deemed by them to infringe their financial privileges. The Lords need not anticipate what view the Commons may take of any Lords amendments with respect to Commons financial privilege. The only exceptions are amendments which appear to be material and intolerable infringements of privilege, in that they either offend Commons SO 78(3)⁹⁵ or impose a charge not authorised by a Ways and Means resolution, and will therefore be summarily rejected by the Commons unless they have previously passed a supplementary financial resolution. Unless there is reason to believe that the necessary resolution will be made by the Commons, it is unprofitable for the Lords to make amendments of this kind. When such Lords amendments are considered by the Commons:

- (a) in the case of an infringement of Commons SO 78(3), the amendment is deemed to have been disagreed to without debate and without Question put;
- (b) in the case of a Lords amendment imposing a charge upon the people which has not been authorised by a Ways and Means resolution, the Speaker calls upon the member of the Commons in charge of the bill to move to disagree with the Lords amendment forthwith.

8.193 With these exceptions, the Commons may either invoke their financial privileges in respect of Lords amendments or waive them; and the Commons regularly accept Lords amendments which have financial implications. The Speaker of the Commons directs that a 'special entry' be made in their Journals implicitly asserting their general rights but stating that the Commons accept the Lords amendment, "the Commons being willing to waive their privileges".

95 "If the Speaker is satisfied that a Lords amendment imposes a charge upon the public revenue such as is required to be authorised by resolution of the House under Standing Order No. 49 (Certain proceedings relating to public money) and that such charge has not been so authorised, on reaching that amendment, the Speaker shall declare that he is so satisfied and the amendment shall be deemed to have been disagreed to and shall be so recorded in the Journal."

Privilege reasons

8.194 If the Commons disagree to a Lords amendment that infringes their financial privileges, the disagreement is made on the ground of privilege alone, and not on the merits of the amendment, even though the Commons may have debated the merits. The Commons communicate in their message to the Lords that the amendment involves a charge upon public funds or a charge by way of national or local taxation or that it in some other way deals with financial arrangements made by the Commons; and they add words to the effect that the Commons do not offer any further reason, trusting that the reason given may be deemed sufficient. In such cases the Lords do not insist on their amendment but they may offer amendments in lieu.

8.195 If the Commons disagree to a Lords amendment which appears to have financial implications but offer an amendment in lieu or an amendment to the words restored to the bill, financial privilege is not at that stage invoked by the Commons and the question whether the Lords amendment infringes privilege does not arise. It is therefore open to the Lords to disagree to the Commons amendment in lieu and to insist on the original Lords amendment.

Consent of the Crown

8.196 Where a bill affects the prerogative or interest of the Crown, the Consent of the Crown is required and in respect of public bills must, after it has been obtained by His Majesty's Government, be signified to the House by a minister who is a Privy Counsellor. Consent is not signified by the peer in charge of a private member's bill. This Consent places the Crown's prerogative and interest at the disposal of Parliament for the purposes of the bill, but does not imply that the Crown approves the provisions that require its Consent.

8.197 A bill affecting the interests of the Duchy of Cornwall or the Duchy of Lancaster requires Consent, unless the Crown's Consent has been obtained and the effect on the Duchy is not distinct from that on the Crown. In such a case Consent is given by the Crown on behalf of each Duchy or, when the Prince of Wales is of age, by Him as Duke of Cornwall.

8.198 The Consent of the Crown is signified on third reading.⁹⁶ It may also be signified on consideration of Commons amendments if it has not been previously signified and one of the Commons amendments makes it

necessary. If a bill requires Consent and is carried over from one session to the next, Consent need not be re-signified in the second session.⁹⁷

8.199 When it is known that Consent to a bill is required, this is noted in the list of bills in progress in *House of Lords Business*.

Measures and private bills

8.200 Consent of the Crown may also be required in respect of a Measure or a private bill (see paragraphs 8.235 and 9.56).

Royal Assent

8.201 Letters Patent are issued from time to time to signify Royal Assent to bills and Measures passed by both Houses of Parliament.

8.202 Royal Assent is usually notified to each House sitting separately in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967. Once Royal Assent has been notified to both Houses, bills become Acts of Parliament. If notification is given on different calendar days to each House, the date of enactment is the calendar date of notification in the second House.

8.203 Notification is frequently given before oral questions, but it may take place at any break between two items of business, or at the end of business, if necessary after an adjournment. The order in which notification is given is as follows: supply bills, other public bills, private bills, Measures.

8.204 Royal Assent may also be signified by Commission, as described in appendix F.

Record copies of Acts

8.205 Two record copies of each Act are printed. One copy is signed and endorsed by the Clerk of the Parliaments. This copy is preserved in the Parliamentary Archives, the other in the National Archives.

Procedures which apply only to certain types of bill

Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949

8.206 Under the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 certain public bills may be presented for Royal Assent without the consent of the Lords. The

⁹⁶ [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2014–15](#).

⁹⁷ [Procedure 4th Rpt 2014–15](#).

Acts do not apply to bills originating in the Lords, bills to extend the life of a Parliament beyond five years, private bills or delegated legislation. The conditions which must be fulfilled before a bill can be presented for Royal Assent under the Acts vary according to whether or not the bill is certified by the Speaker of the House of Commons as a money bill.

Money bills

8.207 A money bill is a bill endorsed with the signed certificate of the Speaker of the House of Commons that it is a money bill because in the Speaker's opinion it contains only provisions dealing with national, but not local, taxation, public money or loans or their management. The certificate of the Speaker is conclusive for all purposes. If a money bill, which has been passed by the Commons and sent up to the Lords at least one month before the end of a session, is not passed by the Lords without amendment within a month after it is sent to them, the bill shall, unless the Commons direct to the contrary, be presented for the Royal Assent without the consent of the Lords. This does not debar the Lords from amending such bills provided they are passed within the month, but the Commons are not obliged to consider the amendments. On a few occasions minor amendments have been made by the Lords to such bills and have been accepted by the Commons.

Other public bills

8.208 If the Lords reject any other public bill to which the Acts apply which has been sent up from the Commons in two successive sessions, whether of the same Parliament or not, then that bill shall, unless the Commons direct to the contrary, be presented for Royal Assent without the consent of the Lords. The bill must be sent up to the Lords at least one calendar month before the end of each session; and one year must elapse between second reading in the Commons in the first session and the passing of the bill by the Commons in the second. The Lords are deemed to have rejected a bill if they do not pass it, either without amendment or with such amendments only as are acceptable to the Commons. The effect of the Parliament Acts is that the Lords have power to delay enactment of a public bill until the session after that in which it was first introduced and until at least 13 months have elapsed from the date of second reading in the Commons in the first session.

Supply bills

8.209 Supply bills, or bills of aids and supplies, such as Supply and Appropriation Bills and Finance Bills, may be passed or rejected by the Lords but, since the supply is granted by the House of Commons, the Lords are debarred from offering any amendment. Consequently the committee stage is negated.⁹⁸ Proceedings on Supply and Appropriation Bills are always taken formally;⁹⁹ Finance Bills are usually debated on second reading and their subsequent stages taken formally.

8.210 When these bills have been passed by the Lords, they are returned to the Commons if the Royal Assent is to be signified by Commission, and are brought up by the Speaker and receive the Royal Assent before, and in a different form from, other bills.¹⁰⁰

8.211 A supply bill may be identified by its enacting formula (the words between the Title and Clause 1), which will signal the sole responsibility of the Commons. A supply bill may, or may not, be certified as a 'money bill' within the meaning of s. 1(2) of the Parliament Act 1911. Finance Bills, which are supply bills, are frequently not certified as money bills.

Separate subjects

8.212 The right of the Lords to reject a supply bill includes the right to omit supply provisions from a bill when such provisions form a 'separate subject' from the general object of a bill which the Lords are otherwise entitled to amend.

8.213 For example the Lords amended Part III of the Land Commission Bill 1966–67 (which provided for a betterment levy). The Lords amended the part in committee although it concerned supply, but then left it out in its entirety on third reading, since it would have been an infringement of Commons financial privilege to return the bill with that part concerning supply amended. This gave the Commons the opportunity to restore the entire separate subject to the bill with amendments, including some of the Lords amendments made in committee.

⁹⁸ See paragraph 8.56.

⁹⁹ Procedure 3rd Rpt 1992–93.

¹⁰⁰ See appendix F.

Tacking

8.214 Commons financial privilege debars the Lords from amending supply bills. In order that the Commons should not abuse their financial privilege by including in such bills provisions unconnected with supply, the Lords passed a resolution in 1702 condemning the abuse of 'tacking'. It is now embodied in SO 51.¹⁰¹

Consolidation bills

8.215 Consolidation bills are invariably introduced in the House of Lords, and are subject to scrutiny by the Joint Committee on Consolidation etc. Bills (see paragraph 8.219). Such bills fall into the following categories:

- (a) bills, whether public or private, which are limited to re-enacting existing law;
- (b) bills to consolidate any enactments with amendments to give effect to recommendations made by the Law Commissions;
- (c) statute law repeals bills, prepared by the Law Commissions to promote the reform of the statute law by the repeal of enactments which are no longer of practical utility;
- (d) statute law revision bills, which are limited to the repeal of obsolete, spent, unnecessary or superseded enactments;
- (e) bills prepared under the Consolidation of Enactments (Procedure) Act 1949, which include corrections and minor improvements to the existing law.

8.216 Almost all such bills now fall within categories (a) to (c).

8.217 Bills which re-enact in the form in which they apply to Scotland the provisions of United Kingdom Acts,¹⁰² and consequential provisions bills which, although not consolidation bills, contain ancillary provisions normally found in a consolidation bill and form part of a consolidation,¹⁰³ have also on occasion been specifically referred to the Joint Committee on Consolidation etc. Bills on motion. If the motion is agreed to, a message is sent to the Commons to ask for their agreement.

8.218 On second reading the Lord in charge of the bill may indicate to the House the category into which each bill falls. The bill is then automatically referred to the Joint Committee on Consolidation etc. Bills.¹⁰⁴

Joint Committee on Consolidation etc. Bills

8.219 The joint committee consists of 12 members of each House, the Lords members being nominated by the Committee of Selection.¹⁰⁵ It is normally chaired by a former holder of high judicial office. The function of the joint committee is to assure itself that all the provisions of a bill fall properly within one of the categories previously indicated, and to report thereon to each House. After taking evidence from the drafters responsible and any departmental or other witnesses, the joint committee reports the bill to the House of Lords with or without amendment. Where amendments are made by the joint committee, bills are usually republished as amended. Whether or not amended, they are then recommitted to a Committee of the whole House. Thereafter consolidation bills follow the same course as other public bills.

8.220 Amendments may be moved in the House to bills that have been referred to the joint committee, provided that they are restricted to the class of amendment that could have been moved in the joint committee.

Moving of stages of consolidation bills en bloc

8.221 Where the same stage of several linked consolidation bills is to be considered by the House, the Lord in charge may, with notice (given by means of an italic note in *House of Lords Business*), move the bills *en bloc*. In the case of an amending stage, this is only possible if no amendments have been tabled. Any member may, however, propose that the bills be taken separately to the extent desired. The House can also resolve itself into a committee on recommitment in respect of several consolidation bills at once in order to debate any amendments tabled; the committee reports only when all the bills have been considered. In this case the procedure is applied by business of the House motion.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ SO 50.

¹⁰⁵ [Report of the Select Committee on the Speakership of the House of Lords, HL Paper 92, 2005–06.](#)

¹⁰⁶ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1991–92.

¹⁰¹ LJ (1701–05) 185.

¹⁰² LJ (1972) 383.

¹⁰³ Joint Committee on Consolidation etc. Bills 4th Rpt 1987–88.

Hybrid bills

8.222 Hybrid bills are public bills which are considered to affect specific private or local interests, in a manner different from the private or local interests of other persons or bodies of the same class, thus attracting the provisions of the standing orders applicable to private business (see paragraph 9.7).

Reference of bills to Examiners

8.223 Each public bill introduced in the Lords is examined by the Legislation Office to see whether it may affect any private interests to which protection is given by the standing orders. If, *prima facie*, this is found to be so, an order is made referring the bill to the Examiners. The second reading of the bill cannot be moved until the report of the Examiners has been received nor, in the case of a bill requiring an environmental statement, until certain other actions have occurred (see paragraph 8.228), although notice of second reading of the bill may be entered in the order paper.

8.224 It is open to any member who considers that a public bill may be hybrid, or has become hybrid as a result of any amendment made to it (see paragraph 8.230), to move that the bill be referred to the Examiners. Such a motion is usually moved immediately before second reading, but may be moved with notice between stages at any time before third reading.

Report from Examiners

8.225 If the Examiners report that no standing orders are applicable, the bill may proceed on its ordinary course.

8.226 However, if the Examiners find that the standing orders relating to private business are applicable, the bill is a hybrid bill, and (unless the House orders otherwise) an order of the House is made providing for petitions against the bill to be deposited by a given date.

Petitions

8.227 If no petitions are deposited against the bill, the bill proceeds as a public bill in the usual way. If petitions are deposited, the bill is committed after second reading to a select committee.

Consultation on the environmental statement

8.228 If a hybrid bill requires an environmental statement to be prepared¹⁰⁷ comments from the public must be invited on the statement within a period set by the relevant minister.¹⁰⁸ Once those comments have been received by the government department a report must be prepared within a specified timeframe by an independent assessor summarising the issues raised in those comments. That report is submitted to both Houses. The second reading of the bill cannot be moved until at least 14 days after the report has been submitted. Any supplementary environmental information subsequently deposited will be subject to a similar process and the third reading of the bill cannot be moved until 14 days after the last assessor's report has been submitted. At third reading the minister must state the main reasons and considerations upon which Parliament is invited to give consent to the project to be authorised by the bill and also the main measures to be taken to avoid, reduce and, if possible, offset any major adverse effects of the project. A written statement setting out this information must be laid at least seven days before third reading.

Commitment

8.229 Since the bill is a public bill, and has been affirmed in principle on second reading, the preamble does not have to be proved before the select committee; but in other respects the committee broadly follows the procedure of a select committee on an opposed private bill (see paragraph 9.38). When the bill is reported from the select committee it is recommitted to a Committee of the whole House or a Grand Committee and thereafter follows the usual course of a public bill (subject to the requirements at third reading for a bill needing an environmental statement set out in paragraph 8.228). The bill is republished as amended by the select committee.

Hybridising amendments

8.230 A bill may become *prima facie* hybrid as a result of an amendment made to it (and a hybrid bill may be amended in such a way as to affect private or local interests not previously affected). If an amendment is agreed to which, in the opinion of the Legislation Office, has such an effect, the bill

¹⁰⁷ PBSO 27A.

¹⁰⁸ PBSO 83A.

may be referred to the Examiners before its next stage, on a motion moved by the Senior Deputy Speaker.

Measures

8.231 A Measure passed by the General Synod of the Church of England is, under the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919, submitted to Parliament for a resolution directing that it be presented to His Majesty for Royal Assent.

8.232 The Measure is submitted first to the Ecclesiastical Committee, which is appointed pursuant to the 1919 Act for the duration of a Parliament and which consists of 15 members of the House of Lords, nominated by the Lord Speaker, and 15 members of the House of Commons, nominated by the Commons Speaker. The committee appoints its own Chair; by practice, this is a former holder of high judicial office. Being a statutory committee, the committee is not formally a joint committee, nor are its proceedings “proceedings in Parliament”;¹⁰⁹ but it has resolved to adopt the procedure of a joint committee.

8.233 The committee reports on the nature and legal effect of the Measure, and gives its views on whether the Measure should proceed (“is expedient”), especially with relation to the constitutional rights of all His Majesty’s subjects. During its consideration of a Measure the Ecclesiastical Committee may, either of its own motion or at the request of the Legislative Committee of the General Synod, invite the Legislative Committee to discuss its provisions at a conference.

8.234 The committee communicates its report in draft to the Legislative Committee, and may not present its report to Parliament until the Legislative Committee asks it to do so. The Legislative Committee may, at any time before the presentation of the Ecclesiastical Committee’s report to Parliament, withdraw a Measure from the consideration of that committee, and has invariably done so in the face of an unfavourable draft report.

8.235 If the Legislative Committee decides to proceed with the Measure, the text of the Measure and the report of the Ecclesiastical Committee are laid before Parliament. If the Senior Deputy Speaker and the Chairman of Ways and Means in the Commons think that a Measure deals with two

or more subjects which might more properly be divided, they can divide a Measure at this point and it is published as separate Measures. A resolution for presenting the Measure to His Majesty for Royal Assent may then be moved. Where a Measure affects the interests or prerogative of the Crown, Consent is required as for a bill. It is signified before the motion is moved in the House. If both Houses agree to such a motion, the Measure is ready for Royal Assent.

8.236 Neither the Ecclesiastical Committee nor either House has power to amend a Measure, but either House can reject it by disagreeing to the motion for a resolution.

¹⁰⁹ See paragraph 11.1, footnote 1.

Private legislation

Role of the Senior Deputy Speaker

9.1 In addition to duties in the House, the Senior Deputy Speaker exercises a general supervision and control over private bills, private bill aspects of hybrid bills and hybrid instruments. References in Private Business Standing Orders (PBSOs) to the Chairman of Committees are construed as including references to any other Deputy Chairman acting on behalf of the Chairman of Committees.¹

9.2 The Senior Deputy Speaker has the duty to name the Lords to form the following committees:

- (a) select committees on private bills;
- (b) select committees on opposed personal bills;
- (c) joint committees under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 (House of Lords members); and
- (d) joint committees under the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945 (House of Lords members)

unless they are of the opinion that any such committee should be selected and proposed to the House by the Committee of Selection or unless at least two members of that committee request a meeting for that purpose.² The Senior Deputy Speaker also has the duty to name the Chair of any select committee on a private bill appointed by them.³

¹ Private Business SOs 94A, 204. In this chapter any reference to standing orders is, unless otherwise stated, a reference to the Standing Orders Relating to Private Business and the abbreviation PBSO is used.

² SO 62(2) and PBSO 95(1).

³ PBSO 95(2).

Private bills

Origination of private bills

9.3 Private bills originate outside Parliament and are promoted by bodies seeking special powers not available under the general law. They should not be confused with private members' bills, which are public bills (see paragraph 8.31). Each private bill starts with a petition to Parliament from the promoters for leave to bring in a bill.⁴ The petition, with a copy of the proposed bill annexed to it, is deposited on or before 27 November in the House of Commons⁵ and a copy of the proposed bill is deposited in the office of the Clerk of the Parliaments.⁶

9.4 The Government cannot promote a private bill. When a government department wants to promote a bill which would, if promoted by another person or body, be a private bill, the bill is introduced as a public bill and is subsequently treated as a hybrid bill (see paragraph 8.226).

9.5 Where a bill deals exclusively with the personal affairs of an individual it may be certified by the Senior Deputy Speaker and the Chairman of Ways and Means in the Commons ('the two Chairmen' or 'the Chairmen') as a 'personal bill', though such bills are rare. Personal bills can be presented at any time during the session.

9.6 Scottish private legislation on matters not wholly within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament (other than personal bills) is governed by the statutory procedure in the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 (see paragraph 9.85).

Examination for compliance with standing orders

9.7 Each House normally appoints two officials as Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.⁷ Each Examiner may act on behalf of either House. Examiners from both Houses may sit together to examine a particular bill. In the Lords, appointments are made by the House, and in the Commons by

the Speaker. Beginning on 18 December, each petition for a bill is examined by one or more of the Examiners, who certify whether certain PBSOs of both Houses are applicable.⁸ These standing orders require notices to be displayed and advertisements to be taken out, and the deposit of bills and other documents at various public offices.

9.8 Complaints of non-compliance with the standing orders ('memorials') may be presented, and memorialists are entitled to be heard before the Examiners.⁹

9.9 The Examiners certify to both Houses whether the standing orders applicable have, or have not, been complied with. If they have not been complied with, the Examiners report the facts and any special circumstances. Should the Examiners be in doubt as to the construction of any standing order in its application to a particular case, they make a special report of the facts, without deciding whether the standing order has or has not been complied with.¹⁰

9.10 In a case of non-compliance or doubt the Examiners' certificate or report is referred by each House to its Standing Orders (Private Bills) Committee.¹¹ Both committees must agree to dispense with the relevant standing orders in order for the bill to progress further. Either committee may require conditions to be met before granting dispensation.

European Convention on Human Rights

9.11 The memorandum which accompanies each private bill, when it is deposited on or before 27 November, includes a statement by or on behalf of the promoters of the bill as to the compatibility of the provisions of the bill with the Convention Rights (as defined in the Human Rights Act 1998).¹² A report from a minister of the Crown on the promoters' statement of opinion as to compatibility must be presented no later than the second sitting day after first reading in each House.¹³

4 PBSO 2.

5 PBSO 38(3).

6 Subject to PBSO 201, the deposit of a petition for a private bill in the House of Commons and of a copy of the proposed bill in the House of Lords may take place when the Houses are not sitting, including during dissolution. The following petitions were deposited on 27 November 2019, shortly before a general election on 12 December 2019: Highgate Cemetery Bill and Monken Hadley Common Bill.

7 PBSO 69.

8 PBSOs 70, 3.

9 PBSOs 76–79.

10 PBSOs 72, 81.

11 PBSO 87.

12 PBSO 38(3).

13 PBSO 98A.

Late bills

9.12 Promoters who wish to introduce a bill late (after 27 November) must submit to the two Chairmen a statement of the objects of the bill, the reasons for the need to proceed during the current session, and the reasons why it was impracticable to deposit the bill by 27 November.

9.13 The Chairmen consider:

- (a) whether the explanation justifies the delay in depositing the bill; and
- (b) whether the proposals are so urgent that postponement of the bill to the following November would be contrary to the public interest.

9.14 If the Chairmen are satisfied on these points, or if they consider that the public interest so requires, the appropriate Chairman gives leave for the petition and the bill to be deposited in the House in which they decide the bill is to originate.¹⁴

9.15 After the petition, together with the proposed bill, has been presented to the House, it is referred to the Examiners. The Examiners report to both Houses that the bill is non-compliant with standing orders and the certificate is referred to the Standing Orders Committee of each House. If both committees report that the standing orders ought to be dispensed with, the bill is presented and read a first time.

9.16 The bill, as presented, should not contain any non-urgent provisions nor any other than those outlined in the original statement of the promoters in support of their application.

Lords bills: introduction and first reading

9.17 The allocation of private bills between the two Houses is determined between the two Chairmen or, more usually, their Counsel, on or before 8 January.¹⁵ The private bills proposed to be introduced are divided as equally as possible between the two Houses with a view to general convenience. Where a bill has been rejected previously in one House, a subsequent bill with similar objects normally originates in that House. Personal bills usually originate in the Lords.

9.18 It is usual, before any allocation is made, for Counsel to the two Chairmen to invite representations in writing from each of the promoters.

9.19 First reading is 'formal', that is to say, by way of an entry in the Minutes of Proceedings. No proceedings take place in the House itself. In the case of bills originating in the House of Lords, it takes place on 22 January (or the next sitting day) or, if later, the day on which:

- (a) the Examiners have certified that standing orders have been complied with; or
- (b) the Standing Orders Committee has reported that standing orders have been complied with; or
- (c) the House, on report from the Standing Orders Committee that the standing orders ought to be dispensed with, has agreed that the bill should be allowed to proceed.¹⁶

Subsequent stages

9.20 The Senior Deputy Speaker normally moves subsequent stages of private bills in the House (but see paragraph 9.27). Deputies may act for the Senior Deputy Speaker for all purposes connected with private legislation.¹⁷

Interests

9.21 Members with financial interests that are relevant to private legislation should exercise particular caution, and seek advice before deciding to participate in proceedings on that legislation. A member with an interest in the outcome of a private bill may not serve on the committee on the bill.¹⁸

Petitions against private bills

9.22 Parties specially and directly affected by a bill may present a petition against it, which must state clearly the grounds of their objection to the bill.¹⁹

9.23 Petitions against Lords bills must usually be presented on or before 6 February.²⁰ Petitions against a Commons bill, or a late bill originating in

¹⁶ PBSO 98.

¹⁷ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1967–68; PBSO 94A.

¹⁸ [Guide to the Code of Conduct](#) and PBSO 96.

¹⁹ PBSO 111.

²⁰ PSBO 101.

¹⁴ PBSO 97.

¹⁵ PBSO 90.

the House of Lords, may be deposited up to 10 days after first reading.²¹ Petitions against Commons bills are admissible whether or not the petitioner also petitioned against the bill in the Commons.

9.24 Petitions against proposed amendments must be lodged in time for the committee to consider them.

Petitions for additional provision

9.25 After the introduction of a bill, the promoters may wish to make additional provision in the bill in respect of matters which require the service of new notices and advertisements. A petition for that purpose, after approval by the Senior Deputy Speaker, who acts for this purpose in close accord with the Chairman of Ways and Means, is deposited in the office of the Clerk of the Parliaments with a copy of the provision proposed to be added. The petition is referred to the Examiners, and may not proceed unless any standing orders applicable have been complied with or dispensed with. A petition for additional provision may not be presented in the case of a bill brought from the Commons.²²

Second reading

9.26 The second reading of a private bill is usually taken after oral questions and is usually taken formally. It does not, as in the case of public bills, affirm the principle of the bill, which may therefore be called in question before a committee or at third reading. The second reading is normally moved by the Senior Deputy Speaker, and provides an opportunity for them to direct the attention of the House to any special circumstances connected with the bill.²³

9.27 A member of the Lords who intends to debate the second reading of a bill is expected to notify the Senior Deputy Speaker, the Private Bill Office²⁴ or the Government Whips' Office; a member who intends to oppose it should always do so. The Senior Deputy Speaker then usually asks the promoters to arrange for another member of the House to move the

second reading. If notice of the second reading has already been given it will be removed from the order paper and set down for debate at a later date.

9.28 The second reading of a bill originating in the House of Lords may not be taken earlier than the second sitting day after first reading²⁵ and it is customary to wait until the petitioning period has expired before taking second reading.

9.29 Lords bills affected by the standing orders originally devised by Lord Wharmcliffe, which govern the consents of proprietors, members and directors of companies,²⁶ are referred again to the Examiners after second reading.²⁷ Such bills are not committed unless those orders have been complied with or dispensed with.²⁸

Instructions

9.30 Instructions to committees on private bills may be moved at any time between the second reading and committee stage of the bill, but are usually put down for the same day as the second reading. The Senior Deputy Speaker should be informed before an instruction is tabled.²⁹

9.31 Permissive instructions enable the committee to do what it could not do without such an instruction. However, any enlargement of the scope of a bill should be effected by a petition for additional provision rather than such an instruction. Mandatory instructions compel the committee to do something which it already has discretion to do. However, the House has been reluctant to agree to any instruction which will restrict the decisions of the committee.

9.32 The most usual type of instruction on a private bill is of a cautionary nature. For example, the committee is sometimes instructed to have regard to certain matters or to ensure that various objections have been considered. An instruction of this nature is often accepted by the House, as it ensures that the committee considers matters which might not be raised by the parties appearing before it or in a departmental report.

25 PBSO 99.

26 These are often referred to as the 'Wharmcliffe Orders'.

27 PBSOs 62–68.

28 PBSO 100.

29 PBSO 93.

21 Subject to PSBOs 201 and 201A.

22 PBSO 73(2).

23 PBSO 91.

24 Part of the Legislation Office.

9.33 To assist them in carrying out an instruction, committees have on occasion been given power by the House to hear evidence other than that tendered by the parties entitled to be heard. This procedure, however, is open to criticism: it may enable a person to oppose a bill without having petitioned against it, and there is no fund out of which the fees of any expert witness may be paid.

9.34 Instructions have occasionally been given to an unopposed bill committee.

9.35 It is customary for the committee to make a special report to the House upon matters referred to in an instruction.

Commitment

9.36 After second reading, every unopposed bill (that is, a bill against which no petitions have been lodged) is normally committed to an unopposed bill committee.³⁰ Every bill opposed by petitions is committed to a select committee.³¹

9.37 The Senior Deputy Speaker may report to the House that, in their opinion, an unopposed bill should be proceeded with as an opposed bill and committed to a select committee.³² In such a case the committee might be authorised to hear evidence tendered by parties other than the promoters, but this procedure has rarely been used.

Committees on opposed bills

9.38 Select committees on opposed bills consist of five members, normally named by the Senior Deputy Speaker, who also nominates the Chair. The appointments are reported to the House. Members of the House with an interest in the bill may not serve on the committee,³³ nor may those who have expressed a view in public on issues close to the subject matter of the bill which are likely to be argued before the committee. If the Chair is absent, the committee may appoint a substitute.³⁴

30 PBSO 121.

31 PBSO 104.

32 PBSO 92.

33 PBSO 96.

34 PBSO 95.

9.39 In principle every member of the committee must attend the whole proceedings, but the committee may sit with only four members if all the parties agree. In this case a report is made to the House. If the consent of any party is withheld, the committee adjourns and may not resume in the absence of a member without leave of the House. No member who is not a member of the committee may take any part in its proceedings.³⁵

9.40 If the committee adjourns over a day on which the House sits, it must report the reason to the House.³⁶ Promoters and petitioners may be represented by counsel or agents. The committee hears arguments and evidence from the parties and the representations of government departments, which may include opposition to all or part of the bill. The committee is not allowed to hear other evidence without an order of the House. The committee may decide that the bill should be allowed to proceed, with or without amendments, or “that it is not expedient to proceed further with the bill”.³⁷

9.41 The promoters are usually represented by counsel; petitioners may represent themselves or appoint counsel or an agent to speak on their behalf. The promoters and the petitioners may call witnesses; evidence called is tendered on oath. Representatives of the government departments which have reported on the bill attend and may be questioned by the committee.³⁸

9.42 The committee may, if it so chooses, make a site visit to a relevant area. It may not take evidence from the parties whilst doing so without express permission of the House.

9.43 If any clauses in the bill are not opposed by petition, those clauses will be considered by the select committee only if the Senior Deputy Speaker reports to the House that the committee should do so.³⁹ This is common practice where the unopposed clauses are not the subject of a government report and are of minor importance.

35 PBSOs 105, 106.

36 PBSO 108.

37 PBSOs 110, 127, 124.

38 PBSO 127.

39 PBSO 92.

Right to be heard

9.44 In general, and subject to PBSOs 115–120, petitioners have a right to be heard if their interests are specially and directly affected by the bill. If another party challenges a petitioner’s right to be heard, the question is heard and decided by the committee at the beginning of the committee’s proceedings.⁴⁰

Bill rejected

9.45 If the select committee rejects the bill, an entry to this effect is made in the Minutes of Proceedings. The bill does not then proceed further and is removed from the list of bills in progress in *House of Lords Business*.

Recommitment

9.46 If the committee reports that the bill should be allowed to proceed, and if the unopposed clauses have not been considered by a select committee, the bill is recommitted to an unopposed bill committee, which then considers the unopposed clauses. It may not vary any decision made by the opposed bill committee.⁴¹

9.47 If no petitioner appears, or if all petitions are withdrawn before proceedings commence, or if the right to be heard of all petitioners is disallowed, then the select committee reports accordingly; the bill becomes unopposed, and, unless there is an instruction, the bill is recommitted to an unopposed bill committee.⁴² However, if an instruction has been given to a select committee on a private bill, the committee must consider the bill and instruction.

Special report

9.48 In certain circumstances, when it is thought that the House should be informed of the findings of a committee, and its reasons for reaching them, a special report is made. It is usual, for instance, to make a special report in response to an instruction. An order for the special report to be considered can be made, to allow the House to debate and review

the decisions of the committee; but third reading provides the normal opportunity for such a debate.

Unopposed bill committees

9.49 Each unopposed bill committee normally consists of the Senior Deputy Speaker assisted by their Counsel.⁴³ The Senior Deputy Speaker may select further members from the panel of Deputy Chairmen.⁴⁴ No member who is not a member of the committee may take any part in the proceedings. The promoters may be represented by their agents (rather than by counsel) and may call witnesses; evidence called is not tendered on oath. Representatives of the government departments which have reported on the bill attend and may be questioned by the committee.⁴⁵

9.50 The promoters’ agent is called upon to justify any clauses on which the Senior Deputy Speaker has asked for further information or which are the subject of a departmental report. The committee may then amend the bill as it thinks fit.

9.51 When the committee is prepared to accept the bill, witnesses are called, on oath, to prove the preamble to the bill. In cases where there is no unopposed bill committee, the preamble is proved before the select committee.

Report

9.52 The proceedings of committees on both unopposed and opposed bills are concluded by an entry in the Minutes of Proceedings reporting the bill from the committee. Amendments made in committee are available for inspection in the Private Bill Office; the bill as amended must be deposited by the promoters at certain public offices. No report stage is held in the House. However, after the bill has been reported by the committee, drafting or consequential amendments can be inserted in the bill by Counsel to the Senior Deputy Speaker on the authority of the Senior Deputy Speaker, and endorsed “Amendments made on Report”. No entry in the Minutes of Proceedings is made when this is done.⁴⁶

43 PBSO 121.

44 PBSOs 121, 122.

45 PBSO 127.

46 PBSO 147.

40 PBSO 114.

41 PBSO 121.

42 PBSO 113.

Third reading and passing

9.53 In the majority of cases, the third reading of a private bill is formal. Any amendments proposed to be moved on third reading must be submitted to the Senior Deputy Speaker at least 'one clear day', that is, two days, in advance.⁴⁷ All amendments which have the approval of the Senior Deputy Speaker are moved by them; the House usually accepts them without question. These are usually amendments asked for by the promoters to correct errors or to carry out agreements made during the committee stage. Occasionally an amendment contrary to the wishes of the promoters is submitted and moved by a member of the House. In such cases a debate would ordinarily arise.

9.54 Any member of the House who wishes to speak without proposing amendments is expected to notify the Senior Deputy Speaker of their intention in advance. Such remarks should be made on the motion that "the bill do now pass", not on the motion for third reading.

Commons bills

9.55 A private bill brought from the Commons is read a first time forthwith by means of an entry in the Minutes of Proceedings, and referred to the Examiners in respect of the standing orders relating to such bills.⁴⁸ It may not be read a second time until the standing orders have been complied with or dispensed with.⁴⁹ Petitions against it may be deposited up to 10 days after first reading,⁵⁰ whether or not the petitioner also petitioned the House of Commons.⁵¹ If it is amended in the House of Lords, it may be referred to the Examiners again in respect of the amendments.⁵²

King's Consent

9.56 When the King's or Prince of Wales' Consent (see paragraphs 8.196–8.200) is required for a private bill, it is usually signified on third reading by a minister who is a Privy Counsellor.

Commons amendments

9.57 Amendments made by the Commons to Lords bills, or to Lords amendments to Commons bills, and amendments to such amendments which the promoters wish to make in the House of Lords, are submitted to the Senior Deputy Speaker for approval.⁵³ Commons amendments may be agreed formally by an entry in the Minutes of Proceedings, without notice, and not taken in the House but, if the Senior Deputy Speaker so wishes, the same procedure is followed as for public bills.

9.58 If there is disagreement between the Houses on amendments to private bills, the same procedure is followed as for public bills. However, decisions on private legislation are coordinated between the two Houses, so that the need for this procedure seldom arises. Neither House reinserts a provision struck out by the other House unless by agreement in advance between the two Houses.

Royal Assent

9.59 Private bills other than personal bills receive Royal Assent in the same form as public bills, "*Le Roi le veult*" (see appendix F).

Hybrid instruments

9.60 The House of Lords alone has a procedure for considering hybrid instruments.

9.61 When the Senior Deputy Speaker is of the opinion that an affirmative instrument⁵⁴ is such that, apart from the provisions of the Act authorising it to be made, it would require to be enacted by a private or hybrid bill, the Senior Deputy Speaker reports that opinion to the House and to the minister or other person responsible for the instrument. An instrument upon which such a Senior Deputy Speaker's report has been made is known as a hybrid instrument. Such instruments can be opposed in the House of Lords by petitioning against them.⁵⁵

47 PBSO 148.

48 PBSOs 98, 74, 60–61, 65–68.

49 PBSO 99.

50 PBSO 101.

51 PBSO 112.

52 PBSO 75.

53 PBSO 150.

54 For this purpose, an affirmative instrument is as defined in SO 73, but excludes orders under s. 1 of the Manoeuvres Act 1958 and certain instruments exempted from this procedure by their parent Act.

55 PBSO 216.

9.62 Any petition asking the House not to affirm a hybrid instrument must be deposited with the Clerk of the Parliaments within 14 days following the day on which the Senior Deputy Speaker's report is laid before the House. If no petition is received within this period, the Senior Deputy Speaker reports accordingly to the House. Any petition received during the period is referred to the Hybrid Instruments Committee (see paragraph 11.74), together with the instrument petitioned against.

9.63 The Hybrid Instruments Committee, after considering any representations made in writing by the parties to the proceedings and after hearing, if it thinks fit, the parties in person or by counsel or agents, decides whether any petitioner has a right to be heard. If so, the committee reports to the House, in accordance with the criteria specified in PBSO 216, whether there ought to be a further inquiry by a select committee into all or any of the matters specified by the petitioner. In such a case, the House may refer all or any of the matters on which the committee has reported to a select committee consisting of five members, appointed by the House on the proposal of the Committee of Selection, with terms of reference specified by the House.

9.64 No motion to approve a hybrid instrument may be moved until the proceedings under PBSO 216 have been completed,⁵⁶ that is until either:

- (a) the Senior Deputy Speaker has reported to the House that no petitions have been received, or that all petitions have been withdrawn; or
- (b) the Hybrid Instruments Committee has reported that no petitioner has a right to be heard, or that there ought not to be an inquiry by a select committee; or
- (c) the House has decided not to refer any matter to a select committee; or
- (d) the select committee has reported to the House.

9.65 Where proceedings under PBSO 216 have not been completed in respect of an instrument which has expired or lapsed, a further instrument to substantially the same effect may be substituted for the purposes of those proceedings.

⁵⁶ SO 73.

Expedited hybrid instruments

9.66 A hybrid instrument which, by virtue of the Act authorising it to be made, is, after the expiry of a period prescribed by that Act, to proceed in Parliament as if its provisions would, apart from that Act, require to be enacted by a public bill that is not hybrid, is known as an expedited hybrid instrument.⁵⁷ The procedure for such an instrument differs from that applicable to other hybrid instruments in several respects. A petition not to affirm an expedited hybrid instrument must be deposited within 10 days following the day on which the instrument is laid. If the Hybrid Instruments Committee is of the opinion that there ought to be a further inquiry, it conducts that inquiry itself forthwith.

9.67 No motion to approve an expedited hybrid instrument may be moved until the proceedings under PBSO 216A have been completed, that is until the Senior Deputy Speaker or the Hybrid Instruments Committee has reported, or the period prescribed by the parent Act has expired.

Special procedure orders

9.68 The procedure for special procedure orders is laid down by the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945, as amended by the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1965 and the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013,⁵⁸ supplemented by the PBSOs of both Houses. That Act applies:

- to orders made under Acts passed before the Act of 1945 which are specified in that Act, or to orders made under it;⁵⁹ and
- to orders made under Acts passed since the Act of 1945 which are expressed in those Acts to be "subject to special parliamentary procedure".⁶⁰

9.69 In this part 's.' refers to sections of the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945.

⁵⁷ PBSO 216A.

⁵⁸ s. 25.

⁵⁹ s. 8.

⁶⁰ s. 1.

Laying of orders

9.70 An order subject to special parliamentary procedure must be laid before Parliament.⁶¹ No order may be laid until the requirements⁶² of the enabling Act, or of Schedule 1 to the 1945 Act, as to notices, consideration of objections and holding of inquiries have been complied with; and notice must be published in *The London Gazette* not less than three days before the order is laid. There must be laid with it a certificate by the minister specifying the requirements of the enabling Act and certifying that they have been complied with or (so far as the 1945 Act permits) dispensed with.

Petitions

9.71 Petitions⁶³ may be presented against a special procedure order within a period of 21 days, known as the 'petitioning period', beginning with the day on which the order is laid before Parliament or, if the order is laid before the two Houses on different days, with the later of the two days. If the petitioning period expires on a Sunday, it is extended to the following Monday; if it expires during a dissolution, prorogation or any period of 10 or more consecutive days on which the House does not sit for public business, it is extended to the day on which the House resumes.

9.72 There are two kinds of petition against a special procedure order:

- a petition calling for amendments to the order, which must specify the proposed amendments (a 'petition for amendment'); and
- a general petition against the order, which must be presented separately (a 'petition of general objection').

9.73 Memorials⁶⁴ stating technical objections to petitions may be deposited in the office of the Clerk of the Parliaments within seven days beginning with the day on which the petition was presented.

9.74 After the petitioning period has expired, the Senior Deputy Speaker and the Chairman of Ways and Means in the House of Commons consider all petitions and report to both Houses. If a petition complies with the Act and standing orders, and if the Chairmen consider the petitioner has the right to be heard, they certify that it is proper to be received and whether

it is a petition for amendment or a petition of general objection. If a petition for amendment⁶⁵ involves amendments which would alter the scope of the order or affect the interests of persons other than the petitioner, the Chairmen may make a special report to that effect. If a petition for amendment involves amendments "which would constitute a negative of the main purpose of the order", the Chairmen certify it as a petition of general objection. But if only some of the amendments would defeat the main purpose of the order, the Chairmen may delete those amendments and certify the rest of the petition as a petition for amendment. In certain cases, the Chairmen may find it necessary to hear the parties, and they must do so if memorials are deposited.

9.75 Within 14 days,⁶⁶ beginning with the day on which the Chairmen's report is laid before the House of Lords, counter-petitions may be presented against petitions for amendment.

Resolution for annulment

9.76 If either House, within 21 days⁶⁷ beginning with the day on which the Chairmen's report on an order is laid before it (the 'resolution period'), resolves that the order be annulled, the order lapses. In reckoning the resolution period, time during which Parliament is dissolved or prorogued, or both Houses are adjourned for more than four days, is not counted.

9.77 If there is an equality of votes on a resolution for annulment, the resolution is defeated and the order proceeds.

9.78 If no resolution for annulment is passed, any certified petition is referred to a joint committee, except that a petition of general objection is not referred if either House has resolved within the resolution period that it should not be. Any special report of the two Chairmen, and any counter-petitions, are also referred to the committee.

9.79 If no petition is referred to a joint committee at the end of the resolution period, and no resolution for annulment has been passed, the order may come into operation.

61 s. 1.

62 s. 2.

63 s. 3; PBSOs 206, 201, 201A.

64 PBSO 207.

65 PBSO 207A.

66 PBSO 210.

67 s. 4.

Joint committee

9.80 Joint committees under the 1945 Act consist of three members of each House, and PBSO 209 governs their proceedings. Where a petition is for amendment,⁶⁸ the joint committee may report the order with or without amendments to give effect to the petition in whole or in part. Where the petition is of general objection, the joint committee may report the order with or without amendments, or report that the order not be approved. The report of the joint committee is laid before both Houses. Where the order is reported without amendment,⁶⁹ it may come into operation from the date when the report of the joint committee is laid before Parliament.

9.81 Where the order is reported with amendments,⁷⁰ the minister may bring the order as amended into operation on a date of their choice, or withdraw the order, or bring it to Parliament for further consideration by means of a bill for its confirmation.

9.82 Where the joint committee reports that the order not be approved, the order does not take effect unless confirmed by Act of Parliament.

Confirming bills

9.83 A confirming bill presented in respect of an order reported with amendments is a public bill and sets out the order as amended.⁷¹ It is treated as if the amendments had been made in committee in the House in which it is presented, and in the second House likewise it proceeds straight to consideration on report.⁷² A bill presented in respect of an order which the committee has reported not be approved goes through the same procedure, unless a petition for amendment was certified but was not dealt with by the joint committee. In that case the confirming bill has a first and second reading, and is referred to that committee for the purpose of considering that petition. Report and third reading follow. In the second House, the bill proceeds straight to consideration on report.

68 s. 5.

69 s. 6.

70 PBSO 214.

71 s. 6(4).

72 s. 6(5).

Orders relating to Scotland⁷³

9.84 In the case of orders which do not deal with matters within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament but which relate exclusively to Scotland, a preliminary inquiry into objections is held in Scotland by Commissioners in accordance with the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936. If the minister concerned accepts the Commissioners' recommendations, the order is laid before Parliament and the subsequent proceedings are as already described, except that no petition, whether for amendment or of general objection, is referred to a joint committee unless either House so orders within the resolution period. If the minister is not prepared to accept the Commissioners' recommendations, they may, instead of laying the order before Parliament, introduce a bill for the confirmation of the order. The procedure on such a bill is the same as for a bill under section 9 of the 1936 Act.

Scottish private legislation

9.85 Private legislation on matters affecting interests in Scotland, and not wholly within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, is governed by the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936.⁷⁴ A person seeking such legislation does not present a petition for a private bill to Parliament but submits a draft order to the Secretary of State for Scotland; and petitions them to issue a provisional order in the terms of the draft or with such modifications as may be necessary.⁷⁵ Legislation for purposes which would require a personal bill, as defined by PBSO 3(2), is exempted from this provision.

9.86 In this part 's.' refers to sections of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936; and 'GO' refers to General Orders made under s.15(1).

Legislation not confined to Scotland

9.87 A person who seeks powers "to be operative in Scotland and elsewhere" may make representations to the Secretary of State that the

73 s. 10.

74 s. 1(1).

75 s. 1(1).

powers should be conferred by a single enactment.⁷⁶ The Secretary of State, the Senior Deputy Speaker and the Chairman of Ways and Means in the House of Commons consider such a representation. If they are of the opinion that the powers would be more properly obtained by a private bill than by the duplicated process of a provisional order for Scotland and a private bill for the areas affected beyond Scotland, they publish their decision and report it to Parliament. The promoters then proceed by private bill. A petition for such a bill may not be presented sooner than four weeks after the representation has been made to the Secretary of State.⁷⁷

Draft orders

9.88 Application for provisional orders may be made twice a year, on 27 March and 27 November. A copy of every draft order must be deposited in the appropriate offices of both Houses of Parliament.⁷⁸

9.89 Promoters are required to comply with General Orders made under the 1936 Act, which correspond with the standing orders that have to be complied with prior to the introduction of a private bill. These require them to deposit copies of draft orders at certain public offices, and to give notice by public advertisement to owners and occupiers of land or houses affected. The Secretary of State refers all draft orders to the Examiners, who report to the Secretary of State and the two Chairmen whether these General Orders have been complied with. If they have not, the promoters may apply for dispensation to the two Chairmen, whose decision is final.⁷⁹

9.90 The last date for advertisements is 11 April or 11 December, as the case may be, and for six weeks from the last date of advertisement persons may petition against any draft order to the Secretary of State, who notifies the two Chairmen.⁸⁰ When this period has expired, the two Chairmen examine all the draft orders and any petitions, and report to the Secretary of State, who lays each report before Parliament.⁸¹

76 s. 1(4).

77 PBSO 193.

78 GO 2, s. 1(2).

79 s. 13, GO 4–56, 58–60, 65–67, 69–72, s. 3(2).

80 GO 75.

81 s. 2, PBSO 189.

Order refused

9.91 If the two Chairmen report that the provisions, or some of the provisions, of any draft order relate to matters outside Scotland to such an extent, or raise questions of public policy of such novelty and importance, that they ought to be dealt with by private bill and not by provisional order, the Secretary of State must, without further inquiry, refuse to issue a provisional order, to the extent objected to by the Chairmen.⁸²

Substituted bill

9.92 The promoters of a draft order which the two Chairmen consider should not be issued by the Secretary of State, may, if they wish, introduce a private bill known as a 'substituted bill'. They must, within 14 days after the Secretary of State has notified them of their refusal to make the provisional order, deposit a copy of the bill in every public office where a copy of the draft order was deposited, and they must notify their intention to the opponents of the draft order and prove to the Examiner that they have done so. They must satisfy the Examiner that the bill does not contain any provision which was not contained in the draft order, though it is not required to contain all the provisions which were in the order. Subject to these conditions, the notices which were given for the draft order are deemed to have been given for the substituted bill, and the petition to the Secretary of State for the provisional order is taken to be the petition for the bill. Petitions deposited against the draft order are received from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, by the House in which the bill originates, as petitions presented against the substituted bill. In the House of Lords, no other petition may be received.⁸³

Unopposed orders

9.93 If the two Chairmen raise no objection to the draft order, and if there is no opposition outstanding, the Secretary of State issues the provisional order, with such modifications as may be necessary to meet recommendations made by the two Chairmen or any public department affected. The Secretary of State has the power to send an unopposed order to an inquiry by Commissioners before issuing it.⁸⁴

82 s. 2(2).

83 PBSOs 194, 195, 196, s. 2(4), PBSO 197.

84 s. 7, s. 3(1).

Opposed orders

9.94 Opposed orders are referred to Commissioners, who hear parties in Scotland. There are four Commissioners, normally two members from each House, selected by the two Chairmen from parliamentary panels appointed by the Senior Deputy Speaker in the House of Lords and the Committee of Selection in the House of Commons. One of the Commissioners is appointed as Chair.⁸⁵

9.95 The proceedings of the Commissioners follow closely those of select committees on private bills. After inquiry, the Commissioners report on the order to the Secretary of State. They either report that the order should not be made, in which case the order is rejected; or they approve it, with or without modification.⁸⁶

9.96 The Secretary of State then issues the provisional order. They are entitled to make further amendments after the inquiry, and are required at this stage to have regard to any recommendations made by the Chairmen or by departments. It is an essential feature of the procedure, however, that the fullest respect is paid to the views of the Commissioners. With the rarest exception, further amendments are limited to matters of drafting.

Confirmation bills

9.97 No provisional order issued by the Secretary of State for Scotland has any validity until it has been confirmed by a public Act of Parliament. A bill to confirm any such order or orders is usually introduced by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons. A bill to confirm an order into which no inquiry has been held is deemed to have passed through all its stages up to and including committee in each House.⁸⁷ In the House of Lords, after first reading, it is put down for consideration on report. The Lord in charge of the bill moves:

“That this bill be now considered on report.”

9.98 The third reading and passing of the bill are usually taken on the next convenient day. Proceedings on such a bill are usually formal. Such bills are not printed in the Lords unless amended on consideration on report.

9.99 A bill to confirm an order into which an inquiry has been held may be petitioned against within seven days of introduction in the House of origin.⁸⁸ If a petition is presented, a member may, with notice, move immediately after second reading to refer the bill to a joint committee, which broadly follows the procedure of a select committee on an opposed private bill.⁸⁹ Such a motion is rare. If such a motion is agreed to in the House of Commons and the bill is passed by that House, then in the House of Lords the bill proceeds straight from second reading to third reading.⁹⁰ If no such motion is agreed to, then, if the bill was introduced in the Lords, it proceeds from second reading to consideration on report; if the bill was introduced in the Commons, it proceeds in the Lords straight from first reading to consideration on report.

Transport and Works Act 1992

9.100 Under the Transport and Works Act 1992, projects such as railways, tramways, harbours and barrages no longer come before Parliament for approval by way of private bill, but are dealt with by ministerial orders, in most cases following local public inquiries. Such orders are not normally subject to parliamentary proceedings, but may be deposited in the libraries of both Houses for information. However, section 9 of the Act provides that schemes which are judged by the Secretary of State to be of national significance must be approved by each House on a motion moved by a minister before an order is made to give effect to the scheme. In practice such a motion precedes any local public inquiry.

9.101 Motions take the following form:

“Lord X to move that, pursuant to section 9 of the Transport and Works Act 1992, this House approves the following proposals which in the opinion of the Secretary of State are of national significance, namely...”

85 s. 5, PBSO 190, s. 4.

86 s. 6, 10–12, 14, 17, GO 73–115, s. 8.

87 s. 7(2).

88 s. 9.

89 PBSO 191.

90 PBSO 192.

Delegated legislation and other matters

Delegated legislation

10.1 Acts of Parliament do not make detailed provision for many of the subsidiary and procedural matters necessary to give effect to the policy embodied in the Act. So Acts often confer legislative power upon the Government. This legislative power is exercised by means of 'delegated' (or 'secondary') legislation. Delegated legislation is made most often by ministers but may also be made by other persons and bodies. The statutory basis for delegated legislation is usually a provision in an Act of Parliament, often referred to as the 'parent Act'.

General powers of the House over delegated legislation

10.2 The Parliament Acts do not apply to delegated legislation, so delegated legislation rejected by the Lords cannot have effect even if the Commons have approved it. Neither House of Parliament has the power to amend delegated legislation.¹ The House of Lords has only occasionally rejected delegated legislation.² The House has resolved "That this House affirms its unfettered freedom to vote on any subordinate legislation submitted for its consideration".³ The rules governing matters before the courts (*sub judice* – see page 65) do not apply to delegated legislation or to proceedings on such legislation. Delegated legislation may be debated in

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- 1 Except in the very small number of cases where the parent Act specifically provides for such amendment, see: Census Act 1920 s. 1(2), Civil Contingencies Act 2004 s. 27(3).
 - 2 The last four instances of the rejection of an affirmative instrument were 18 June 1968 (Southern Rhodesia (United Nations Sanctions) Order 1968), 22 February 2000 (Greater London Authority (Election Expenses) Order 2000), 28 March 2007 (Gambling (Geographical Distribution of Casino Premises Licences) Order 2007) and 3 December 2012 (Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (Amendment of Schedule 1) Order 2012). A motion for an Address praying against a negative instrument (the Greater London Authority Elections Rules 2000) was agreed to on 22 February 2000. On 26 October 2015, the House agreed two motions (both on a division) to decline to consider the draft Tax Credits (Income Thresholds and Determination of Rates) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 until certain specified conditions had been met.
 - 3 LJ (1993–94) 683; HL Deb. 20 October 1994, cols 356–83.

Grand Committee, but must return to the floor of the House if a formal decision is required.⁴

Types of delegated legislation

10.3 Delegated legislation that comes before the House consists mostly of statutory instruments.⁵ The parent Act makes clear which procedures apply to the delegated legislation made under its various provisions.

10.4 The most common forms of delegated legislation are:

- affirmative instruments,⁶ which must be approved by resolutions of both Houses if they are to come into force, or remain in force having been made;
- negative instruments, which are subject to annulment by a resolution of either House, i.e. they have effect unless specifically rejected;
- general instruments, which may be required to be laid before Parliament for information but are not subject either to approval or annulment or to any other kind of proceedings; and
- instruments not laid before Parliament.⁷

10.5 There are also certain 'super-affirmative' procedures, which give Parliament an opportunity to exercise a greater scrutiny role than it may exercise in respect of affirmative instruments.⁸ Examples include human rights remedial orders (paragraphs 10.22–10.25) and legislative reform orders (paragraphs 10.26–10.29).

10.6 Other types of delegated legislation include:

- hybrid instruments (affirmative instruments which, if they were primary legislation, would be subject to Private Business Standing Orders (PBSOs); see paragraphs 9.60–9.67); and
- special procedure orders (which are required where certain protected categories of land, such as open space land,⁹ are subject to compulsory purchase; see paragraphs 9.68–9.84).

4 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2003–04; 1st Rpt 2008–09.](#)

5 The Statutory Instruments Act 1946 defines the main categories of statutory instrument.

6 SO 73.

7 Codes of practice and protocols may also be delegated legislation, although in most cases they are not legally binding and are described as 'quasi-legislation'.

8 See [Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee, Special Report: Strengthened Statutory Procedures for the Scrutiny of Delegated Powers, 3rd Rpt, Session 2012–13, HL Paper 19.](#)

9 See Acquisition of Land Act 1981, s. 19(1).

Scrutiny of delegated powers and delegated legislation

10.7 The Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee examines the way in which bills delegate legislative power, and also scrutinises legislative reform and similar orders (see paragraph 11.56). The Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee scrutinises and reports on the policy content of delegated legislation (see paragraph 11.70).¹⁰ The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments considers and reports on technical and legal aspects of delegated legislation (see paragraph 11.72). The Joint Committee on Human Rights examines proposed remedial orders (see paragraph 11.62).

Negative instruments

10.8 Negative procedure is the most common form of parliamentary control over delegated legislation. Most negative instruments take effect on a specified future date, but some may come into effect on the date they are laid. Both negative instruments and draft negative instruments are subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House adopted within a specified time limit.

Amendments and motions relating to negative instruments

10.9 Opposition to or concern about a negative instrument may be expressed in various ways.

- A resolution to reject a negative instrument takes the form of a motion that "an Humble Address" be presented to His Majesty praying that the instrument be annulled.¹¹ The reason for seeking to annul the instrument may be given, by means of the addition of the words "on the grounds that" etc.¹² The period during which a negative resolution may be moved ('praying time') is 40 days. Swearing-in days in either House are included in the reckoning of the 40 days, but periods of dissolution, prorogation or adjournment of both Houses for more than four days are not. Praying time in respect of an instrument laid during the recess does not therefore begin to run until one of the Houses sits.

10 The Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee also scrutinises proposed negative instruments laid before Parliament under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 ("the 2018 Act") and the European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020, and draft instruments published under Schedule 8 to the 2018 Act. Procedure 5th Rpt 2017–19, Procedure 6th Rpt 2019–21.

11 The procedure is set out in the Statutory Instruments Act 1946.

12 [Procedure 6th Rpt 2010–12.](#)

- Critical amendments or motions may be moved relating to negative instruments, inviting the House to call on the Government to take action or record a particular point of view, without annulling the instrument itself.
- A negative instrument may also be debated on a neutral 'take note' motion, either in Grand Committee or in the House.

Negative instruments in Grand Committee

10.10 Where a neutral motion is tabled in *House of Lords Business* to take note of the instrument, this may be debated in Grand Committee without a referral motion, and no further proceedings are required once the debate has taken place. If another member were to table a prayer or some other substantive motion on the same instrument, the motion inviting a decision of the House, which could not be taken in Grand Committee, would take precedence. A prayer or other substantive motion may also be tabled following the debate in Grand Committee.¹³

Affirmative instruments

10.11 Affirmative instruments require the express approval of Parliament, or sometimes of the Commons only.¹⁴ The affirmative procedure takes one of two forms, depending on the parent Act.

- A draft affirmative instrument is an instrument that is required to be laid in draft before both Houses and will not be made or have effect unless both Houses agree to resolutions approving the draft instrument (this is by far the most common form).¹⁵
- A made affirmative instrument is an instrument that is made before being laid before Parliament and which requires both Houses to agree to the appropriate resolutions approving the instrument either (a) before it may come into force, or (b) if already in force, to enable it to remain in force beyond a specified period.¹⁶

¹³ [Procedure 1st Rpt 2008–09](#). While debates on neutral 'take note' motions on negative instruments are deemed suitable for consideration in Grand Committee, they may also be debated in the Chamber.

¹⁴ These are primarily financial instruments. The rest of this paragraph refers to both Houses but it must be remembered that some instruments need only be laid before and approved by the House of Commons.

¹⁵ In some cases one or both Houses must present Addresses to the Crown praying that the instrument be made.

¹⁶ Stated in the parent Act and usually 28 or 40 days in duration.

10.12 Motions to approve most types of affirmative instrument may not be moved until a report on the instrument from the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has been laid before the House.¹⁷ Special considerations apply to certain categories of affirmative instrument, such as those laid under section 17 of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and hybrid instruments (see SO 73 and paragraphs 10.26–10.29 and 9.60–9.67).

10.13 A motion to approve an affirmative instrument must be moved by a minister of the Crown. If the responsible minister is unable to be in the Chamber, another minister may move the motion on their behalf.

Amendments and motions relating to affirmative instruments

10.14 Opposition to or concern about an affirmative instrument may be expressed in a number of ways (in addition to speaking in the debate in Grand Committee or on the approval motion). For example:

- members may give notice of direct opposition by means of an amendment to the approval motion, the effect of which would be to withhold the agreement of the House;¹⁸
- members may, by means of an amendment or a separate motion, call upon the Government to take specified action (but without seeking to prevent the approval of the instrument); or
- members may, by means of an amendment or a separate motion, invite the House to put on record a particular point of view relating to the instrument, but without calling on the Government to take any specific action.

10.15 It is usual for all such amendments and motions to be debated at the same time as the substantive approval motion on the instrument. Notice should be given of any intention to oppose a motion or amendment concerning delegated legislation.¹⁹ Manuscript amendments to motions relating to statutory instruments are not allowed.

¹⁷ SO 73. The House has agreed from time to time to dispense with the standing order, see for instance 13 December 2021.

¹⁸ This may take the form of a motion to 'decline to approve' the affirmative instrument. It may also take the form of a motion to 'decline to consider' the affirmative instrument until certain specified conditions have been met. See debate on the Tax Credits (Income Thresholds and Determination of Rates) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 on 26 October 2015.

¹⁹ Procedure 1st Rpt 1990–91.

Moving affirmative instruments en bloc

10.16 If several affirmative instruments are closely enough related to justify being taken together, or have been debated in Grand Committee (see paragraph 10.18), the motions for resolutions or Addresses on them may be moved *en bloc*.²⁰ It is for the minister in charge, in the first instance, and ultimately for the House, to decide whether groups of instruments qualify for this procedure. An *en bloc* motion may be moved only with the unanimous leave of the House; if any member objects, motions on the individual instruments must be moved separately to the extent desired.²¹ Notice of a motion to take instruments *en bloc* is given by means of an italic note in *House of Lords Business* reminding members of their right to object to taking the instruments *en bloc*.

Affirmative instruments in Grand Committee

10.17 Affirmative instruments may be considered in Grand Committee. No referral motion is required. After the debate has been held in Grand Committee each instrument is approved by the House on a separate motion. The *en bloc* procedure set out in paragraph 10.16 applies in Grand Committee.

10.18 Motions to approve affirmative instruments after they have been debated in Grand Committee are normally taken *en bloc* in the House. The requirement for the unanimous leave of the House applies as for other *en bloc* motions.²²

Orders subject to super-affirmative and other strengthened scrutiny procedures

10.19 Certain parent Acts make orders subject to a form of parliamentary procedure more rigorous than the affirmative procedure. The most commonly used are procedures under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006.²³

10.20 The parent Act sets out the precise scrutiny procedure, which varies in each case, though they share some or all of the following characteristics:

- a requirement for the Government to consult before laying a draft order or draft proposal before Parliament;
- a requirement to lay supporting documents with the draft order;
- power for a designated scrutiny committee in each House to determine the level of parliamentary scrutiny the draft order is subject to;
- power for a designated scrutiny committee to recommend the draft order be not proceeded with; and
- a requirement for the minister to consider or take account of recommendations made by the relevant committee, or resolutions made by either House.²⁴

10.21 The scrutiny procedures that apply under the various Acts are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Remedial orders

10.22 Under section 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998, if primary legislation is found by a higher United Kingdom court or by the European Court of Human Rights to be incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights, then “If a minister of the Crown considers that there are compelling reasons for proceeding under this section, he may by order make such amendments to the legislation as he considers necessary to remove the incompatibility”. Such an order is known as a remedial order, and is subject to special procedures set out in Schedule 2 to the Act.

10.23 For non-urgent orders, the minister must first lay a document containing a draft order and an explanation of why it is being made. Parliament and the public have 60 days (not counting prorogation, dissolution, or any adjournment of both Houses for more than four days) to make representations; “representations” explicitly includes “any relevant parliamentary report or resolution”. The minister may then lay a second draft order. If there have been representations, a summary of them must be laid; and if the second draft order is different from the first, the changes must be explained. After a second 60-day period, the order may be approved by both Houses, and, if approved, may then be made.

²⁴ See [Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee, 3rd Rpt, 2012–13 \(HL Paper 19\)](#).

²⁰ Procedure 2nd Rpt 1970–71.

²¹ Procedure 3rd Rpt 1971–72.

²² [Procedure 1st Rpt 2005–06](#).

²³ Similar procedures are found in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (s. 85), the Local Government Act 1999 (s. 17), the Local Government Act 2000 (s. 9), the Local Government Act 2003 (s. 98), the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (s. 5E), the Local Transport Act 2008 (s. 102), and the Localism Act 2011 (ss 7 and 19). See paragraphs 10.30–10.40.

10.24 If the order is declared to be urgent, it may be made before being laid. It is then laid, with an explanatory document. There follow 60 days for representations, counted from the date of making the order. If representations are made, the minister must lay a summary; and, if it is intended to amend the original order, a new order may be made and laid, with an explanation. Both Houses must then approve the original or replacement order within 120 days of the making of the original order; otherwise the orders lapse.

10.25 The Joint Committee on Human Rights is charged to consider remedial orders, and to perform for such orders the functions otherwise carried out by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. Under SO 73, no motion to approve such an order may be moved until the Joint Committee's report has been laid before the House. In the case of a draft order, the Joint Committee must report within 60 days of the laying of the draft. In the case of an urgent order, the Joint Committee must report within 119 days of the making of the original order.²⁵

Legislative reform orders

10.26 The Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 gives ministers wide-ranging powers to amend primary legislation by order, so as to remove or reduce burdens (section 1) or to promote regulatory principles (section 2). The key components of the statutory scrutiny procedure are: (a) the minister recommends which scrutiny procedure should apply to the draft order (negative, affirmative or super-affirmative), although that recommendation is subject to a decision of either House to upgrade the scrutiny procedure; (b) either House may propose amendments to the draft order; and (c) either House may veto the instrument.

10.27 In summary the procedure is as follows:

- A minister wishing to make an order under the Act must first consult on their proposals.
- The minister must lay a draft order before both Houses, with an explanatory document recommending which procedure should apply: negative resolution; affirmative resolution; or super-affirmative resolution (see paragraph 10.29).
- Within 30 days of the date the draft order is laid, either House may require that another procedure should apply—requiring either that a

²⁵ [Procedure 3rd Rpt 1999–2000](#).

draft order laid as a negative instrument be treated as an affirmative instrument or a super-affirmative instrument, or that a draft order laid as an affirmative instrument be treated as a super-affirmative instrument.

- The procedure to which the draft order is subject may be changed in one of two ways. Either (a) the designated scrutiny committee in one or other House recommends another procedure, and this becomes the requirement unless, within the 30-day period, a contrary resolution is passed by the relevant House; or (b) one or other House resolves that another procedure should apply.

10.28 In the House of Lords, the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee is the designated scrutiny committee in respect of legislative reform orders (LROs).

10.29 The three procedures set out in the 2006 Act are as follows:

- Negative procedure (section 16). The minister may make the order unless, within 40 days from the date the draft order was laid, either House resolves otherwise, or the designated scrutiny committee of either House recommends otherwise (and that recommendation is not rejected by the relevant House in the same session).
- Affirmative procedure (section 17). The minister may make the order if, after the expiry of 40 days from the date the draft order was laid, both Houses resolve to approve the draft. If, however, the designated scrutiny committee of either House recommends within the 40-day period that the order should not proceed, it may not proceed unless that recommendation is rejected by resolution in the same session.
- Super-affirmative procedure (section 18). The draft order is laid before both Houses for 60 days, during which time either House may make resolutions, and the designated scrutiny committee of each House may make recommendations. The minister must have regard to any resolutions or recommendations, or any other representations made during the 60 days. After the 60-day period, the minister may decide either to proceed with the draft order without amendment or lay a revised draft which is subject to the normal affirmative procedure. In either case, the minister must lay before Parliament a statement about any representations received. Between the laying of the statement (or the revised draft and the statement) and the approval of the draft, the designated scrutiny committee of either House may recommend that the order should not proceed, in which case it may not then proceed unless

the relevant House rejects the recommendation, by resolution, in the same session.

Other strengthened scrutiny procedures²⁶

Northern Ireland Act 1998

10.30 Section 85 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that His Majesty may, by Order in Council, make provision about certain of the “reserved matters” specified in Schedule 3 to the Act. In summary, the procedure for the scrutiny of these orders is as follows:

- Before any recommendation can be made to His Majesty to make an Order in Council under section 85, a draft order must be laid and approved by resolution of both Houses.
- Before any draft order is laid before Parliament, the Secretary of State must lay before Parliament a document containing a draft of the proposed order and refer the document to the Northern Ireland Assembly for consideration.
- There is a scrutiny period of 60 days from the date the document is laid before Parliament.
- After the expiry of the 60-day period, the Secretary of State can lay a draft order together with a statement (i) summarising any representations made during the 60-day scrutiny period, (ii) containing any report made to the Secretary of State by the Northern Ireland Assembly, and (iii) giving details of any changes made to the proposed order as a result of representations made. The term “representations” includes resolutions of either House or the Assembly or a relevant report or resolution of any committee of either House or the Assembly.

10.31 This scrutiny procedure does not apply if, by reason of urgency, the order is required to be made without a draft having been considered and approved as set out in paragraph 10.30. In this case, the Order in Council is laid before Parliament after having been made and ceases to have effect after 40 days, unless within that period it has been approved by resolution of both Houses.

10.32 In the House of Lords, orders under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 are scrutinised by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Local Government Act 1999

10.33 Section 16 of the Local Government Act 1999 enables the Secretary of State, by order, to modify or exclude the application of any enactment which they think prevents or obstructs compliance by “best value authorities” with the principles of best value, in particular the duty “to secure continuous improvement” in the way they exercise their functions (section 3). Such orders may also confer new powers on authorities to permit or facilitate such compliance. In summary, the procedure for the scrutiny of these orders is as follows:

- The Secretary of State must consult before making an order.
- They must lay before Parliament a document explaining the proposals, and, in particular, setting out the proposed draft order and giving details of the consultation.
- There is a scrutiny period of 60 days from the date the document is laid, and the Secretary of State must consider any representations made during this period.
- At the expiry of the 60 days, the Secretary of State may lay before Parliament a draft order for approval, accompanied by a statement giving details of any representations received and any changes made to the original proposal laid before Parliament.

10.34 In the House of Lords, orders under the Local Government Act 1999 are scrutinised by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Local Government Act 2000

10.35 Sections 5 and 6 of the Local Government Act 2000 enable the Secretary of State to amend, repeal, revoke or disapply any enactment which they think prevents or obstructs local authorities from exercising their power under section 2(1) to promote well-being, or which requires a local authority to prepare, produce or publish any plan or strategy relating to any particular matter. The procedure for the scrutiny of these orders, set out in section 9 of the Act, is similar to that for orders made under section 16 of the Local Government Act 1999 (paragraph 10.33). In the House of Lords, these orders are scrutinised by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.

²⁶ A fuller account of some these procedures is given in the [Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee 3rd Rpt 2012–13](#).

Local Government Act 2003

10.36 Section 97 of the Local Government Act 2003 enables the Secretary of State to amend, repeal, revoke or disapply enactments which either (a) they consider prevent or obstruct “best value authorities” (see paragraph 10.33) charging for the provision of discretionary services, or doing for a commercial purpose anything which they are authorised to do as part of their ordinary functions, or (b) make provision for or in connection with such charging. The procedure for the scrutiny of these orders is similar to that for orders made under section 16 of the Local Government Act 1999 (paragraph 10.33). In the House of Lords, these orders are scrutinised by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

10.37 Section 5C(1) and (2) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 enable the Secretary of State to amend, repeal, revoke or disapply any provision which they think either (a) prevents or restricts fire and rescue authorities from exercising any power conferred by section 5A(1) to do, for a commercial purpose or otherwise, things that are incidental to or connected with their functions, or (b) overlaps any such power. The procedure for scrutiny of such orders is the same as for LROs (paragraphs 10.26–10.29), except that the ministerial undertakings given in respect of LROs do not extend to the use of these orders. In the House of Lords, orders under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 are scrutinised by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Local Transport Act 2008

10.38 Section 101 of the Local Transport Act 2008 enables the Secretary of State by order to amend, repeal, revoke or disapply any enactment they think prevents or obstructs “Integrated Transport Authorities” from exercising their power under section 99(1) to promote economic, social or environmental well-being in their areas. The procedure for the scrutiny of these orders is similar to that for orders made under section 16 of the Local Government Act 1999 (paragraph 10.33). In the House of Lords, these orders are scrutinised by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Localism Act 2011

10.39 Under section 5 of the Localism Act 2011 the Secretary of State may by order amend, repeal, revoke or disapply a statutory provision which

they think prevents a local authority from exercising its “general power of competence” (conferred by section 1 of the Act), or which they think overlaps that general power. The procedure for scrutiny of such orders is the same as for LROs (paragraph 10.26–10.29), except that the ministerial undertakings given in respect of LROs do not extend to the use of these orders.

10.40 Under section 15 of the Localism Act 2011, the Secretary of State may by order apply, extend, disapply, amend, repeal or revoke any enactment in order either to transfer a local public function from the public authority whose function it is to a “permitted authority”, or to make provision about the discharge of functions which have already been transferred. The procedure for scrutiny of such orders is based on that for LROs except that (a) the level of scrutiny is specified in section 19 of the Act, and there is no power for either House or the designated scrutiny committee in either House to change the scrutiny arrangements, and (b) the ministerial undertakings given in respect of LROs do not extend to the use of these orders. In the House of Lords, orders under sections 5 and 15 of the Localism Act 2011 are scrutinised by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee.

European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023

10.41 Exceptionally, a minister may choose whether instruments laid under section 23(1) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (“the 2018 Act”) and sections 11, 12 and 14 of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (“the 2023 Act”) should be subject to the negative or affirmative procedure.^{27 28} Where a minister proposes that an instrument should be a negative instrument, the sifting procedure set out in Schedule 7 to the 2018 Act and Schedule 5 to the 2023 Act applies. This requires a minister to lay before both Houses a draft of the instrument (commonly called a proposed negative instrument) along with a statement that in their opinion the negative procedure should apply and with a memorandum setting out the reasons for that opinion. A committee in each House may then, within a period of 10 sitting days beginning with the first day on which both Houses are sitting after the day the draft instrument was laid,

27 Regulations may be made under section 8 for two years from Implementation Period completion day (31 December 2020) and under section 23(1) for 10 years after that day.

28 It is usual for the parent Act to specify the procedure.

recommend that the instrument should be upgraded to the affirmative procedure. If the minister rejects a recommendation to upgrade the instrument, they must make a statement explaining why. In the House of Lords, proposed negative instruments laid under the 2018 Act and the 2023 Act are scrutinised by the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

10.42 Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 makes provision for a strengthened scrutiny procedure for statutory instruments which amend or revoke subordinate legislation made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. Paragraph 13 of Schedule 8 requires all such instruments to be subject to the affirmative procedure. Paragraph 14 requires the Government to publish, in a manner they consider appropriate, a draft of the instrument at least 28 days before laying. The Government are then required to make a “scrutiny statement” which must set out what steps were taken to make the draft available to Parliament and the Government’s response to any recommendation made by a committee of either House about the published draft. In addition, paragraph 15 requires the Government to make two explanatory statements: why there are good reasons for the revocation or amendment, and the effect of the amendment or revocation on retained European Union law. In the House of Lords, draft instruments published under Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 are scrutinised by the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Northern Ireland Assembly legislation²⁹

10.43 The Northern Ireland Assembly legislates on transferred or devolved matters, and the United Kingdom Parliament has no part to play in the enactment of such legislation. However, certain matters such as taxation and international relations are excepted or reserved for legislation by the United Kingdom Parliament. The Northern Ireland Assembly can legislate on excepted and reserved matters with the consent of the Secretary of State.

10.44 In such circumstances, section 15 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that the Secretary of State may not submit for Royal Assent a bill of the Northern Ireland Assembly touching on an excepted or reserved matter unless they have laid the bill before the United Kingdom Parliament. In an urgent case, the Secretary of State may submit the bill for immediate Royal Assent; but they must then lay the Act before both Houses at Westminster. Either way, when such a bill or Act has been laid at Westminster, each

House has 20 sitting days within which a motion to oppose the bill or Act may be tabled.

10.45 Under the Act, any such motion must be signed by at least 20 members of the House. The usual rules of the House on adding names to motions (see paragraph 6.55) are dispensed with for these motions on Northern Ireland Assembly legislation.

10.46 Procedure on these motions is as follows:

- When a Northern Ireland Assembly bill or Act is laid before the House, its arrival is recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings, and in a table in the legislation section of *House of Lords Business* entitled “Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation on Reserved/Excepted Matters in Progress”. This table shows the expiry date of the 20-day statutory period. If 20 sitting days pass and no motion is put down, the House’s involvement is at an end.
- If within the 20 days a member of the House tables a motion to oppose the bill or Act, the motion is published in *House of Lords Business*.
- Signatures to the motion may be added in the Table Office or the Legislation Office.
- Signatories to the motion are listed in *House of Lords Business*. If further members of the House add their names, they are added to the list. Once 20 have signed, the list is replaced with a total number.
- A signature is required, either on a copy of the motion, or on a note clearly indicating the member’s wish to be associated with the motion. Fax, email and telephone are not acceptable.
- The master copy of the motion, with a consolidated list of signatures, is kept in the Table Office, and is open for inspection.
- Members may withdraw their signatures at any time, by giving written authority in the same form.
- If, on the 20th day, the number of signatories has not reached 20, the motion is ineffective. If it has reached 20, the motion may be put down for a named day and debated in the usual way. When the motion is put down for a named day, only the name of the member who originally tabled the motion appears on the order paper as the member who is to move the motion. The total number of signatures which the motion has attracted is indicated with the text of the motion.

²⁹ [Procedure 4th Rpt 1999–2000.](#)

European Union legislation³⁰

10.47 Most procedures relating to scrutiny of European Union legislation lapsed with the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union on 31 January 2020, or with the subsequent end of the post-withdrawal transition period on 31 December 2020. However, the European Affairs Committee retains responsibility for scrutinising, among other things, documents made under the Withdrawal Agreement and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, as well as EU documents that would significantly engage the UK's diplomatic or political interests, and its Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland has responsibility for scrutinising new or amended EU legislation applying to Northern Ireland under the Protocol. This takes the form of a document-based scrutiny system, on the basis of explanatory memoranda submitted by government departments.

National policy statements

10.48 National policy statements (NPSs) set out national policy on particular types of development. Under section 9(2) of the Planning Act 2008 each proposal for a NPS must be laid before Parliament. In so doing, the Secretary of State specifies a relevant period for parliamentary scrutiny. If, during this scrutiny period, either House passes a resolution with regard to the proposal, or a committee of either House makes recommendations regarding the proposal, the Secretary of State must lay before Parliament a statement setting out their response to the resolution or recommendations. The proposal is then laid before Parliament again, and is subject to approval by resolution of the House of Commons before being formally designated as a NPS. The final NPS is also laid before Parliament.³¹

10.49 In the House of Lords, NPSs are normally debated in Grand Committee, for up to four hours. However, this does not restrict the freedom of committees of the House or of individual members to make use of the statutory procedures outlined in paragraph 10.48. In the event of a motion for resolution being tabled, the usual channels have undertaken to provide time for a debate in the Chamber within the scrutiny period.³²

Scrutiny of treaties³³

10.50 No treaty³⁴ may be ratified unless the minister responsible has:

- laid a copy before Parliament;
- published it; and
- allowed a period of 21 sitting days (beginning with the day after that on which the treaty was laid) during which either House may resolve that the treaty should not be ratified.

10.51 The minister may extend the scrutiny period by up to 21 sitting days, by publishing and laying before Parliament a statement to that effect before the original period expires; this can be done more than once.

10.52 If the House of Lords passes a resolution within the 21 sitting days (or within the extended scrutiny period) that the treaty should not be ratified, the Government can only proceed with ratification after they have laid a statement before Parliament explaining why the minister believes the treaty should nevertheless be ratified.

10.53 These requirements do not apply if the minister is of the opinion that, exceptionally, the treaty should be ratified without their being met. In such a case, either before or as soon as practicable after the treaty has been ratified, it must be published and laid before Parliament by the minister, along with a statement explaining why the treaty is being ratified outside this process.

10.54 In laying a treaty before Parliament, the minister shall also publish an explanatory memorandum explaining the provisions of the treaty, the reasons for seeking its ratification, and such other matters as the minister considers appropriate.

10.55 For the purposes of these provisions, a sitting day is a day when both Houses are sitting.

10.56 Treaties, as instruments subject to parliamentary proceedings, were formerly scrutinised by the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee. In January 2019, the Procedure Committee agreed that the European Union Committee would, on a temporary basis, scrutinise those treaties laid before

30 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2009–10](#).

31 Planning Act 2008 s. 9 and s. 5, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, s. 130.

32 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2008–09](#). A similar procedure was applied to the Marine Policy Statement ([Procedure 3rd Rpt 2010–12](#)).

33 See Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, ss 20–25.

34 This procedure does not apply to (i) double taxation conventions and arrangements and international tax enforcement arrangements; and (ii) treaties concluded under authority given by the UK Government by any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or any of the British Overseas Territories.

Parliament that replaced existing agreements to which the UK was party by virtue of its EU membership.³⁵ In January 2020, the Liaison Committee agreed to the establishment of an International Agreements Sub-Committee of the European Union Committee to take responsibility for scrutiny of all treaties, superseding previous arrangements. In the context of wider changes to the former European Union Committee structure, the Liaison Committee agreed in December 2020 to replace the International Agreements Sub-Committee with a standalone International Agreements Committee.³⁶ The International Agreements Committee was duly established on 28 January 2021. Its terms of reference are “to consider, and where appropriate report on, 1) matters relating to the negotiation, conclusion and implementation of international agreements, and 2) treaties laid before Parliament in accordance with Part 2 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010”.

35 Procedure Committee Decision, 14 January 2019.

36 [Liaison Committee 5th Rpt 2019–21](#).

CHAPTER 11

Select committees

11.1 The House appoints committees to perform functions on its behalf. Those committees whose members are appointed (‘named of the committee’) by the House are known as ‘select committees’.¹

11.2 A select committee is appointed by ‘orders of appointment’ setting out the committee’s remit (‘orders of reference’), powers and membership.

11.3 Some committees are appointed to perform a particular task, on completion of which the committee ceases to exist (a ‘special inquiry’ select committee). Other committees, listed in SO 63, continue in existence from one session to the next (‘sessional select committees’); but the continued existence of such committees may be reviewed, particularly at the start of a Parliament.² This chapter concludes with a brief description of the sessional select committees.

Motions of appointment

11.4 A committee being set up for the first time is usually appointed by a two-stage process. If the appointment of the committee is recommended in a report of the Liaison Committee, approval of that report by the House is taken to be approval of the principle of the establishment of the committee. If the appointment of the committee has not been recommended by the Liaison Committee (as with certain pre-legislative scrutiny committees, for example), the Leader of the House first moves a motion that it is expedient to appoint the committee. This motion sets the proposed orders of reference, gives the House an opportunity to discuss the desirability of setting up the new committee, and authorises the Committee of Selection to select members. In either case, a second motion is then moved, by the Senior Deputy Speaker, to complete the orders of appointment. Such motions require notice, and may be debated and amended.

1 The following committees are not select committees: Committees of the whole House, Grand Committees, second reading committees, unopposed private bill committees and committees to prepare reasons for disagreeing to Commons amendments to bills. The Ecclesiastical Committee and the Intelligence and Security Committee are statutory bodies and not select committees.

2 [Liaison 3rd Rpt 2005–06](#).

11.5 The 'sessional committees' are:

- House of Lords Commission
- Built Environment Committee
- Communications and Digital Committee
- Conduct Committee
- Consolidation etc. Bills Committee (Joint)
- Constitution Committee
- Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee
- Economic Affairs Committee
- Environment and Climate Change Committee
- European Affairs Committee
- Finance Committee
- Financial Services Regulation Committee
- Human Rights Committee (Joint)
- Hybrid Instruments Committee
- Industry and Regulators Committee
- International Agreements Committee
- International Relations and Defence Committee
- Justice and Home Affairs Committee
- Liaison Committee
- National Security Strategy Committee (Joint)
- Procedure and Privileges Committee
- Public Services Committee
- Science and Technology Committee
- Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee
- Services Committee
- Standing Orders (Private Bills) Committee
- Statutory Instruments Committee (Joint).

11.6 For a sessional select committee, the orders of appointment are made on a single motion. The Senior Deputy Speaker may move *en bloc* the motions appointing select committees, Deputy Chairmen and other bodies

nominated by the Committee of Selection. Notice is given by means of an

italic note in *House of Lords Business* informing the House that, unless any Lord objects, the motions of appointment will be moved *en bloc*.³

Instructions

11.7 The House may amend, amplify or restrict a committee's orders of reference at any time by passing an instruction—e.g. to consider (or not to consider) a certain aspect of the matter, to give certain parties an opportunity to give evidence, or to report by a given date. An instruction may be mandatory or permissive.

Membership

11.8 The Committee of Selection⁴ selects and proposes to the House the membership of select committees, with the exception of the Committee of Selection itself and committees on private legislation.⁵

11.9 There is no formal rule on the political balance of committee membership,⁶ and in most cases no fixed number of members. It is desirable for a member to serve on only one sessional investigative select committee at any one time.⁷

11.10 The Committee of Selection carries out annual monitoring of gender representation in Lords committee membership and chairing.

11.11 The Senior Deputy Speaker may propose to the House, without reference to the Committee of Selection, members of the House to fill casual vacancies on select committees.⁸ Such motions may be moved *en bloc*, subject to the rules set out in paragraph 3.55.⁹

3 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2000–01.](#)

4 SO 62.

5 Unless the Senior Deputy Speaker or two or more members of the Committee of Selection think otherwise: SO 62(2). See also Private Business Standing Orders 104 and 121.

6 At the start of the 2010 Parliament the Committee of Selection concluded that the coalition Government should not have a majority over the other parties and Crossbenchers on any committee or sub-committee ([1st Rpt 2010–12](#)).

7 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2013–14.](#)

8 SO 62(7).

9 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2010–12.](#)

Rotation rule

11.12 In order to secure a regular turnover of membership, a 'rotation rule' operates in the case of most committees, whereby members of the House who have been appointed (or co-opted) for three successive calendar years may not be reappointed in the following two calendar years. The three years may be extended to allow a member appointed as Chair a three-year term as Chair. Select committees apply the rotation rules to their sub-committees.¹⁰

11.13 To give effect to the rotation rule, each January the Committee of Selection recommends the names of members to be appointed to select committees in place of those who are to rotate off those committees.

11.14 The Committee of Selection may consider making *ad hoc* adjustments to the application of the rotation rule when needed.

11.15 The following committees are exempt from any rotation rule:

- Joint Committee on Consolidation etc. Bills¹¹
- Standing Orders (Private Bills) Committee
- Hybrid Instruments Committee.

11.16 The Lord Speaker, leaders, chief whips, deputy chief whips, Convenor of the Crossbench Peers and the Senior Deputy Speaker are exempt from the rotation rule.

11.17 External members of the House of Lords Commission are appointed for a maximum term of six years.¹²

11.18 Lay members of the Conduct Committee are appointed for three-year terms with the ability to extend each appointment once for up to three years.¹³

Committee Chairs

11.19 The Chairs of most committees are appointed by the House on the proposal of the Committee of Selection. Otherwise the Senior Deputy

Speaker or, in their absence, a Deputy Chairman takes the Chair.¹⁴ In the absence of an appointed Chair, the committee may appoint a substitute. Alternatively, a committee may be given power to appoint its own Chair; this is usually done only in the case of a joint committee.

Powers

11.20 A select committee may be appointed to report on a matter referred to it. When such a committee has reported, it ceases to exist. Alternatively, a committee may be given power to report "from time to time"—i.e. more than once.

11.21 A committee cannot appoint sub-committees or delegate its powers to sub-committees without an order of the House. The maximum number of members on a sub-committee is 12, other than in exceptional circumstances.¹⁵

11.22 A committee may be given power to co-opt other members of the House as members of the committee or of a sub-committee.

11.23 Committees are given the power to "send for persons, papers and records". Ordinarily, witnesses attend and documents are produced voluntarily. However, the existence of this power means that, should it be necessary to issue a formal summons for the attendance of witnesses or the production of papers, the Chair may put a motion before the committee that such a summons be issued. The issuing of a summons is to be used as a last resort, and only where a witness has refused repeated invitations, and their evidence is vital to an inquiry in progress. Refusal to attend in response to a formal summons would be reported to the House as a *prima facie* contempt.¹⁶

11.24 Members or staff of the House of Commons, and persons outside United Kingdom jurisdiction (such as foreign ambassadors), may give evidence by invitation, but cannot be compelled to do so. If a committee desires to examine an official of the House of Commons, a message is sent requesting the official's attendance, and the leave of the House of Commons must be obtained. No such messages are sent in respect of joint committees or committees on private bills, nor in respect of members of the House of

¹⁰ [Procedure 4th Rpt 2019–21](#). The rule applies to a committee and any sub-committee of it as a whole.

¹¹ [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2006–07](#).

¹² [House 1st Rpt 2016–17](#).

¹³ [Committee for Privileges and Conduct 4th Rpt 2017–19](#).

¹⁴ SO 60.

¹⁵ Procedure 1st Rpt 1992–93.

¹⁶ [Procedure 1st Rpt 2008–09](#).

Commons.¹⁷ No message is required when Commons officials attend Lords committees to give informal briefings.

11.25 Committees on private business have authority to hear parties by counsel or on oath but other committees do not have this authority unless authorised to do so by the House.¹⁸

11.26 An order “that the minutes of evidence taken from time to time shall, if the committee think fit, be published” gives the committee power to publish evidence¹⁹ in advance of its report.

11.27 A committee may be given other powers including:

- power to appoint specialist advisers;
- power to travel and meet outside the parliamentary estate, either generally or within the United Kingdom.

11.28 Select committees and their sub-committees have the power to confer and meet concurrently with any committee or sub-committee of the Commons appointed to consider a similar matter. Such meetings can be held to deliberate or to take evidence.

11.29 The powers of committees of the House to inquire into matters relating to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have not been limited formally by the devolution statutes. In practice committees do not seek to hold the devolved administrations to account but may take evidence from them for comparative purposes.

Proceedings in committee

11.30 The quorum of a committee is three, unless the House orders otherwise. The quorum of the Lords joining with the Commons as the Joint Committees on Human Rights and Statutory Instruments is two. Members joining a meeting via telephone or video call, in circumstances where that is permitted, count for the purposes of a quorum.

11.31 The Chair of a committee has a vote, but not a casting vote.

11.32 Proceedings are conducted in English. However, the use of the Welsh language is permitted for the purpose of committee proceedings held

in Wales.²⁰ Evidence may be received in foreign languages and British Sign Language (see paragraph 4.45).

Participation by non-members

11.33 Members of the House who are not members of a select committee may attend and speak when evidence is being taken; but they may not attend any meeting while the committee deliberates, unless invited by the committee to do so, they do not count towards the quorum, and they may not vote.²¹ Members of the House who are not members of a committee or sub-committee do not receive papers on a regular basis.²²

11.34 Some domestic committees have external or lay members who are not members of the House: see paragraph 11.85 onwards.

Recess, prorogation and dissolution

11.35 A committee may sit at any time during a recess, but no committee may sit during prorogation or dissolution.

11.36 Sessional committees, and their sub-committees, continue in the same form, notwithstanding prorogation, until they are reappointed in the next session.²³ Other committees cease to exist at prorogation. All committees cease to exist on the dissolution of Parliament.

11.37 If a special inquiry committee has not completed its inquiry in the session in which it is appointed, it may be appointed again in the following session. In this case, an order may be made to refer the evidence taken before the original committee to its successor.

Report

11.38 A report from a committee embodies the text agreed by the majority of the committee on the basis of a draft presented by the Chair. Members of a committee may not make a minority report. However, members who wish to express dissent may move amendments to the Chair’s draft report or propose an alternative draft report. Amendments

²⁰ [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2008–09](#).

²¹ SO 64.

²² Procedure 1st Rpt 1992–93.

²³ SO 63.

¹⁷ Commons SO 138.

¹⁸ SO 65. Parliamentary Witnesses Act 1858, s. 2; LJ (1857) 60.

¹⁹ [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2006–07](#).

moved or alternative drafts proposed are recorded in the minutes of proceedings of the committee, together with a record of any vote. The minutes of proceedings are published with the report whenever a difference of opinion has been recorded in a division.²⁴ Minutes of proceedings are also required to record the making of any amendments to a bill by a select committee on a bill, whether there is a division or not. The minutes of proceedings serve as the authority for the making of the amendments and the republishing of the bill as reported.

11.39 Where a committee is minded to make a personal criticism of a named individual (other than a minister) in its report, the committee is encouraged to consider giving notice to that individual, in order to give them an opportunity to provide a response which the committee can publish as evidence.²⁵

11.40 When a committee has agreed its report, an order is made for the report to be published.²⁶

11.41 A motion to debate the report of a committee requires notice. Reports of some committees are debated on a neutral motion to 'take note' of the report. Other reports are debated on a motion to 'agree to' the report, to which amendments may be moved. A committee report may also be debated as the subject of a question for short debate.

11.42 The House has agreed that it is desirable that there should be regular debates on select committee reports in prime time.²⁷ Select committee reports may also be debated in Grand Committee with the concurrence of those concerned. Whether select committee reports are debated on the floor of the House or in Grand Committee, the debate may be time limited.²⁸

11.43 The Government has undertaken to respond in writing to the reports of select committees, if possible, within two months of publication.²⁹ Reports to which a government response has not been received within two

24 Procedure 3rd Rpt 1981–82; 1st Rpt 1982–83.

25 [Procedure 4th Rpt 2010–12](#).

26 SO 67.

27 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2001–02](#).

28 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2003–04](#).

29 Departmental evidence and response to Select Committees, Cabinet Office, October 2014.

months are listed in *House of Lords Business* every Monday.³⁰ Debate takes place after the Government has responded, unless the committee wishes otherwise.³¹

11.44 There is no set time limit for government responses to reports from the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee, as these need to be made in good time for amendments to be tabled to the bill in question. These responses are made available to the relevant frontbenchers, and placed in the Library of the House.³² They are also reported by the Committee.

11.45 A committee without leave to report from time to time may make a special report on incidental matters relating to its powers, functions or proceedings. Committees have used this procedure to invite evidence, or to review their own work over a period.

Joint committees

11.46 Joint committees of both Houses of Parliament usually have an equal number of members from each House, but this is a matter for arrangement between the Houses.

11.47 The standard procedure for setting up a joint committee proposed by the Lords is as follows: a motion is moved that it is expedient that a joint committee of both Houses be appointed to consider some particular subject. If this is agreed to, it is communicated by message to the Commons, with a request for their concurrence. If the Commons agrees then a message is returned which contains the Commons membership and orders of reference. The House then appoints a select committee, on a proposal from the Committee of Selection, and agrees the powers, orders of reference and time and place of the first meeting.

11.48 An addition to the number of members of a joint committee, or a change in its order of reference, is made in the same way. The filling of casual vacancies on joint committees does not require an exchange of messages.

11.49 A joint committee is given the power to appoint its own Chair. Any power to be exercised by a joint committee must be granted by both

30 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2017–19](#).

31 Procedure 1st Rpt 1992–93, as amended 9 July 1992.

32 [Liaison 1st Rpt 1998–99](#).

Houses. Except where otherwise provided in the orders of reference, the procedure in a joint committee is that of select committees of the House of Lords.

Sessional committees

11.50 The following sessional select committees fall into three categories: first, those on public matters; second, those on private business; finally, the ‘domestic’ committees through which the House regulates its internal affairs.

Committees on public matters

11.51 The Chairs of these committees are nominated by the Committee of Selection, except for the joint committees, which appoint their own Chairs.

Built Environment Committee

11.52 This committee is appointed “to consider matters relating to the built environment, including policies relating to housing, planning, transport and infrastructure”.

Communications and Digital Committee

11.53 This committee is appointed “to consider the media, digital and the creative industries”.

Joint Committee on Consolidation etc. Bills

11.54 This joint committee is described at paragraphs 8.219–8.220.

Constitution Committee

11.55 This committee is appointed “to consider the constitutional implications of public bills coming before the House; and to keep under review the operation of the constitution and constitutional aspects of devolution”.

Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee

11.56 The committee’s terms of reference require it to report “whether the provisions of any bill inappropriately delegate legislative power, or whether they subject the exercise of delegated power to an inappropriate degree of parliamentary scrutiny”. The committee also reports on

“documents and draft orders laid before Parliament under or by virtue of (a) sections 14 and 18 of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006, (b) section 7(2) or section 15 of the Localism Act 2011, or (c) section 5E(2) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004; and to perform, in respect of such draft orders, and in respect of subordinate provisions orders made or proposed to be made under the Regulatory Reform Act 2001, the functions performed in respect of other instruments and draft instruments by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments”. Finally, the committee reports on various other documents and draft orders subject to enhanced scrutiny procedures (see paragraphs 10.33–10.40).

11.57 The committee usually considers bills (except consolidation and supply bills) after introduction in the Lords, on the basis of a memorandum from the relevant government department.³³ The committee aims to issue its reports before the bills are considered at committee stage. If time allows, the committee also reports on government amendments with significant delegated powers aspects.³⁴ The committee has also reported on delegated powers in draft bills.³⁵

Economic Affairs Committee

11.58 This committee is appointed “to consider economic affairs and business affairs”. The committee usually appoints a sub-committee to examine the draft Finance Bill each year.³⁶ The sub-committee examines tax administration, clarification and simplification, and not the incidence or rates of tax. The sub-committee conducts its activities with full regard to the traditional boundary between the two Houses on fiscal policy.³⁷

Environment and Climate Change Committee

11.59 This committee is appointed “to consider the environment and climate change”.

33 Very occasionally, the committee has reported on bills while they are in the Commons and before their introduction in the Lords.

34 [Procedure 1st Rpt 1999–2000.](#)

35 [Liaison 1st Rpt 1998–99.](#)

36 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2001–02.](#)

37 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2003–04.](#)

European Affairs Committee

11.60 This committee is appointed:

- “(1) To consider matters relating to the United Kingdom’s relationship with the European Union and the European Economic Area, including:
- (a) The implementation of any agreements between the United Kingdom and the European Union, including the operation of the governance structures established under those agreements;
 - (b) Any negotiations and further agreements between the United Kingdom and the European Union;
 - (c) The operation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland;
- (2) To consider European Union documents deposited in the House by a minister;
- (3) To support the House as appropriate in interparliamentary cooperation with the European Parliament and the Member States of the European Union.”

11.61 The European Affairs Committee appoints a sub-committee to consider all matters related to the Protocol, including scrutinising EU legislation applying to Northern Ireland under the Protocol, and the Protocol’s overall impact on Northern Ireland.

Financial Services Regulation Committee

11.61A This committee is appointed ‘to scrutinise financial services regulatory consultations, and financial services regulation generally’.

Joint Committee on Human Rights

11.62 This joint committee is appointed to consider matters relating to human rights in the United Kingdom, excluding individual cases. It scrutinises the human rights implications of bills, and also has functions in connection with remedial orders (see paragraphs 10.22–10.25).

Industry and Regulators Committee

11.63 This committee is appointed “to consider matters relating to industry, including the policies of His Majesty’s Government to promote industrial growth, skills and competitiveness, and to scrutinise the work of UK regulators”.

International Agreements Committee

11.64 This committee is appointed “to consider, and where appropriate report on, 1) matters relating to the negotiation, conclusion and implementation of international agreements, and 2) treaties laid before Parliament in accordance with Part 2 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010”. The legislative framework for the House’s scrutiny of treaties, and the committee’s role, are described in paragraphs 10.50–10.56.

International Relations and Defence Committee

11.65 This committee is appointed “to consider the United Kingdom’s international relations and issues relating to UK defence policy”. The committee has been designated as the committee responsible under section 3 of the Trade Act 2021 for producing a report on whether there exist credible reports of genocide in the territory of a counter-party to a prospective Free Trade Agreement with the UK.³⁸ It has been given the power to appoint a sub-committee for the purposes of conducting such an inquiry.

Justice and Home Affairs Committee

11.66 This committee is appointed “to consider justice and home affairs, including the domestic criminal justice system, and international cooperation in respect of criminal justice, civil justice, migration and asylum”.

Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

11.67 This joint committee is appointed “to consider the National Security Strategy”. It has 10 Lords members and 12 Commons members.

Public Services Committee

11.68 This committee is appointed “to consider public services, including health and education”.

Science and Technology Committee

11.69 This committee is appointed “to consider science and technology”.

Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee

11.70 This committee scrutinises all instruments laid before each House of Parliament and subject to parliamentary proceedings (with certain

³⁸ [Liaison Committee 3rd Rpt 2021–22](#).

exceptions). In particular, it is required to draw to the special attention of the House (a) those instruments which are politically or legally important or give rise to issues of public policy likely to be of interest to the House; (b) those which may be inappropriate in view of the changed circumstances since the enactment of the parent Act; (c) those which may imperfectly achieve their policy objectives; (d) those where the explanatory material supporting the instrument is insufficient to understand its policy objective and intended implementation; and (e) those where there appears to have been inadequacies in the consultation process.³⁹ The committee may conduct broader inquiries from time to time.⁴⁰ In addition, following the passage of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023, the committee was charged with scrutinising proposed negative instruments laid under certain provisions of those Acts with a view to recommending whether the scrutiny procedure applicable to a proposed negative instrument should be upgraded to the affirmative procedure.

11.71 The committee reports on proposed negative instruments laid before Parliament under section 23(1) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, and sections 11, 12 and 14 of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (see paragraphs 10.41 and 10.43).⁴¹

Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments

11.72 This joint committee scrutinises delegated legislation in certain technical and legal respects. Its terms of reference are embodied in SO 74 and its powers in a resolution of 16 December 1997. It does not consider the merits or policy of delegated legislation. Under SO 73, a motion to approve an affirmative instrument may not be moved in the House of Lords until the joint committee has reported on the instrument.⁴² The Chair is, by practice, a member of the House of Commons.

Committees on private business

39 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2013–14](#); [Procedure and Privileges 6th Rpt 2019–21](#); [Procedure and Privileges 6th Rpt 2022–23](#).

40 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2005–06](#).

41 [Procedure 5th Rpt 2017–19](#); [Procedure and Privileges 6th Rpt 2019–21](#); [Procedure and Privileges 6th Rpt 2022–23](#).

42 SO 73 sets out certain exceptions, including legislative reform orders, remedial orders and hybrid instruments.

11.73 The Senior Deputy Speaker chairs these committees.

Hybrid Instruments Committee

11.74 This committee considers hybrid instruments in accordance with private business SOs 216 and 216A. The committee rarely meets, reflecting the fact that many bills now include provisions exempting delegated legislation from hybrid instrument procedure.

Standing Orders (Private Bills) Committee

11.75 This committee considers cases referred to it on a certificate of non-compliance, or on a special report, from the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills, who certify whether in the case of a particular private or hybrid bill the standing orders have been complied with. In a case of doubt, the committee decides whether the standing orders have been complied with. In a case of non-compliance, it reports whether the standing orders ought to be dispensed with and, if so, on what conditions.

11.76 The parties either appear in person or are represented by their parliamentary agents. Counsel are not heard. In opposed cases, the quorum of the committee is three; but in unopposed cases, the Senior Deputy Speaker normally acts alone.

Domestic committees

House of Lords Commission

11.77 The House of Lords Commission is appointed to provide high-level strategic and political direction for the House of Lords Administration on behalf of the House. The Commission:

- i agrees the annual Estimate;
- ii supervises the arrangements relating to financial support for members;⁴³ and
- iii works with the Management Board to develop, set and approve the strategic business plan, the annual business and financial plans for the Administration and monitors the

43 This includes keeping the Guide to Financial Support for Members under review. The scheme of financial support for members, including the daily allowance and expenses, is based on resolutions of the House and reports and decisions of the House Committee and House of Lords Commission.

performance of the Administration against agreed targets.

11.78 The Lord Speaker chairs the Commission, and the Senior Deputy Speaker is the Deputy Chair.⁴⁴ The Commission consists of a further eight members of the House, including the party leaders and the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers or their representatives, together with four backbenchers: the Chairs of the Finance and Services Committees, plus two other backbench members from the groups not holding the Chairs of either the Finance or Services Committees. The membership of the Commission also includes two external members who are non-voting, one of whom is the Chair of the Audit Committee. The quorum is three members of the House and there is no separate quorum for the external members, who do not need to be present for a meeting to take place.

11.79 The Commission is supported and advised by the Finance and Services Committees. Certain matters are reserved to the Commission; others are delegated to those committees. The Commission appoints the Audit Committee, including agreeing its members and terms of reference.⁴⁵ The Commission has statutory responsibilities for establishing joint departments in Parliament.⁴⁶ Jointly with the House of Commons Commission, the Commission is responsible for providing political leadership to the Restoration and Renewal Programme. When meeting jointly with the House of Commons Commission in that capacity, the two Commissions sit not as a joint committee, but as the Restoration and Renewal Client Board.⁴⁷

11.80 The Senior Deputy Speaker speaks for the Commission in the House when presenting its reports and answering questions on administrative matters and may also make written statements. This role is described further in paragraphs 6.10 and 6.21.

Conduct Committee

11.81 This committee keeps the Code of Conduct, the Guide to the Code, and the Code of Conduct for Members' Staff under review, and oversees their operation. Recommendations to amend either of the Codes or the Guide are made in reports to the House. The Chair presents these

reports to the House, and may also answer written questions on conduct matters if delegated by the Senior Deputy Speaker.

11.82 The committee receives reports from the Commissioners for Standards on complaints made under the Codes, including cases of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, and hears appeals against the Commissioners' findings or recommended sanctions. Having heard any appeal, the committee makes a report to the House. The agreement of the House is required if a serious sanction is proposed. Reports from the Conduct Committee resulting from an investigation under the Code of Conduct, together with any motion on a sanction, are decided without debate.⁴⁸

11.83 The Conduct Committee is made up of five members of the House (one of whom acts as Chair) and four lay members (see paragraph 11.18). The quorum is three members of the House and two lay members.

Finance Committee

11.84 This committee is appointed to support the House of Lords Commission by:

- (a) considering expenditure on services provided from the Estimate for the House of Lords;
- (b) with the assistance of the Management Board, preparing the forecast outturn, Estimate and financial plan for submission to the Commission;
- (c) monitoring the financial performance of the House Administration; and
- (d) reporting to the Commission on the financial implications of significant proposals.

The committee consists of a frontbench or senior member from each of the three main parties, two backbenchers from each of the Conservative, Labour and Crossbench groups and one backbencher from the Liberal Democrat group. The Chair of the Finance Committee presents any committee reports to the House and replies to debates on those reports. The Chair may answer written questions and debates on Finance Committee matters if delegated by the Senior Deputy Speaker.⁴⁹

44 House of Lords Commission minutes, 20 March 2019.

45 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2016–17](#).

46 Parliament (Joint Departments) Act 2007. A recommendation to establish a joint department by the Commission must be agreed by the House.

47 Commission 1st Rpt 2022–23

48 SO 68.

49 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2016–17](#).

Liaison Committee

11.85 This committee advises the House on the resources required for committee work and on allocation of resources between committees. It reviews the committee work of the House; it considers requests for special inquiry committees; it seeks to ensure effective co-ordination between the two Houses; and it considers the availability of members of the House to serve on committees. The committee consists of 11 members of the House, including the party leaders or their deputies and the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers or their representatives, together with six backbenchers. The Senior Deputy Speaker is Chair, and the Chairs of the main investigative committees are entitled to attend the meetings of the committee on agenda items which concern them.

Committees for peerage claims⁵⁰

11.86 The House may refer a peerage claim to a committee for determination. In such a case, the Senior Deputy Speaker must table a motion to appoint a committee to consider the peerage claim and report to the House.

11.87 Such committees consist of four members of the House along with three current holders of high judicial office, who would not be members of the House but would have the same speaking and voting rights as the members of the committee.⁵¹

Procedure and Privileges Committee

11.88 This committee considers any proposals for alterations in the procedure of the House that may arise from time to time, and whether the

standing orders require to be amended.⁵² The committee also considers questions regarding the privileges of the House.⁵³

11.89 The committee is composed of the Senior Deputy Speaker (in the Chair), the Lord Speaker, the party leaders and chief whips, the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers, three Labour backbenchers, three Conservative backbenchers, two Liberal Democrat backbenchers and two other Crossbenchers.⁵⁴

11.90 The committee as named by the Committee of Selection is supplemented by one alternate for each party group of backbench members and one for the Crossbenchers, plus an alternate for the Convenor. The alternates are also named by the Committee of Selection. They receive papers and are entitled to attend (and, if necessary, to vote) if a regular member cannot.

11.91 When the committee considers any question of privilege, it is required to co-opt two members of the House who are former holders of high judicial office. These co-opted members have the same speaking and voting rights as the full members of the committee.

11.92 The committee appoints a Leave of Absence Sub-Committee, which advises the Clerk of the Parliaments on the operation of the leave of absence scheme. The sub-committee is chaired by the Senior Deputy Speaker; the other members are the chief whips of the three main parties and the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers.⁵⁵

Services Committee

11.93 The Services Committee is appointed to support the House of Lords Commission by:

52 On 21 April 2020, early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the House agreed a motion outlining general principles for the conduct of virtual proceedings. The House resolved at the same time that “The provisions of this Order shall be applied in accordance with guidance issued under the authority of the Procedure Committee from time to time, which may vary the provisions of the Companion to the Standing Orders insofar as they apply to Virtual Proceedings”. The House continued to operate in virtual or hybrid form, on the basis of guidance issued by the Committee, until physical proceedings resumed on 6 September 2021. The exceptional procedures adopted under this guidance are not covered in this volume, but the twelfth and most recent edition of the guidance is online at committees.parliament.uk/publications/6772/documents/73239/default.

53 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2019–21](#).

54 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2005–06](#).

55 [Procedure 6th Rpt 2010–12](#).

50 SO 77.

51 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2019–21](#).

- i. agreeing day-to-day policy on member-facing services,
- ii. providing advice on strategic policy decisions when sought by the Commission, and
- iii. overseeing the delivery and implementation of i and ii.

The committee consists of a frontbench or senior member from each of the three main parties, the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers, two backbenchers from each of the Conservative and Labour groups and one backbencher each from the Liberal Democrat group and Crossbench peers. The Chair of the Services Committee presents any committee reports to the House and replies to debates on those reports. The Chair may also answer written questions and debates on Services Committee matters where delegated by the Senior Deputy Speaker.⁵⁶

Committee of Selection

11.94 In addition to proposing the names of members of the House to form, and to chair, select committees, this committee also proposes the panel of Deputy Chairmen of Committees for each session, as well as the members of any other bodies referred to it by the Senior Deputy Speaker, such as the Lords members of the Board of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST).⁵⁷ The committee is composed of the Senior Deputy Speaker (in the Chair), the party leaders and chief whips, the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers and one backbencher each from the Conservative and Labour groups and the Crossbench peers.

Bodies analogous to select committees

Audit Committee

11.95 The Audit Committee consists of five members of the House and two external members, one of whom is the Chair.⁵⁸ The Lords members concerned hold no other office in the House and, save for the Chair, do not sit on any other domestic committee.⁵⁹ Membership of the committee and its terms of reference are the responsibility of the House of Lords

Commission. The Chair of the Audit Committee is a member of the Commission.⁶⁰

Ecclesiastical Committee

11.96 The Ecclesiastical Committee is a statutory body, whose proceedings are not proceedings in Parliament; but by a committee resolution of 22 March 1921 it follows the procedure of a parliamentary joint committee. It consists of 30 members, 15 of whom are nominated by the Lord Speaker⁶¹ from the House of Lords for the duration of a Parliament, to consider Church of England Measures (see paragraphs 8.231–8.236).

Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament

11.97 The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISCOP) is a statutory body, whose proceedings are not proceedings in Parliament, appointed by the Prime Minister in accordance with the Justice and Security Act 2013. Before putting forward a name or names of the Lords members of the ISCOP to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the House consults the usual channels and tables a motion inviting the House to approve the nomination.

11.98 The ISCOP is required to publish an annual report, and may also publish special reports. There is a presumption that annual reports will be debated in Grand Committee and that special reports will be debated either in Grand Committee or in the Chamber. Such debates are on a take note motion (see paragraph 6.60) moved by a Lords member of the ISCOP. A minister winds up the debate, and the mover has a right of reply.⁶²

Other bodies

Consultative Panel on Parliamentary Security

11.99 The Consultative Panel on Parliamentary Security supports the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Lord Speaker in the discharge of their political responsibility for security. It consists of members from both

56 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2016–17.](#)

57 SO 63.

58 The external members are appointed for a maximum term of six years. House Committee minutes, 17 November 2015.

59 [Offices 5th Rpt 2001–02.](#)

60 [House Committee 1st Rpt 2016–17.](#)

61 Under the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919, as amended by Schedule 6 to the Constitutional Reform Act 2005.

62 [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2007–08.](#)

Houses, of whom the Lords members, including the Senior Deputy Speaker, are appointed by the House of Lords Commission. The Chairman of Ways and Means is the Chair.

The Lord Speaker's committee on the size of the House

11.100 The committee on the size of the House was established to explore methods by which the size of the House of Lords could be reduced, commensurate with its current role and functions. It consists of six cross-party backbench members of the House of Lords who were appointed by the Lord Speaker.

Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission

11.101 The Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission is a statutory body, whose proceedings are not proceedings in Parliament, appointed under the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019. It consists of two members from each House. The members of the House of Lords, one of whom is usually the Senior Deputy Speaker, are nominated by the House of Lords Commission and appointed by resolution of the House.⁶³

Restoration and Renewal Client Board

11.102 The Restoration and Renewal Client Board is the Commissions of both Houses meeting jointly, to provide political leadership for the restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster, to make recommendations about the Programme to both Houses, and to guide the two Corporate Officers in exercising their statutory responsibilities under the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019 (as amended).⁶⁴ The Client Board is neither a statutory body nor a joint committee, and its proceedings are not deemed to be 'proceedings in Parliament'.

11.103 The Client Board consists of all members of the Commissions of both Houses, and the Clerk of the Parliaments and the Chief Operating Officer, with the Speakers acting as joint chairs. The quorum is three

63 [Procedure 2nd Rpt 2019–21](#).

64 Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019, as amended by Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body (Abolition) Regulations 2022.

members of each Commission.⁶⁵ The Client Board delegates authority to direct and oversee the Restoration and Renewal Programme to the Restoration and Renewal Programme Board. The Client Board nominates the Programme Board's membership, including members of both Houses, officials, external members, and its Chair. The nominations are subject to confirmation by resolution of each House (or in the case of the parliamentary members, of the House to which they belong).⁶⁶

11.104 The Senior Deputy Speaker speaks for the Client Board in the House when answering questions on its remit and may also make written statements. This role is described further in paragraphs 6.10 and 6.21.

11.105 The Corporate Officers are required to publish a report on the activities of the Restoration and Renewal Programme at least once a year. There is a presumption that such a report will be debated in Grand Committee or in the Chamber on an annual basis. Such debates are on a take note motion (see paragraph 6.60) moved by the Senior Deputy Speaker or another Lords member of the Client Board, who is also expected to wind up the debate.⁶⁷

POST Board

11.106 The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) provides members of both Houses with information on science and technology issues. It is overseen by a Board of members and officials of both Houses and non-parliamentarians. Four Lords members sit on the Board. By practice they include the Chair of the Science and Technology Committee.

Works of Art Advisory Panel

11.107 The Works of Art Advisory Panel reports and makes recommendations to the Lord Speaker as Chair of the Commission. The Lord Speaker appoints the membership of the advisory panel and sets its terms of reference.

International delegations

11.108 Members of the House serve on United Kingdom delegations to

65 R&R Client Board minutes, 17 October 2022.

66 Commission 2nd Rpt 2022–23. HL Deb. 22 February 2023, cols 1662–7. Members of the Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission cannot be members of the R&R Programme Board.

67 [Procedure 1st Rpt 2019–21](#); [Procedure 4th Rpt 2022–23](#).

various international bodies:

- British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly;
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association;
- Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly;
- EU–UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly;
- Inter-Parliamentary Union;
- NATO Parliamentary Assembly;
- Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

These delegations are appointed after consultations through the usual channels⁶⁸ and announced in a written ministerial statement.

68 On 18 June 1992 the House confirmed this practice in respect of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: LJ (1992–93) 112.

CHAPTER 12

Parliamentary privilege and related matters

Privilege of Parliament

12.1 In order to carry out their duties Parliament, its members and others who participate in or support the work of Parliament need certain rights and immunities. These are known as parliamentary privilege.¹

12.2 It is a basic principle that parliamentary privilege belongs to the House as a whole and not to the individual member;² and that the protection afforded by privilege is no more than Parliament needs to carry out its functions effectively. Privilege accordingly protects each House in respect of the conduct of its internal affairs. It extends beyond members to the staff of the House in carrying out their duties and to external or lay members, witnesses and others taking part in the work of the House or a committee. It does not, though, protect the activities of individuals, whether members or non-members, simply because they take place within the precincts of Parliament.

12.3 In general, the House of Lords enjoys the same parliamentary privileges as the House of Commons. These privileges include:

- freedom of speech;³
- control by the House of its affairs ('exclusive cognisance');
- power to discipline its members for misconduct and punish anyone, whether a member or not, for contempt of Parliament;
- freedom from interference in going to, attending at, and going away from Parliament;
- freedom from arrest in civil cases;
- exemption from subpoenas to attend court as a witness;

1 A detailed and authoritative account of the history and extent of parliamentary privilege can be found in Part 2 of Erskine May (25th edition, 2019).

2 For this reason, privilege of Parliament does not extend to minors or the husbands, wives, widows or widowers of members of the House (SO 83).

3 But see *sub judice* rule, paragraphs 4.68–4.73.

- freedom from service of court documents within the parliamentary precincts; and
- absolute protection of all papers published by order of the House.⁴

Freedom of speech

12.4 Members need to be able to speak freely in the House and in committee, uninhibited by possible defamation claims. Freedom of speech found statutory form in article 9 of the Bill of Rights 1689: “Freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament”. Article 9 affords legal immunity (“ought not to be questioned”) to members for what they say or do in “proceedings in Parliament”. The immunity applies in “any court or place out of Parliament”. The meaning of “proceedings in Parliament” and “place out of Parliament” has not been defined in statute.

12.5 The scope of article 9 is the subject of extensive case law, as a result of which the courts do now in certain circumstances consider things said in Parliament. In 1993, the House of Lords decided (in *Pepper v Hart*) that when interpreting ambiguous statutes the courts may look at ministerial statements made in Parliament during the passage of the bill through Parliament. The courts have also established a practice of examining ministerial statements made in Parliament in another circumstance: when considering challenges by way of judicial review to the lawfulness of ministers’ decisions.

12.6 In order to prevent abuse, freedom of speech is subject to self-regulation by Parliament. Thus, for example, by the *sub judice* rule⁵ the two Houses ensure that court proceedings are not prejudiced by discussion in Parliament.

Freedom to attend freely

Freedom from arrest

12.7 SO 82 and common law govern this privilege. Traditionally the privilege extends from forty days before until forty days after the session, and it may cover any form of molestation of, or interference with, a member

while carrying out parliamentary duties. This privilege covers any form of arrest or detention, except on a criminal charge or for refusing to give security for the peace or for a criminal contempt of court. SO 82 states that notification of any order for the imprisonment or restraint of a member should be given to the House by the court or authority making the order. Such notification is read out in the Chamber and recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings.

12.8 The House has expressed the opinion that privilege would not protect a member of the House suffering from mental illness from being detained under the Mental Health Act 1983.⁶

12.9 The 2013–14 Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege, like its 1998–99 predecessor, called for legislation to abolish the privilege of freedom from arrest.

Attendance before other legislatures

12.10 The House of Commons does not have the power to summon a member of the House of Lords to appear before one of its committees, but any member of the House of Lords requested by a Commons committee to attend as a witness is free to do so, if the member thinks fit.⁷

Jury service

12.11 Members of the House are liable for jury service.⁸ Judges have discretion in relation to jurors with important public service commitments.⁹

Control by Parliament of its affairs

12.12 Freedom of speech is one facet of a broader principle that what happens within Parliament is a matter for control by Parliament alone. This principle of control by Parliament of its affairs, free from interference by the courts, is often called ‘exclusive cognisance’. It consists of a collection of related rights and immunities.

6 Privileges Rpt 1983–84.

7 SO 23.

8 Criminal Justice Act 2003 s. 321.

9 Amendment 9 to the Consolidated Criminal Practice Direction, handed down on 22 March 2005.

4 Parliamentary Papers Act 1840.

5 See paragraphs 4.68–4.73.

12.13 The courts have held that the two Houses are exempt from statute law, e.g. on employment, health and safety at work, and from the regulation of the sale of alcohol, though the Supreme Court has noted that this is “open to question”.¹⁰ Notwithstanding this presumption, the two Houses have applied many such statutory provisions voluntarily, and in an attempt to clarify the position in 2014 the House resolved that “legislation creating individual rights which could impinge on the activities of the House should in future contain express provision to this effect”.¹¹

Disciplinary and penal powers

12.14 The House’s disciplinary and penal powers are part of the control exercised by Parliament over its affairs. Conduct, whether of a member or non-member, which improperly interferes with the performance by either House of its functions, or the performance by members or staff of their duties, is a contempt of Parliament. Thus the House has the right to institute inquiries and require the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents, and wilful failure to attend committee proceedings or answer questions or produce documents could be judged to be a contempt.

12.15 The House of Lords has historically possessed the power to punish contempts by imprisonment, fine and reprimand. Although these powers have never been abolished, they have not been used since the nineteenth century, and there is doubt over whether the House’s powers to punish non-members could in practice be used today.¹²

12.16 The House possesses an inherent and a statutory power to discipline its members; the means by which it does so are described in chapter 5.

12.17 A member can be disqualified temporarily either by statute or at common law, for reasons such as bankruptcy or the holding of a disqualifying judicial office (see paragraph 1.2).

Privilege of peerage

12.18 Privilege of peerage, which is distinct from parliamentary privilege, still exists although the occasions for its exercise have now largely

¹⁰ *R v. Graham-Campbell ex parte Herbert* [1935] 1 KB 594; *R v Chaytor* [2010] UKSC 52, at 78.

¹¹ LJ, 2013–14, 1621.

¹² See House of Commons Committee of Privileges, [Select committees and contempts: clarifying and strengthening powers to call for persons, papers and records](#) (1st Rpt, 2021–22, HC 350).

disappeared. Privilege of peerage belongs to all peers, whether or not they are members of the House of Lords, and also to the wives of peers and widows of peers provided they do not marry commoners.¹³ The extent of the privilege has long been ill-defined, but three of its features survived into the twentieth century. The first was the right of trial by peers, which was abolished by statute in 1948. The second is the right of access to the Sovereign at any time. The third is freedom from arrest in civil matters; but the application of this aspect of the privilege appears to have arisen in only two cases in the courts since 1945.¹⁴ All privilege of peerage is lost upon a disclaimer under the Peerage Act 1963.

Human rights

12.19 Section 6(1) of the Human Rights Act 1998, which provides that “it is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way which is incompatible with a Convention right”, does not apply to the House or its committees, or to a person exercising functions in connection with a proceeding in Parliament.¹⁵ However, the United Kingdom as a whole is a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, and the House is therefore in certain circumstances subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.¹⁶

Parliamentary copyright

12.20 Under sections 165, 166 and 167 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 “parliamentary copyright” exists in:

- bills;
- select committee reports; and
- any other work made by or under the direction or control of either House of Parliament.

12.21 Parliamentary copyright in a public bill belongs in the first instance to the House into which the bill was introduced and, once the bill has reached the second House, to both Houses jointly. It subsists from the time

¹³ SO 83.

¹⁴ *Stourton v Stourton* (1963) 1 All ER 366; *Peden International Transport, Moss Bros, The Rowe Veterinary Group and Barclays Bank plc v Lord Mancroft* (1989).

¹⁵ Human Rights Act 1998 s. 6(3).

¹⁶ Compare *Erskine May*, paragraph 16.20.

the bill is handed in to the House in which it is introduced, and ceases on Royal Assent, or the withdrawal or rejection of the bill, or the end of the session.

12.22 Parliamentary copyright in a private bill belongs to both Houses jointly from the time the bill is first deposited in either House. Acts and Measures once enacted are subject to Crown copyright.

12.23 Literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work made by or under the direction of either House is subject to parliamentary copyright for 50 years from the end of the year in which it was made. Such work includes works made by employees of either House in the course of their duties, and any sound recording, film, live broadcast or live cable programme of the proceedings of either House. The ownership of such copyright belongs to the House under whose direction or control the work was made (or, as appropriate, both Houses).

12.24 The functions of the House of Lords as owner of copyright are exercised by the Clerk of the Parliaments on behalf of the House, and legal proceedings relating to copyright are brought by or against the House of Lords in the name of the Clerk of the Parliaments. Any person may, without charge and subject to certain conditions, reproduce, adapt or commercially exploit parliamentary copyright material.¹⁷

Broadcasting

12.25 The sound broadcasting and televising of proceedings are governed by resolutions of the House of 28 July 1977 and 15 May 1986.¹⁸ The Services Committee has responsibility for supervising the arrangements for, and dealing with any problems or complaints arising out of, the televising and sound broadcasting of the proceedings of the House and its committees. The House has given power to a committee to refuse to allow the televising of proceedings to which visitors are admitted.¹⁹ The Filming Steering Group considers requests for permission to film in the House. The Filming Steering Group is chaired by the Lord Speaker and works within a set of guidelines

¹⁷ These terms are set out in full in the Open Parliament Licence v3, published online at parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/open-parliament-licence.

¹⁸ LJ (1976–77) 820, (1985–86) 331.

¹⁹ Animals in Scientific Procedures Committee (HL Deb. 12 July 2001 col. 1181).

agreed by the Administration and Works Committee.²⁰ Day-to-day monitoring of adherence to rules of coverage is delegated to the Director of Parliamentary Audio/Video.

Data protection

12.26 The UK General Data Protection Regulation, as supplemented by the Data Protection Act 2018, applies to both Houses of Parliament.²¹ The UK GDPR gives individuals (data subjects) a number of rights including a general right of access to personal information held about them, subject to certain exemptions. It also places a duty on all controllers to comply with the principles relating to the processing of personal data (Article 5). These relate to the collection, use, maintenance, accuracy, security and retention of personal information. The Clerk of the Parliaments has the role of controller in relation to the processing of personal data by or on behalf of the House of Lords. Personal data are exempt from certain provisions if the exemption is required for the purpose of avoiding an infringement of the privileges of either House of Parliament.

12.27 Individual members of the House are controllers of the personal data they process in relation to their parliamentary duties.

Freedom of information

12.28 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives a general right of access to information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. The House of Lords is a public authority under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the rights of access apply to recorded information held by the House of Lords Administration with the exception of information set out in the Freedom of Information (Parliament and National Assembly for Wales) Order 2008. The Clerk of the Parliaments has entrusted day-to-day responsibility for House of Lords' arrangements to the Head of Information Compliance. The Act requires every public authority to maintain a publication scheme setting out the classes of information which it publishes or intends to publish, the form in which it intends to publish the information, and details of any charges.

²⁰ Minutes of the Administration and Works Committee, 19 June 2012. The Services Committee is now responsible for this area.

²¹ The Act is applied to both Houses by s. 210 of the 2018 Act.

12.29 The Clerk of the Parliaments as the authorised officer of the House may refuse to disclose information on the grounds of either parliamentary privilege (section 34) or prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs (section 36). A certificate signed by him is conclusive of the fact, and a dissatisfied applicant has no right of appeal to the Information Commissioner.

APPENDIX A

Divisions: Instructions to Tellers

Within three minutes from the order to “*Clear the Bar*”, two Tellers for the Contents and two for the Not-contents must be appointed. Tellers must give their names to the Clerk at the Table, and state whether they are telling for the Contents or Not-contents and in return they receive a wand and a counter.

The Tellers take up their posts in the lobbies and, once they are in place, may start to count members through the lobbies. The Tellers count the Lords as they pass through, the first Lord counted being number three, so as to include automatically the two Tellers on each side.

After three minutes, the Lord on the Woolsack or in the Chair repeats the Question and, if one or more voices from each side shouts “*content*” and “*not-content*”, says: “*The Contents will go to the right by the Throne, the Not-contents to the left by the Bar*”.

If the Lord on the Woolsack or in the Chair does not direct the Contents and Not-contents into the lobbies, the division does not take place, regardless of whether or not the Tellers have started to count members through the lobbies. The Tellers should inform Lords waiting in the lobbies accordingly and return their wands to the Table.

Eight minutes after the Bar is ordered to be cleared, the doors leading into the Chamber from outside are locked, and only those already in the Chamber or in the lobbies can from that moment vote. If the queue extends out of the Chamber, a doorkeeper joins the end of the queue and makes sure no one else joins the queue.

After eight minutes, the Tellers must remain in the lobbies until they are satisfied that all Lords who wish to vote in their lobby have done so. The Tellers then return to the Table. When both sets of Tellers have returned to the Table, the Clerk deactivates the pass-readers. The Clerk imports the voting figures for the pass-readers and for members voting under SO 24A, and adds the votes of any members voting in the Chamber, before handing the result to one of the Tellers for the winning side. That Teller hands this, with a bow, to the Lord on the Woolsack or in the Chair, who announces

the figures to the House. The Teller waits by the Woolsack or the Chair until the result is announced.

When the result is announced, the Teller rejoins the other three Tellers who meanwhile have remained at the Table. All four then hand back their wands to the Clerk and disperse.

APPENDIX B

Rules for the admission of visitors

- (a) Under SO 13 Black Rod is responsible for enforcing the House's rules relating to control of access to the precincts of the House as defined in (b), in respect both of persons and of vehicles, whether or not the House is sitting.
- (b) For the purposes of the interpretation of SO 13 and these rules, the "precincts of the House" comprise all that area of the Palace of Westminster control of which was vested by Queen Elizabeth II in the Speaker of the House of Lords, with effect from 26 April 1965, as well as all other areas under the control of the House. Black Rod is solely responsible for access to the King's Residual Estate, namely the Robing Room, the Royal Gallery and the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft.
- (c) Before admission to the galleries of the House, visitors may be required:
 - (i) to sign an undertaking to abstain from making any form of interruption or disturbance and to obey the rules for the maintenance of good order in the galleries;
 - (ii) to deposit in the appropriate cloakroom all liquids, cameras, mobile phones and other electronic devices, binoculars, umbrellas and walking sticks, parcels, packages, cases and bags other than small handbags; and
 - (iii) to open for inspection at the request of Black Rod, or of the staff under their control, any parcel, package, case or bag, including small handbags, which a visitor may bring into the precincts.
- (d) In the galleries, visitors are not permitted to read books or papers other than the papers of the House, draw (except in the south-west gallery), stand in or behind the galleries, or make use of cameras, mobile phones and other electronic devices, or binoculars. Any offence against this rule may result in the confiscation of any offending material.

- (e) Where committees of the House are sitting in public, the rules governing the admission of visitors to committee rooms are, so far as practicable, the same as those for admission to the galleries of the House. Members of the public are permitted to take notes during committee meetings, and to use electronic devices or tape recorders, as long as they do not cause any disturbance.
- (f) Any visitor who is suspected of having committed a criminal offence within the precincts of the House shall be taken into custody and handed over to the police for such further action as may be appropriate under the law. Any such action shall be reported by Black Rod to the Lord Speaker or, in their absence, to the Senior Deputy Speaker.
- (g) Any visitor who is suspected of having committed contempt of the House, including the contravention of an order or rule of the House, may, at the discretion of Black Rod, either be ejected from the precincts forthwith, or be detained by them until not later than three hours after the rising of the House, or, on a day on which the House is not sitting, for a period not exceeding three hours, in order to enable inquiries to be made into the circumstances of the contempt. If the contempt is of such a nature that, in the opinion of Black Rod, the House may wish to consider it, they shall report it to the Lord Speaker or, in their absence, to the Senior Deputy Speaker.
- (h) Any visitor who is suspected by Black Rod of intending to commit a contempt of the House, including the contravention of an order or rule of the House, may be ejected from the precincts forthwith.
- (i) The Lord Speaker or, in their absence, the Senior Deputy Speaker shall communicate to the House any report by Black Rod made in pursuance of these rules.
- (j) A vehicle which is causing obstruction, or appears to be endangering security, within the precincts of the House may be removed.

APPENDIX C

Royal Commissions

A Royal Commission consists of three or more (usually five) Commissioners, who are Privy Counsellors appointed by Letters Patent to perform certain functions on the King's behalf. These functions include:

- proceedings at the opening of a new Parliament in connection with the election of a Speaker by the Commons (see appendix D);
- proceedings at the Opening of Parliament¹ when the King is not present (see appendix E);
- proceedings in relation to the giving of Royal Assent to bills (see appendix F); and
- proceedings at the prorogation of Parliament (see appendix G).

A minister of the Crown, of Cabinet rank, normally presides. The Commissioners wear robes and (optionally for female Commissioners) hats.

Proceedings on Royal Commissions differ in their details but share common characteristics, which are described in this appendix. Appendices D–G describe the differences.

Entry of Commissioners

The Lords Commissioners enter the Chamber by the door on the spiritual side near the Throne. They take their seats on a bench placed between the Throne and the Woolsack. The presiding Commissioner sits in the centre; the senior in precedence of the other Lords Commissioners sits on their right and the next senior on their left, the remaining two in order of seniority on the right and left of these respectively.

Summoning the Commons

The presiding Commissioner commands Black Rod:

“Let the Commons know that the Lords Commissioners desire their immediate attendance in this House [to hear the Commission read²].”

¹ Either a new Parliament or a new session.

² These words are added on the first day of a new Parliament, or if Parliament is to be prorogued.

Black Rod summons the Commons.

The Commons proceed from their Chamber and advance to the Bar of the House of Lords, bowing three times: the first time at the step, the second time midway between the step and the Bar, and the third time at the Bar. Each bow is acknowledged by the Lords Commissioners. Commissioners who are men raise their hats; Commissioners who are women do not.

Reading the Commission

The Commission is read by the Reading Clerk at the Table. They bow to each Lord Commissioner as they name them, and a Commissioner who is a man responds by raising his hat. Commissioners who are women keep their hats on.

Departure of the Commons

The Commons withdraw, with three bows which are acknowledged as on their arrival.

Departure of Commissioners

The Commissioners, led by the presiding Commissioner, leave the Chamber by the door on the spiritual side near the Throne, and disrobe.

APPENDIX D

Opening of a new Parliament and election of Commons Speaker

The election of a Speaker of the House of Commons takes place only at the beginning of a new Parliament and not at the beginning of subsequent sessions.

First day

On the day appointed, the Lord Speaker, in their black gown, preceded by the Mace, enters the House by the Bar and takes their seat on the Woolsack. No prayers are said at this stage. The Leader of the House or another Government minister rises and says:

“My Lords,

It not being convenient for His Majesty to be personally present here this day, He has been pleased to cause a Commission under the Great Seal to be prepared in order to the holding of this Parliament.”

The Lord Speaker then leaves the Chamber by the door on the spiritual side near the Throne, the Mace remaining on the Woolsack. The Lords Commissioners enter, and the Commons are summoned (see appendix C).

Black Rod summons the Commons with the following words:

“Members of the House of Commons,

The Lords who are authorised by virtue of His Majesty’s Commission to declare the Opening of Parliament, desire the presence of this Honourable House in the House of Peers to hear the Commission read.”

The presiding Commissioner says:

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

We are commanded by His Majesty to let you know that, it not being convenient for Him to be present here this day in His Royal Person, he has thought fit by Letters Patent under the Great Seal to empower several Lords therein named to do all things in His Majesty’s Name which are to be done

on His Majesty's Part in this Parliament, as by the Letters Patent will more fully appear."

The Commission is read (see appendix C).

Then the presiding Commissioner says:

"My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

We have it in command from His Majesty to let you know that, as soon as the Members of both Houses shall be sworn, the causes of His Majesty calling this Parliament will be declared to you: and, it being necessary that a Speaker of the House of Commons should be first chosen, it is His Majesty's Pleasure that you, Members of the House of Commons, repair to the place where you are to sit, and there proceed to the choice of some proper person to be your Speaker, and that you present such person whom you shall so choose here [tomorrow] for His Majesty's Royal Approbation."

The Commons and the Commissioners depart (see appendix C).

The Lords Commissioners disrobe. The Lord Speaker returns, and prayers are read.

The Lord Speaker first takes the oath.

After the Lord Speaker, the archbishops, the party leaders, the Senior Deputy Speaker and the occupants of the front benches, including those used by ex-ministers nearest the Bar, may take the oath, followed by the remaining Lords present.

Second day

On the second day of the Parliament, the sitting opens with prayers.

The first business is the confirmation, by the Lords Commissioners, of the election of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

After prayers, the House adjourns during pleasure to allow the Commissioners to robe.

The Lords Commissioners enter, and the Commons are summoned.

Black Rod summons the Commons with these words:

"Mr/Madam Speaker-Elect and Members of the House of Commons, the Lords who are authorised by virtue of His Majesty's Commission to declare His Royal Approval to the election of a Speaker, desire the presence of this Honourable House in the House of Peers to hear the Commission read."

The Commons arrive, preceded by their Speaker-elect. The Speaker-elect makes a speech to this effect:

"My Lords,

I have to acquaint your Lordships that in obedience to the Royal Command, His Majesty's most faithful Commons have, in the exercise of their undoubted rights and privileges, proceeded to the election of a Speaker, and that their choice has fallen upon me. I now present myself at your Lordships' Bar, and submit myself with all humility for His Majesty's gracious Approbation."

The presiding Commissioner then says:

"Mr/Mrs/Miss [and then surname of Speaker-elect]"

We are commanded to assure you that His Majesty is so fully sensible of your zeal in the public service, and of your ample sufficiency to execute the arduous duties which His faithful Commons have selected you to discharge, that His Majesty does most readily approve and confirm you as their Speaker."

The Speaker then addresses the Lords Commissioners to the following effect:

"My Lords,

I submit myself with all humility and gratitude to His Majesty's gracious Commands. It is now my duty, in the name and on behalf of the Commons of the United Kingdom, to lay claim, by humble petition to His Majesty, to all their ancient and undoubted rights and privileges, especially to freedom of speech in debate, to freedom from arrest, and to free access to His Majesty whenever occasion shall require, and that the most favourable construction shall be put upon all their proceedings. With regard to myself I pray that, if in the discharge of my duties I shall inadvertently fall into any error, it may be imputed to myself alone and not to His Majesty's most faithful Commons."

The presiding Commissioner then says:

"Mr [Madam] Speaker,

We have it further in command to inform you that His Majesty does most readily confirm all the rights and privileges which have ever been granted to or conferred upon the Commons by His Majesty or any of His Royal Predecessors.

With respect to yourself, Sir [Madam], though His Majesty is sensible that you stand in no need of such assurance, His Majesty will ever place the most favourable construction upon your words and actions."

Upon this the Commons and the Commissioners depart (see appendix C). The House adjourns for the Commissioners to disrobe, and afterwards resumes to enable Lords to be introduced or to take the oath.

New Speaker in mid-Parliament

If, during the course of a Parliament, there is a vacancy in the office of Speaker, the Commons receive a direction from the Sovereign, signified by a minister of the Crown. A Commission is then issued, and the Lords Commissioners assemble in the House of Lords in the usual way, and summon the Commons, who come with their Speaker-elect. The Speaker-elect makes the usual speech, and the presiding Commissioner declares the Approbation of His Majesty as follows, but the further exchanges claiming the confirming privileges, made at the commencement of a Parliament, are omitted:

“Mr/Mrs/Miss [and then surname of Speaker-elect]

We have it in command from His Majesty to declare His Majesty’s entire confidence in your talents, diligence and sufficiency to fulfil the important duties of the high office of Speaker of the House of Commons to which you have been chosen by that House, and in obedience to the Commission which has been read and by virtue of the authority therein contained, we do declare His Majesty’s royal allowance and confirmation of you, Sir [Madam], as Speaker of the House of Commons.”

APPENDIX E

The King’s Speech

First session of a new Parliament

By the King in Person³

The State Opening of Parliament usually takes place in the morning. The Lords are attired in their Parliament robes or such other dress as may be approved by the Earl Marshal on behalf of the King. Certain members of the Royal Family and spouses or partners of members of the House who are successful in the ballot for places are seated on the floor of the House. An enclosure is reserved for the Diplomatic Corps. Judges are seated on the Woolsacks in their robes.

The King is met at the Sovereign’s Entrance by the Lord Great Chamberlain and enters the Palace of Westminster preceded by the Earl Marshal, Lord Great Chamberlain, Lord Chancellor (with the Purse containing the King’s Speech), Lord Speaker and Lord Privy Seal. They proceed to the Robing Room where the King robes and puts on the Crown and regalia. A procession is formed, marshalled by the Earl Marshal, and proceeds through the Royal Gallery and the Prince’s Chamber to the Chamber of the House of Lords. When His Majesty has taken his seat on the Throne, the Lord Speaker and Lord Chancellor stand on his right at the foot of the steps of the Throne. The King is attended by the Officers of State. The King then commands Black Rod, through the Lord Great Chamberlain, to summon the Commons, which they do in these words:

“Mr/Madam Speaker,

The King commands this honourable House to attend His Majesty immediately in the House of Peers.”

The Commons come from their Chamber and advance to the Bar with their Speaker, bowing once only at the Bar.

His Majesty then delivers his Speech from the Throne.

It is also possible for the King's Speech to be read by the Lord Chancellor, standing on one of the lower steps of the Throne in the presence of the Sovereign. This was done during the reign of George I and in the later years of Queen Victoria.

The King then retires. The Commons withdraw, bowing once.

By Royal Commission

If the King is not present, there is no State Opening. The King's Speech is delivered by the presiding Commissioner, or by one of the other Lords Commissioners, by virtue of the Royal Commission for opening Parliament.

At the hour appointed, usually in the morning, the Lords Commissioners enter the Chamber, and the Commons are summoned (see appendix C).

The Presiding Commissioner says:

"My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

We are commanded to deliver to you His Majesty's Speech in His Majesty's own words."

The Presiding Commissioner, remaining seated and with their hat on, then delivers the Speech.

Then the Commons and the Commissioners depart (see appendix C).

A further opportunity may then be given for Lords to take the oath. The Lord Speaker takes their seat on the Woolsack and prayers are read. After the Lords present have taken the oath, or at a time previously fixed, the House is adjourned during pleasure until the time fixed for the meeting in the afternoon.

Subsequent Sessions

By the King in Person

If the King opens subsequent sessions in person, the ceremony is similar to that described above for the delivery of the King's Speech at the beginning of a new Parliament.

By Royal Commission

When the King is not present, his functions are performed by Lords Commissioners.

The Lords Commissioners enter the Chamber, and the Commons are summoned (see appendix C).

The Presiding Commissioner says:

"My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

We are commanded by His Majesty to let you know that, it not being convenient for Him to be present here this day in His Royal Person, He has thought fit by Letters Patent under the Great Seal to empower several Lords therein named to do all things in His Majesty's Name which are to be done on His Majesty's part in this Parliament, as by the Letters Patent will more fully appear."

The Commission is read (see appendix C).

The Presiding Commissioner then says:

"My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

We are commanded to deliver to you His Majesty's Speech in His Majesty's own words."

The Presiding Commissioner, remaining seated and covered, then delivers the Speech.

Then the Commons and the Lords Commissioners depart (see appendix C). The Lord Speaker then takes their seat on the Woolsack, and the House adjourns during pleasure until the meeting of the House in the afternoon.

Royal Assent by Commission

At the time appointed for the Royal Assent, if the House is sitting, the House adjourns during pleasure to enable the Lords Commissioners to robe. The Lords Commissioners enter the Chamber, and the Commons are summoned (see appendix C). They arrive with their Speaker. Any supply bills that may be ready for Royal Assent are brought up by the Clerk of the House of Commons, to whom they have been previously returned. The Clerk of the Parliaments receives them from the Speaker at the Bar, and brings them to the Table, bowing to the Lords Commissioners. The presiding Commissioner, remaining seated and covered, then says:

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

His Majesty, not thinking fit to be personally present here at this time, has been pleased to cause a Commission to be issued under the Great Seal, and thereby given His Royal Assent to certain Acts [and Measures] which have been agreed upon by both Houses of Parliament, the Titles whereof are particularly mentioned, and by the said Commission has commanded us to declare and notify His Royal Assent to the said Acts [and Measures] in the presence of you, the Lords and Commons assembled for that purpose, which Commission you will now hear read.”

The Commission is read (see appendix C).

When this has been done, the presiding Commissioner says:

“In obedience to His Majesty’s Commands, and by virtue of the Commission which has been now read, we do declare and notify to you, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, in Parliament assembled, that His Majesty has given His Royal Assent to the Acts [and Measures] in the Commission mentioned, and the Clerks are required to pass the same in the usual form and words.”

The Clerk of the Parliaments and the Clerk of the Crown then rise and stand at the Despatch Boxes on either side of the Table, bowing to the Lords Commissioners as they reach their places. From the temporal side, the Clerk of the Crown reads out the short title of each bill in turn. As soon as each title has been read, both Clerks bow to the Lords Commissioners.

The Clerk of the Parliaments then turns towards the Bar, where the Commons are assembled, and pronounces the appropriate formula in Norman French, namely, for a supply bill:

“Le Roi remercie ses bons sujets, accepte leur benevolence, et ainsi le veult.”

For each other public or private bill and Measure:

“Le Roi le veult.”

For a personal bill:

“Soit fait comme il est désiré.”

When all the bills have been thus disposed of, the Clerk of the Parliaments and the Clerk of the Crown bow to the Lords Commissioners and return to their places at the Table. The Commons and the Lords Commissioners then retire (see appendix C).

The ceremony of prorogation by Commission

Without Royal Assent

At the time appointed, the Lords Commissioners enter the Chamber, and the Commons are summoned (see appendix C) as follows:

“Mr Speaker, the Lords who are authorised by virtue of His Majesty’s commission to declare His Royal Assent to Acts [and Measures] passed by both Houses [and to an Act passed in accordance with the provisions of the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949], and also to declare the prorogation of Parliament, desire the presence of this honourable House in the House of Peers.”

The presiding Commissioner says:

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

His Majesty, not thinking fit to be personally present here at this time, has been pleased to cause a Commission to be issued under the Great Seal, for proroguing this present Parliament; and we are commanded to deliver to you His Majesty’s Speech in His Majesty’s own words.”

The presiding Commissioner then reads the King’s Speech.

The Commission for proroguing Parliament is then read (see appendix C), after which the presiding Commissioner, still seated and covered, says:

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

By virtue of His Majesty’s Commission under the Great Seal to us and other Lords directed and now read, we do in His Majesty’s Name, and in obedience to His Majesty’s Commands, prorogue this Parliament to ... the ... day of ... to be then here holden, and this Parliament is accordingly prorogued to ... the ... day of”

The Commons then withdraw (see appendix C).

As soon as the Commons have withdrawn, the Commissioners rise and bow to the House. The Lord Speaker, if they are a member of the Commission, moves to stand in front of the Woolsack. The Deputy Serjeant at Arms (the Yeoman Usher) takes up the Mace from the Woolsack, and

the Lord Speaker leaves the House by the Bar. As soon as the Lord Speaker has left the House, the remaining Commissioners turn right and are led by the presiding Commissioner out of the House through the door on the spiritual side near the Throne.

With Royal Assent

If, at the time of prorogation, there are bills ready for Royal Assent, they must be dealt with before Parliament can be prorogued. One Commission is issued for both Royal Assent and prorogation. When the Commons have arrived, the presiding Commissioner, remaining seated and covered, says:

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

His Majesty, not thinking fit to be personally present here at this time, has been pleased to cause a Commission to be issued under the Great Seal, and thereby given His Royal Assent to divers Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses of Parliament, the Titles whereof are particularly mentioned, and by the said Commission has commanded us to declare and notify His Royal Assent to the said several Acts, in the presence of you the Lords and Commons assembled for that purpose; and has also assigned to us and other Lords directed full power and authority in His Majesty’s Name to prorogue this present Parliament. Which Commission you will now hear read.”

The Commission is read (see appendix C) and Royal Assent signified (see appendix F).

Then the presiding Commissioner says:

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

We are commanded to deliver to you His Majesty’s Speech in His Majesty’s own words.”

The presiding Commissioner reads the speech and then says:

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

By virtue of His Majesty’s Commission which has been now read, we do, in His Majesty’s Name, and in obedience to His Majesty’s Commands, prorogue this Parliament to ... the... day of ... to be then here holden, and this Parliament is accordingly prorogued to ... the ... day of”

The Commons then withdraw, and the Commissioners leave the House, in the manner described for prorogation by Commission without Royal Assent.

Endorsements to bills

Lords bill sent to Commons

The Clerk of the Parliaments⁴ signs the bill and writes on it “Soit baillé aux Communes.”

Lords bill agreed to by Commons without amendment

The Clerk of the House of Commons writes on the bill “A ceste Bille les Communes sont assentus.”

Lords bill agreed to by Commons with amendments

The Clerk of the House of Commons writes on the bill “A ceste Bille avecque des Amendemens (or avecque une Amendement) les Communes sont assentus.”

Commons amendments to Lords bill agreed to with amendments

The Clerk of the Parliaments writes on the bill “A ceste Amendement (or ces Amendemens) avecque une Amendement (or des Amendemens) les Seigneurs sont assentus.”

Disagreement with the Commons

The Clerk of the Parliaments writes on the bill “Ceste Bille est remise aux Communes avecque des Raisons (or une Raison).”

Commons bill sent to Lords

The Clerk of the House of Commons signs the bill and writes on it “Soit baillé aux Seigneurs.”

Commons bill returned with amendments

The Clerk of the Parliaments writes on the bill “A ceste Bille avecque des Amendemens (or une Amendement) les Seigneurs sont assentus.”

Supply bill returned to Commons agreed pending Royal Assent by Commission

The Clerk of the Parliaments writes on the bill “A ceste Bille les Seigneurs sont assentus.”

⁴ In the absence of the Clerk of the Parliaments, the Clerk Assistant or any other Table clerk may endorse or sign a bill on their behalf.

Prayers for the Parliament

One of the following:⁵

Psalms 1, 15, 24, 34 (vv. 1–8), 46, 66 (vv. 1–14, 18), 67, 93, 95 (vv. 1–7), 100, 111, 112 (vv. 1–6), 119 (vv. 33–40), 121, 145 (vv. 1–6 and 21).

The Lord be with you.

And with thy Spirit.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

○ Lord our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth; most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most Gracious Sovereign Lord King Charles; and so replenish him with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that he may always incline to thy will, and walk in thy way; Endue him plenteously with heavenly gifts; grant him in health and wealth long to live; strengthen him that he may vanquish and overcome all his enemies; and finally after this life he may attain everlasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Almighty God, the Fountain of all Goodness, We humbly beseech thee to bless Queen Camilla, William Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales, and all the Royal Family: Endue them with thy Holy Spirit; enrich them with thy Heavenly Grace; prosper them with all happiness; and bring them to thine everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

⁵ Offices 3rd Rpt 1979–80.

Almighty God, by whom alone Kings reign, and Princes decree justice; and from whom alone cometh all counsel, wisdom, and understanding; we thine unworthy servants, here gathered together in thy Name, do most humbly beseech thee to send down thy Heavenly Wisdom from above, to direct and guide us in all our consultations; and grant that, we having thy fear always before our eyes, and laying aside all private interests, prejudices, and partial affections, the result of all our counsels may be to the glory of thy blessed Name, the maintenance of true Religion and Justice, the safety, honour, and happiness of the King, the publick wealth, peace and tranquillity of the Realm, and the uniting and knitting together of the hearts of all persons and estates within the same, in true Christian Love and Charity one towards another, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

One of the following:⁶

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. *Amen. (Advent)*

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. *Amen. (Christmas)*

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen. (Lent)*

Almighty God, who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech thee, that as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to

⁶ [Procedure 3rd Rpt 2012–13.](#)

good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen. (Easter)*

God, who of old time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen. (Pentecost and general)*

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen. (General)*

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

APPENDIX J

Introductions

Lords Temporal

The Lord Speaker sits on the Woolsack, wearing court dress and a black gown. In the absence of the Lord Speaker, a Deputy Speaker occupies the Woolsack.

The newly created peer and two supporters, all in their Parliament robes,⁷ with Garter Principal King of Arms⁸ and Black Rod, assemble in Peers' Lobby. Garter and Black Rod are sometimes represented by deputies. A procession is formed, which enters the Chamber in the following order:

- 1 Black Rod
- 2 Garter, carrying the peer's Letters Patent
- 3 junior supporter
- 4 new peer, carrying their writ of summons
- 5 senior supporter⁹

At the Bar, each member of the procession bows in turn to the Cloth of Estate. Each person then turns to their right and enters the House on the temporal side, except the junior supporter who turns to their left and enters the House on the spiritual side.

Black Rod passes in front of the crossbenches, goes behind the clerks' seats and stands on the spiritual side. Garter hands the new peer's Letters Patent to the Reading Clerk who has taken up a position by the first gangway on the temporal side. Garter then proceeds behind the clerks' seats and stands next to Black Rod.

⁷ Knights of Orders also wear their collars.

⁸ Under SO 4, the Heralds may not charge a Lord any fee upon their introduction into the House.

⁹ The seniority of supporters is determined by the House of Lords Precedence Act 1539. Members of the House holding offices which give them special precedence under the House of Lords Precedence Act 1539, such as the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President and the Lord Privy Seal, may act as supporters for new Lords; their precedence as office holders determines their seniority as supporters (Procedure 2nd Rpt 1992–93).

The junior supporter moves to stand in front of the crossbenches on the spiritual side. The new peer processes to the Table of the House, and hands their writ of summons to the Reading Clerk. The senior supporter moves to stand in front of the crossbenches on the temporal side.

From the Despatch Box, the Reading Clerk reads the Letters Patent and administers the oath of allegiance or the solemn affirmation to the new peer. The new peer then signs the Test Roll and undertaking to abide by the House of Lords Code of Conduct.

The new peer moves round the Table to stand in front of the crossbenches and turns to face the Woolsack, with the senior supporter just behind them on the spiritual side, and the junior supporter just behind them on the temporal side. Meanwhile, Black Rod and Garter have moved to the spiritual side of the House between the Table and the Government front bench, facing the three peers. Together, the new peer and the supporters bow to the Cloth of Estate.

The procession then moves up the spiritual side of the House towards the Woolsack, with Black Rod leading, followed by Garter, the new peer, the junior supporter and the senior supporter. On reaching the Woolsack, the new peer shakes hands with the Lord Speaker. The procession passes into the Prince's Chamber through the door on the spiritual side of the House.

The new peer and the two supporters, without robes, then return to the Chamber, and the new peer sits for the first time in that part of the House where they intend to sit in the future.

Lords Spiritual

The ceremony of introduction of an archbishop or bishop is broadly the same as for Lords Temporal, but Lords Spiritual are not preceded by Garter or Black Rod and have no Letters Patent to present.

The new bishop, in their episcopal robes (white rochet with black wrist bands, black chimere and scarf) and carrying their writ of summons, enters the Chamber, preceded and followed by a supporting bishop, the junior in front and the senior¹⁰ behind, likewise in their robes.

¹⁰ The order of seniority of the Lords Spiritual is: Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop of York, Bishop of London, Bishop of Durham, Bishop of Winchester followed by the remaining 21 bishops in order of their receipt of first writ of summons to attend the House.

At the Bar, the three bishops bow in turn to the Cloth of Estate. They then enter the House, the junior supporter on the spiritual side, and the new bishop and senior supporter on the temporal side. The junior bishop moves to stand in front of the crossbenches on the spiritual side. The new bishop processes to the Table, and hands their writ to the Reading Clerk. The senior bishop moves to stand in front of the crossbenches on the temporal side.

From the Despatch Box, the Reading Clerk reads the writ and administers the oath of allegiance to the new bishop, who then signs the Test Roll upon the Table. The new bishop then signs the Test Roll and undertaking to abide by the House of Lords Code of Conduct.

The new bishop moves round the Table to stand in front of the crossbenches and turns to face the Woolsack, with the senior bishop just behind them on the spiritual side and the junior bishop just behind them on the temporal side. Together, they bow to the Cloth of Estate.

The three bishops then move up the spiritual side of the House towards the Woolsack, with the new bishop in the lead. On reaching the Woolsack, the new bishop shakes hands with the Lord Speaker. The three bishops then immediately¹¹ take their seats on the appropriate bench, led by the junior bishop.

¹¹ Unlike new Lords Temporal, who exit the Chamber, disrobe and then return to take their seat upon the appropriate bench.

Index

- absence of member
 - asking question 38, 90
 - during debate 57
 - moving amendment 134
 - moving motion 38
- accountability, ministerial 67
- Act of Settlement 1701 2
- Acts of Parliament
 - copyright of Crown 240
 - record copies 161
- Addison Rules 68
- Addresses to the Crown 25
 - in reply to a message 26, 27
 - on King's Speech 22
 - amendments to 23
 - presented by whole House 26
 - replies to 26
 - to new Sovereign 25
- adjournment
 - at end of sitting 31, 104
 - during committee stage 139
 - during pleasure 44
 - may be moved without notice 40
 - of business 43
 - of debates lasting more than one day 104
 - of second reading debate 125
- Administration and Works Committee 241
- admissibility of amendments 129
 - on third reading 150
- admission of visitors, rules for 245–246
- affirmation, solemn 6
- affirmative instruments 196
 - amendments and motions relating to 197
 - equality of votes 111
 - hybrid instruments 181
 - in Grand Committee 198

- Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments 197, 224
- minister must move motion to approve 197
- moving *en bloc* 198
- opposition to 197
- variation of place on order paper 43
- agencies, ministerial accountability for 67
- aliens, disqualification of 2
- amendments
 - admissibility of 129
 - at report stage 147
 - at second reading 124
 - at third reading 136, 150
 - Commons amendments 153
 - amendments to 153
 - consequential 153
 - explanatory statements 128
 - grouping of 135
 - if spoken to, must be moved 135
 - manuscript 134, 148, 154
 - marshalling of 130
 - moving *en bloc* 136, 148, 155
 - on King's Speech 23
 - packaging of 156, 157
 - pre-emption 135
 - privilege 151
 - procedure on 134
 - tabling of 127
 - to motions 102
 - to public bills 127–134
- annulment
 - equality of votes 111
 - of negative instruments 195
 - of special procedure orders 185
- anticipation 37
- appellations 62
- Appropriation Bills not printed for Lords 120
- archbishops See bishops
- arrangement of business 36
- arrest, freedom from in civil cases 235

- attendance 56
- Audit Committee 230
- balloted debates 100
- balloted oral questions See topical oral questions
- bankruptcy 2
- Bill of Rights 1689 236
- bills, hybrid 165
- bills, personal 170
- bills, private 170–181
 - carry-over 24
 - commitment 176
 - committees on opposed 176
 - Commons amendments 181
 - Commons bills 180
 - instructions to committees 175
 - introduction of Lords bills 172
 - late bills 172
 - parliamentary copyright 240
 - petitions against 173
 - petitions for additional provision 174
 - place in order of business 43
 - preamble See preamble
 - recommitment 178
 - rejected 178
 - report stage 179
 - right of petitioners to be heard 178
 - Royal Assent 181
 - second reading 174
 - third reading and passing 180
- bills, private members' 121
- bills, public 115–161
 - amendments 127 See *also* amendments
 - carry-over 116
 - commitment 126
 - committee negated 127
 - Committee of the whole House 137
 - Commons amendments 153
 - Commons bills

- not taken up within 12 sitting days 122
 - printed when Lords not sitting 119
 - Consent of Crown 159
 - consideration in Committee at later stages 146
 - debate before second reading 125
 - endorsements 152, 260
 - explanatory notes 120
 - first reading 117
 - Grand Committee See Grand Committee
 - House bill 152
 - instructions to committee 127
 - introduction 23, 117
 - Law Commission bills 125, 143
 - legislative consent 151
 - long title See long title of bill
 - minimum intervals between stages 116
 - money bills 161
 - no two stages on one day 115
 - order of commitment discharged 140
 - parliamentary copyright 239
 - passing 151
 - ping pong 157
 - preamble See preamble
 - pre-legislative scrutiny 123
 - privilege amendment, Lords bills 151
 - publishing of 120
 - recommitment 146
 - report stage 147 See also report stage
 - Royal Assent 160
 - scope 129
 - second reading 124
 - stages of 115
 - supply bills 162
 - third reading 149
 - variation of place on order paper 43
 - withdrawal of 122
- bishops
 - appellations 62, 63
 - introduction of 5, 266
 - may sit on steps of Throne 18
 - must speak from bishops' benches 53
 - retired 18
 - robes 53
 - seating 16
 - writs of summons 4
- Black Rod
 - may sit on steps of Throne 18
 - responsible for security 245
- bowing to Cloth of Estate and Mace 52
- broadcasting 240
- Built Environment Committee 220
- business of the House motions 34, 43
 - place on order paper 41, 43
 - time-limited debates 101
- calling on business 14, 38
- carry-over
 - of private, personal, provisional order confirmation and hybrid bills 24
 - of public bills 116
- casting vote
 - Chair of committee does not have 216
 - Lord Speaker does not have 109
- Chairman of Committees See Senior Deputy Speaker
- Chair of select committee 214
- Chamber
 - items not to be brought into 54
 - map of 19
- change of Speaker 30
- Chief Whip, Government 36, 51
- Chief Whip, Opposition 36
- children, eldest, may sit on steps of Throne 17
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004 24, 25
- civil servants, evidence to parliamentary committees 68
- Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, may sit on steps of Throne 18
- clerks
 - advice on *sub judice* 67
 - advice on wording of questions and motions should be accepted 84
 - members to consult 51

clocks 58, 102
Closure 64
 may be moved without notice 40
Cloth of Estate, members bow on entering Chamber 52
Code of Conduct 71–78 *See also* conduct, members'
collecting the voices 31, 105
Command papers 46
Commissioners for Standards 78
Commissioners, on opposed Scottish provisional orders 190
Commissions, Royal *See* Royal Commissions
commitment
 negatived 127
 of public bills 126
 order of, discharged 140
Committee for Privileges and Conduct *See* Conduct Committee or
 Procedure and Privileges Committee
Committee of Selection 230
Committee of the whole House 137
committees for peerage claims 228
committees, select *See* select committees
Commons amendments 153
 consequential amendments 153
Commons committees, Lords may attend as witnesses 237
Commons financial privilege 123, 130, 158
 tacking 163
Commons, House of
 questions on internal affairs of 87
 references in debate 60
Commons, Members of
 may be present at secret sitting 31
 personal criticism of 60
 references in debate 60
Communications and Digital Committee 220
compulsory purchase 194
concurrent meetings, of committees with Commons committees 216
Conduct Committee 214, 226
 enforcement of Code of Conduct 78
 expulsion and suspension 10
conduct in the House 52

conduct, members' 71
 Code of Conduct 71
 Guide to the Code of Conduct 78
 suspension and expulsion 79
Consent of Crown
 Measures 160
 private bills 180
 public bills 159
Consolidated Fund Bills not republished for Lords 120
consolidation bills 163
Consolidation Bills Committee 163
Consolidation of Enactments (Procedure) Act 1949 163
Constitution Committee 220
control by Parliament of its affairs 237
Convenor of the Crossbench Peers 37
co-option by a select committee 215
copyright, parliamentary 239
counsel, power of committees to hear parties by 216
courts, cases before 65
crossbenches 17
Crown
 Addresses to the *See* Addresses to the Crown
 Consent of 159
 demise of the 25
 messages from the 27

death of member 12
death of the Sovereign *See* demise of the Crown
debate, rules of
 address speeches to the House 53
 appellations 62
 attendance at debate 56
 Closure 64
 length of speeches 58
 personally insulting and offensive speeches, to be avoided 63
 Question may not be put again in same session 98
 reading of speeches 59
debates
 balloted 100
 time-limited 101

- delegated legislation 193–206
 - Parliament Acts do not apply 193
 - strengthened scrutiny procedures 198
- Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee 220
 - bills considered by 123
 - precedence of motions relating to reports from 41
 - reports, government responses to 219
- delegations, international 232
- demise of the Crown 25
 - oath to be taken 6
- Deputy Chairmen 16
- Deputy Leader of the House 51
- Deputy Speakers 16
 - change of 30
- devolution 117
 - questions on devolved matters 86
 - select committee powers not formally limited 216
- dinner break 44
- disabled members
 - may speak seated 53
 - may take oath seated 7
 - virtual participation 57, 107
- disciplinary and penal powers of House 79, 238
- disqualification from membership 1
- dissolution 24, 47
 - papers may not be laid 47
 - select committees cease to exist 217
- divisions
 - children in lobbies 107
 - contingency arrangements 113
 - equality of votes 110
 - on amendment to motion 103
 - resolution to annul special procedure order 185
 - instructions to Tellers 243
 - quorum 112
 - vote of Deputy 109
 - votes may be taken in the Chamber 107
 - voting by eligible disabled members 107
 - voting in both lobbies 108
 - voting in wrong lobby 108

- documents See papers
- Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster, Consent of 160
- Earl Marshal
 - membership of the House 1, 3
 - role in State Opening 253
- Ecclesiastical Committee 230
 - Measures submitted to 167
- Economic Affairs Committee 221
- electronic devices, use of 54
- emergencies
 - recall of the House 25
 - SO 46 dispensed with 115
- en bloc* 44
 - affirmative instruments approved 198
 - affirmative instruments referred to Grand Committee 198
- amendments
 - Commons amendments 155
 - in committee 136
 - on report 148
 - clause stand part 138
 - consolidation bills 164
 - motions appointing committees etc. 212
- endorsements of bills 152, 260
- environmental law, government bills 120
- Environment and Climate Change Committee 221
- equality of votes See divisions
- European Affairs Committee 222
- European Convention on Human Rights
 - government bills 120
 - private bills 171
- European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020 206
- European Union legislation 208
- European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 205
- evidence
 - Lords may give evidence to Commons committee 237
 - power may be given to committees to publish 216
- Examiners 170
 - Commons private bills referred to 180
 - hybrid bills referred to 165

exclusive cognisance 237
executive agencies, ministerial accountability for 67
exhibits not to be brought into Chamber 54
explanatory notes on bills 120

facilities of the House, access to 11
Finance Committee 227
financial privilege See Commons financial privilege
Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 204
first reading 117
 private bills 173
 public bills
 Commons bills 119
 Lords bills 118
foreign languages not to be used except where necessary 59
Freedom of Information Act 2000 241
freedom of speech 236
freedom to attend freely 236

Gaelic, oath/affirmation may be repeated in 7
gallant, use of appellation 62
gangways, members may not speak from 53
gap, speaking in the 55, 102
Government Chief Whip See Chief Whip, Government
Grand Committee 31
 affirmative instruments 198
 bills 141
 debate before second reading 125
 national policy statements 208
 negative instruments 196
 questions for short debate 96
 quorum 30
 select committee reports 218
grouping of amendments 135

Hansard 45
 correction of speeches 46
hereditary peers
 by-elections 4
 former members may sit on steps of Throne 17

 membership of the House 3
 register of 4
higher title, use of 62
House bill 152
House Committee 225
House of Commons See Commons, House of
House of Lords Act 1999 1, 3, 17
House of Lords Business 35
Human Rights Act 1998
 application to House 239
 compatibility statement (government bills) 120
 compatibility statement (private bills) 171
 motions in relation to remedial orders 41
 remedial orders 199
Human Rights, Joint Committee on 222
 remedial orders 200
Humble Address See Addresses to the Crown
hybrid bills 165
hybrid instruments 181
Hybrid Instruments Committee 224

Industry and Regulators Committee 222
information, freedom of 241
Insolvency Act 1986 2
instructions
 to committees on private bills 175
 to committees on public bills 127
 to select committees 213
Intelligence and Security Committee 231
interests
 private legislation 173
 relevant to a bill 117
 speaking on behalf of outside interests 60
International Agreements Committee 210, 222
international delegations 232
International Relations Committee 223
interruption
 of maiden speeches 61
 of speeches 56

intervals, minimum between stages of public bills 116
introduction of members 5
 ceremony described 265
Ireland, peers of, may sit on steps of Throne 18

joint committees 219
 Consolidation etc. Bills 220
 Human Rights 222
 National Security Strategy 223
 Statutory Instruments 224

Journals 46
judges, disqualification of 3
jury service 237
Justice and Home Affairs Committee 223

languages other than English 7
 not to be used in debate except where necessary 59

late bills 172
Leader of the House 51
 questions to 87
learned, use of appellation 62
leave of absence 10
 Leave of Absence Sub-Committee 229
leave of the House 33
legislation, delegated See delegated legislation
legislative consent 151
legislative reform orders 200
 motions to approve 41
length of speeches 58
Liaison Committee 227
Library, use of 11
Local Government Act 1999 203
Local Government Act 2000 203
Local Government Act 2003 204
Localism Act 2011 204
Local Transport Act 2008 204
long title of bill
 amendments to 129
 taken last 131

 in Committee of the whole House 139
 read on introduction 119

Lord Chamberlain 26
Lord Chancellor
 peerage claims 4
 role in State Opening 253

Lord Great Chamberlain
 membership of the House 1, 3
 role in State Opening 253

Lords of Appeal, former 62
Lord Speaker
 calling on eligible disabled members 58
 change of Speaker 30
 does not have casting vote 109
 does not vote 15
 election and role 13
 function in the House 52
 interests 14
 notifies death of member 12
 private notice questions 93
 procession 29

Lords Spiritual 1
 must speak from bishops' benches 53
 robes 53

Lords Temporal 1
 may not speak from bishops' benches 53

lunch break 44

Mace 29
 members bow to 53

maiden speeches 61
manuscript amendments 134
 not at third reading 149
 on report 148

marshalled lists 133
marshalling of amendments, rules of 130

Measures 167
 Consent of Crown 160, 168
 copyright 240
 variation of place on order paper 43

- memorials, complaining of non-compliance with Private Business Standing Orders 171
- messages
 - between the two Houses 49
 - from the Crown 27
 - to members of the Royal Family 26
- minimum intervals between stages of public bills 116
- ministerial accountability 67
- minority report, members of select committee may not make 217
- money bills 161
 - not committed 127
- motions 98
 - amendments to 102
 - resolutions 99
 - take note 99
 - withdrawal 104
- MPs See Commons, Members of

- national policy statements 208
- National Security Strategy, Joint Committee on 223
- negative instruments, in Grand Committee 196
- nemine dissentiente* 23
- next business motion 64
 - notice not required 40
- no longer heard motion
 - form of words 63
 - notice not required 40
- Northern Ireland Act 1998 202
- Northern Ireland Assembly
 - legislation, procedure under Northern Ireland Act 1998 206
 - Legislative Consent Motions 118
- notice, business of which required or not required 39

- oath of allegiance 6
- oath, power of committees to hear witnesses on 216
- Oaths Act 1978 7
- offensive language 63
- Official Report See Hansard
- Opening of Parliament 21

- opposed bill committees 176
- Opposition Chief Whip 36
- oral questions See questions
- order of business 40
 - variation of 43
- order of speaking 54
- order paper 35
- outside interests See interests

- packaging of amendments 156
- papers
 - Act 46
 - Command 46
 - days when they may be laid 47
 - may not be laid during dissolution 47
 - of committees not received by non-members 217
 - parliamentary 46
 - returns to an order of the House 47
- Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 161
 - do not apply to delegated legislation 193
- parliamentary copyright 239
- Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) 232
 - members proposed by Committee of Selection 230
- parliamentary papers See papers
- parliamentary privilege 235
- Parliamentary Security, Consultative Panel on 231
- Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission 231
- Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body 232
 - spokesperson 83
- passing of bills
 - private bills 180
 - public bills 151
- peerage, privilege of 238
- personally insulting and offensive speeches, to be avoided 63
- personal statements 81
 - notice not required 39
 - place in order of business 42
- petitions
 - against hybrid bills 166
 - against private bills 173

- against special procedure orders 184
- for additional provision 174
- public 48
 - place in order of business 42
- ping pong 157
- points of order, House does not recognise 14
- postponement
 - of business without notice 43
 - of clauses 138
- powers of select committee 215
- prayers
 - petitions to House 48
 - read at start of sitting 30
 - text of 262
 - to annul negative instruments 195
- praying time 195
 - prorogation and dissolution disregarded 24
- preamble
 - amendments to, taken last 131
 - in Committee of the whole House 139
 - of hybrid bill need not be proved before select committee 166
 - of private bill to be proved before committee 179
- pre-emption 135
- pre-legislative scrutiny 123
- Prince of Wales
 - consent to private bills 180
 - consent to public bills 160
- private bills See bills, private
- Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 187
- private notice questions 92
 - place in order of business 42
- privilege amendments 151
- privilege of peerage 238
- privilege, parliamentary
 - control by Parliament of its affairs 237
 - freedom of speech 236
 - freedom to attend freely 236
 - questions of, place in order of business 42

- Privy Counsellors
 - may sit on steps of Throne 18
 - seating 17
 - signify Consent of Crown 159
- Procedure and Privileges Committee 228
- prorogation 23
 - effect of 24
 - select committees may not sit during 217
- public bills See bills, public
- public boards, members and employees of 68
- public petitions 48
- Public Services Committee 223
- King's Speech 21, 253
- questions
 - for written answer 93
 - general principles 84
 - government responsibility 86
 - inadmissibility 85
 - oral questions
 - place in order of business 42
 - supplementary questions 90
 - tabling 88
 - private notice 92
 - Question may not be put again in same session 98
 - questions for short debate 95
 - place in order of business 43
 - place on order paper 41
 - supplementary questions 90
 - tabling oral 88
 - topical oral questions (balloted) 91
 - to secretaries of state and Cabinet-level departmental ministers 92
 - urgent 83
- question time 88
 - participation of eligible disabled members 58
- quorum
 - divisions 112
 - of House 30
 - of select committee 216

reading of speeches 59
 recall of House 25
 recess
 select committees may sit during 217
 usual times of 29
 recommitment
 private bills 178
 public bills 146
 register of hereditary peers 4
 relevance
 of amendments to bills 129
 of debate 54
 of supplementary questions 90
 remedial orders (human rights) 199
 place on order paper 41
 repetition
 of amendments 147
 of arguments 149
 of Question in same session 98
 of statements 81
 of urgent questions 83
 reply, no speaking after 55
 reply, right of See right of reply
 report stage 147
 manuscript amendments 148
 private bills 179
 repeat amendments 147
 rules of debate 148
 Representation of the People Act 1985 25
 resolutions 99
 retired members, may sit on steps of Throne 18
 right of reply 98
 on amendments 103
 questions for short debate, no right of reply 95
 right to be heard 178
 hybrid instruments 182
 rotation rule 214
 Royal Assent 160
 by Commission 256
 forms of words 257
 private bills 181
 time of notification/Commission 41
 Royal Commissions 247
 new parliament 249
 prorogation 258
 King's Speech 254
 Royal Assent 256
 Royal Family, messages to members of 26
 Royal Household
 Lords who are members of may present Addresses 26
 member of may communicate reply to Address 26

 Science and Technology Committee 223
 Scottish Parliament
 legislative competence 170, 187
 Legislative Consent Motions 118
 Scottish private legislation 187
 inquiry by Commissioners 187
 naming of joint committee members 169
 seating in the Chamber 16, 19
 secondary legislation See delegated legislation
 Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee 223
 second reading
 adjournment of 125
 agreed to with amendment 124
 debate before 125
 opposition to 124
 private bills 174
 public bills 124
 second reading committee 125
 secret sittings 31
 notice not required 40
 select committees 211
 Chairs of 214
 concurrent meetings with Commons committees 216
 dissolution brings to an end 217
 instructions to 213
 minority reports not permitted 217
 on opposed private bills 176

- on public bills 144
- participation by non-members 217
- powers of 215
- prorogation
 - may not sit during 217
 - sessional committees and sub-committees continue over 217
- quorum 216
- recess, may sit during 217
- reports 217
 - debates on 218
 - government responses 218
 - variation of place on order paper 43
- rotation rule 214
- special report 219
- Selection, Committee of 230
- Select Vestries Bill 22
- self-regulation 51
- Senior Deputy Speaker
 - appointment of 23
 - order of business 41
 - role 15
 - role in private legislation 169
 - unopposed bill committees 179
- 'separate subjects' 162
- Services Committee 229
- sessional committees
 - definition 211
 - descriptions 220
 - list 212
- sittings
 - days and times of 29
 - secret 31
 - notice not required 40
- size of the House, Lord Speaker's committee on the 231
- Sovereign See Crown
- Speaker See Lord Speaker
- speakers' lists 55
- speaking more than once 56

- speaking times
 - length of speeches 58
 - no speaking after mover has replied 55
 - questions for short debate 97
 - speaking in the gap 55, 102
 - time-limited debates 101
- special inquiry committees
 - definition 211
 - may be reappointed in new session 217
- specialist advisers, power of committees to appoint 216
- special procedure orders 183
 - effect of prorogation and dissolution 24
 - naming of joint committee members 169
- special public bill committee 143
- special report
 - from a committee on private bill 178
 - from a select committee 219
- speeches
 - interruption of 56
 - length of 58
 - maiden speeches 61
 - not to be delivered by another member 57
 - reading of 59
- speech, freedom of 236
- spiritual side 16
- Standing Orders (Private Bills) Committee 225
- standing orders, suspension or amendment of 34
- statements
 - ministerial, oral 81
 - notice not required 39, 83
 - personal 81
 - place in order of business 42
 - written 83
- State of Emergency 26, 27
- State Opening
 - ceremony described 253
- statutory instruments See delegated legislation
- Statutory Instruments, Joint Committee on 224
 - affirmative instruments may not be approved until reported on 197

Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945 169, 183
steps of the Throne, right to sit on 17
sub-committees 215
sub judice
 does not apply to bills or Measures 118
 does not apply to delegated legislation 193
 sub judice resolution 65
substituted bills 189
Succession to the Crown Act 1707 25
super-affirmative procedure 198
supply bills 162
supporters 5
 may not be on leave of absence 11
swearing-in days 21

tacking, supply bills 163
take note motions 99
tax status of members 12
Tellers 106
 instructions to 243
 insufficiency of 109
temporal side 16
Test Roll 7
third reading
 admissibility of amendments 150
 private bills 180
 public bills 149
Throne, steps of See steps of the Throne, right to sit on
time-limited debates 101
topical oral questions See questions
Transport and Works Act 1992 191
travel, power of committees to 216
treason, disqualification of those convicted of 2
treaties, scrutiny of 209
tributes 12, 39, 42

unopposed bill committees 179
urgent questions, repeated as statements 83
usual channels 36
 speakers' lists consultation 55

valedictory speeches 61
virtual participation by disabled members 57
 may vote electronically 107
visitors
 reference to 60
 rules for the admissions of 245
 secret sittings 31
votes See divisions

Welsh
 oath or affirmation may be repeated in 7
 use for committee meetings 216
Wharcliffe Orders 175
withdrawal
 of bills 122
 of motions and amendments 104
witnesses
 committee powers in respect of 215
 Lords may attend Commons committees as 237
wording of questions and motions 84
writ of assistance/attendance 5
written answer, questions for 93
written statements 83

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