



Election of Select Committee Chairs [interim version]

This note describes the practical arrangements for the election of select committee chairs by secret ballot. It will be revised once exact list of committees to which chairs are to be elected, the allocation of chairs to parties and the timing of the election is known.

Process

1. The election of chairs of select committees is governed by Standing Order No. 122B. Not all select committee chairs are elected by the House—the relevant chairs are only those listed in the Standing Order (see paragraph 18 of this paper), and the chair of the Backbench Business Committee, who is elected separately under Standing Order No. 122D
2. At the start of the Parliament all relevant chairs must be elected by the House. However, before this process can commence, the House must first allocate the posts of particular committee chairs to specific parties.

The process is as follows:

- The Speaker writes to the party leaders on the day following his election at the start of the Parliament, giving an indicative figure for the numbers of chairs to be allotted to each party according to their strength in the House.
- The Standing Order then allows a week from the Queen's Speech for a motion to be put to the House, in the name of all the leaders of the parties entitled to a chair, to allocate the chair of each committee to a specific party. Debate on this motion is limited to one hour, unless changes are also being made to the Departmental Select Committees listed in S.O. No. 152, in order to reflect governmental changes (for example a new Department, or merging of existing departments) in which case the motion is allowed 90 minutes for debate.
- If no such motion is tabled within two weeks, the Standing Order allows a motion allocating chairs to be brought in the name of any Member.
- The Speaker will announce the exact dates and timings of the election soon after the House has agreed the motion allocating chairs to specific parties. Under the Standing Order, the default is for the ballot to take place 14 days after the

approval of the motion allocating chairs to parties. Nominations can be submitted as soon as the motion has been agreed by the House, until 5pm the day before the ballot. The Speaker has discretion under S.O. No.122B to vary timings.

Nominations

3. Nominations are to be submitted to the Table Office or the Procedural Hub in the Portcullis House Atrium.
4. Nomination forms are available from the Table Office, Vote Office and the Procedural Hub but this form need not be used, provided that in all respects nominations meet the provisions of the Standing Order. To be valid, nominations must contain a signed statement made by the candidate declaring willingness to stand, and must be accompanied by the signatures of 15 Members elected to the House as members of the same party as the candidate (or 10% of the Members elected to the House of that party, whichever is the lower). In the event that more than 15 signatures are collected from the same party as the candidate, only the first 15 valid signatures are printed.
5. Nominations may be accompanied by the signatures of up to five Members elected to the House as members of any party other than to which the chair is allocated or of no party. Similarly, only five such signatures are printed.
6. No Member may sign the statement of more than one candidate—if any Member does so, that Member's signature will be invalidated for all nominations for that position. (Hence candidates may choose to obtain and submit more than 15 nominations, so that the nomination remains valid if a nominator is declared invalid.)
7. Candidates should declare any relevant interests with their nomination. This may include interests which are not required for the Register of Members' Financial Interests, for example the interests of family members or interests falling below the financial

threshold, if the interests are relevant, or could be relevant, to the committee's remit. Candidates are advised to familiarise themselves with paragraphs 1 to 6 of Chapter 2 of the *Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members*, which explain which interests might need to be declared; and with Chapter 3 of the Guide, particularly paragraphs 8 to 14, which explain how the lobbying rule could restrict you in committee proceedings if you have financial interests. Further information can be obtained from the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests at commonsregistrar@parliament.uk or x3277.

8. Candidates have the option of providing a 500-word supporting statement.
9. Valid nominations received each day are printed in the next day's House's business papers. They will also be published on the Parliament website, along with the candidate's supporting signatures, any declared interests and any supporting statement.
10. As soon as possible after the close of nominations, if there is more than one candidate, the list of candidates and their sponsors will be placed in the Vote Office in Members' Lobby and made available on the website (only printing the first 15 or 5 valid signatories for each candidate). A booklet will also be published containing a photograph of each candidate, any declared interests and any supporting statement. If there is only one candidate for a position, he or she has been elected unopposed.

Ballot

11. According to the Standing Order the ballot is held between 10 am and 5 pm, although the Speaker has discretion to vary timings. Select committee chair elections are generally held in one of the committee rooms on the Committee Corridor. Members voting have their names recorded at temporary division desks before being issued with a ballot paper.
12. Any Member who is on the Parliamentary Estate but is incapacitated from voting in the committee room may ask for a Clerk to obtain a ballot paper on their behalf, bring it to the Member, and cast it in the ballot box. Members who need to use this service should make such a request in writing or by email to Marek Kubala, Clerk of Elections, Public Bill Office (kubalam@parliament.uk). As is the case with all other votes in the House, proxy voting is not possible.
13. There will be a separate ballot paper for each position, as part of a booklet of papers. The ballot paper will give the names of candidates in alphabetical order. Members should complete the ballot paper at one of the stations erected in the room, and then deposit it in one of the ballot boxes at the exit. Members should vote by ranking as many candidates as they

wish in order of preference, marking 1 by the name of their first preference, 2 by the name of their second preference, and so on. Members can indicate as few or as many preferences as they wish.

Count

14. The ballots will be counted under the Alternative Vote system. For each chair, any candidate who receives more than half the first preferences shall be elected. If no candidate is so elected, the candidate with the lowest number of first preference votes is eliminated and their votes distributed among the remaining candidates according to the preferences on them. If no candidate has more than half the votes, the process of elimination and distribution is repeated, until one candidate has more than half the votes.
15. As soon as practicable after the closing of the ballot, the result will be announced by the Speaker and published. This may happen at the start of business the following day.
16. The Member elected formally takes up their position as chair of the committee when the remaining members of the committee have been appointed by the House.
17. Chairs are elected to serve until the end of the Parliament.
18. Committees whose chairs are elected under Standing Order No. 122B:
 - (a) Departmental: Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Communities and Local Government, Culture, Media and Sport, Defence, Education, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Health, Home Affairs, International Development, International Trade, Justice, Northern Ireland Affairs, Science and Technology, Scottish Affairs, Transport, Treasury, Welsh Affairs, Work and Pensions;
 - (b) Others: Environmental Audit, Petitions, Procedure, Public Accounts (Chair must be from Official Opposition party), Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs, Standards (Chair must be from Official Opposition party).Other committees (for example, committees which expired at the end of the Parliament such as the Women and Equalities and the Exiting the European Union committees, if re-established) could be added to the list by separate decision of the House.

Contact

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