



House of Commons
Liaison Committee

Formal Minutes

Session 2006–07

Proceedings of the Committee

Tuesday 21 November 2006

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr James Arbuthnot	Mr John McFall
Mr Kevin Barron	Andrew Miller
Mr Alan Beith	Mr Terry Rooney
Malcolm Bruce	Mr Mohammad Sarwar
Mr John Denham	Mr John Whittingdale
Mr Andrew Dismore	Mr Phil Willis
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody	Dr Tony Wright
Dr Hywel Francis	Mr Tim Yeo
Mike Gapes	Sir George Young
Mr Michael Jack	

1. Estimates Day debates

Resolved, That the Chairman be given the authority to allocate one or two committee reports for the Estimates Day debates on Thursday 7 December.

2. Leader of the House of Commons

The Committee held an informal meeting with Rt Hon. Jack Straw MP, Leader of the House of Commons.

[Adjourned till Thursday 7 December at 9.30 a.m.]

Thursday 7 December 2006

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr James Arbuthnot	Mr Michael Jack
Mr Alan Beith	Andrew Miller
Malcolm Bruce	Mr Barry Sheerman
Mr Andrew Dismore	Mr John Whittingdale
Dr Hywel Francis	Mr Phil Willis
Mike Gapes	

1. Debates

a) Estimates Day

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had reported to the House the choice of Estimates for debate on the Estimates Day on 7 December:

Department for Communities and Local Government, in so far as it relates to the provision of affordable housing; and

Department for Work and Pensions, in so far as it relates to assistance for those who have lost their occupational pensions.

b) Westminster Hall

The Committee *agreed* the reports suitable to be recommended for debate in Westminster Hall as follows:

Transport Committee: *Parking Policy and Enforcement*, HC 748, Session 2005–06 and HC 1641, Session 2005–06;

Culture, Media and Sport Committee: *Protecting and Preserving our Heritage*, HC 912, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6947;

Foreign Affairs Committee: *East Asia*, HC 860, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6944.

2. Overseas travel

Resolved, That the Committee approve the following overseas visit:

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee to Germany, at a cost not exceeding £24,286.

3. Financial scrutiny

a) Merging Departmental (Spring) Reports and Departmental Resource Accounts

The Committee *took note* of the Scrutiny Unit paper and *agreed* to the proposal for a pilot, with the suggested safeguards.

b) Follow-up to the deliberative session on 19 October on financial scrutiny work of select committees

The Committee *took note* of the proposals set out in the note by the clerks and *agreed* that the Scrutiny Unit should take forward discussions on improvements on availability of information and working methods, to be overseen by a working group.

4. Meeting with Leader of the House: follow-up

The Committee *agreed* to take up the Leader's offer to discuss the Law Commission's report on post-legislative scrutiny in a small working group.

The Committee *agreed* to the Leader's offer to send a reminder to Departments about the rules for witnesses and evidence.

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Leader.

5. Modernisation Committee's inquiries

The Committee *agreed* that Members would send individual submissions to the Modernisation Committee in respect of its inquiry into the role of the backbenchers.

The Committee *agreed* to put in a submission to bid for more time on the floor of the House for debates on select committee reports.

6. Any other business

a) Briefing for public bill committees

The Committee took note of the information paper by the Scrutiny Unit and *agreed* that the head of the Unit would pass on the Committee's concerns to the Chairman's Panel and would report back to the Committee.

b) Any other items

Review of select committee resources

The Committee *noted* that there would be a review of select committee resources in 2007.

All party groups

The Committee *took note* of a letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Standards and Privileges on all party groups (APGs) and *agreed* to support the proposals.

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Speaker about the concerns of members, regarding the funding of APGs, the public perception and the overlap with select committees.

Embargo period for publication of select committee reports

The Committee considered the timing of publication of committee reports and the release of advance copies and *agreed* to consider a note on arrangements and possible changes to embargo rules at a future meeting.

[Adjourned till Thursday 18 January at 9.30 a.m.]

Thursday 18 January 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr James Arbuthnot	Mr John McFall
Mr Alan Beith	Rosemary McKenna
Michael Connarty	Andrew Miller
Sir Patrick Cormack	Mr Barry Sheerman
Mr Andrew Dismore	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Mr Frank Doran	Mr John Whittingdale
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody	Mr Phil Willis
Dr Hywel Francis	Dr Tony Wright
Mr Edward Leigh	Sir George Young
Peter Luff	

1. Westminster Hall debates

The Committee *agreed* the reports suitable to be recommended for debate in Westminster Hall as follows:

Constitutional Affairs Committee: *Reform of the Coroners' System and Death Certification*, HC 902, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6943;

Defence Committee: *Educating Service Children*, HC 1054, Session 2005–06 and HC 58, Session 2006–07;

Health Committee: *Independent Sector Treatment Centres*, HC 934, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6930;

Health Committee: *NHS Charges*, HC 815, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6922;

International Development Committee: *Conflict and Development: Peacebuilding and Post-conflict Reconstruction*, HC 923, Session 2005–06 and HC 172, Session 2006–07;

Joint Committee on Human Rights Committee: *Human Trafficking*, HC 1127, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6696;

Quadripartite Committee: *Strategic Export Controls: Annual Report for 2004, Quarterly Reports for 2005, Licensing Policy and Parliamentary Scrutiny*, HC 873, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6954;

Trade and Industry Committee: *New nuclear? Examining the issues*, HC 1122, Session 2005–06 and HC 1663, Session 2005–06;

Transport Committee: *How fair are the fares? Train fares and ticketing*, HC 700, Session 2005–06 and HC 1640, Session 2005–06;

Treasury Committee: *The administration of tax credits*, HC 811, Session 2005–06 and HC 49, Session 2006–07.

2. Overseas travel

Resolved, That the Committee approve the following overseas visits:

Communities and Local Government Committee to Holland, at a cost not exceeding £8,184;

Defence Committee to Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Prague and Warsaw, at a cost not exceeding £18,371;

Welsh Affairs Committee to Czech Republic and Poland, at a cost not exceeding £24,815.

3. Evidence from the Prime Minister: suggested structure for questioning

The Committee *agreed* that the subject headings for the evidence session with the Prime Minister on 6 February 2007 would be based on those in the Policy Review, published by the Cabinet Office in November 2006, but that the subject-matter of questions would not be restricted to the contents of the Policy Review.

4. Embargo period for publication of select committee reports

The Committee considered the paper from the Second Clerk and *agreed* that the Chairman would write to the Leader of the House of Commons seeking a motion for approval by the House to amend Standing Order No. 134 to extend the maximum period possible under the embargo.

5. Select committee web-sites and the proposed now ePolitix website

The Committee *took note* of the paper from Dorian Gerhold, Principal Clerk of Select Committees.

6. Public bill committees

The Committee *took note* of the correspondence between the Chairman of Ways and Means and the Leader of the House of Commons on public bill committees.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 6 February at 8.45 a.m.]

Tuesday 6 February 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr James Arbuthnot	Mr Edward Leigh
Mr Kevin Barron	Mr John McFall
Mr Alan Beith	Rosemary McKenna
Sir Stuart Bell	Andrew Miller
Michael Connarty	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Sir Patrick Cormack	Mr John Whittingdale
Mr John Denham	Mr Phil Willis
Mr Andrew Dismore	Dr Tony Wright
Mr Frank Doran	Mr Tim Yeo
Mike Gapes	Sir George Young
Mr Michael Jack	

The Committee discussed the proposed line of questioning to the Prime Minister.

Evidence session with the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister, Rt Hon Tony Blair, a Member of the House, was examined.

[Adjourned till Thursday 15 March at 9.30 a.m.]

Thursday 15 March 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr James Arbuthnot	Peter Luff
Mr Kevin Barron	John McFall
Mr Alan Beith	Rosemary McKenna
Malcolm Bruce	Andrew Miller
Michael Connarty	Mr Terry Rooney
Sir Patrick Cormack	Mr Mohammad Sanwar
Mr John Denham	Mr Barry Sheerman
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Dr Hywel Francis	Mr John Whittingdale
Mike Gapes	Mr Phil Willis
Mr Michael Jack	Sir George Young

1. Debates

a) Estimates Day

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had reported to the House the choice of Estimates for debate on the Estimates Day on 6 March:

Department of Health, in so far as it relates to NHS deficits; and

Department of Transport, in so far as it relates to local transport planning and funding.

b) Westminster Hall

The Committee *agreed* the reports suitable to be recommended for debate in Westminster Hall as follows:

Defence Committee: *Educating Service Children*, HC 1054, Session 2005–06 and HC 58, Session 2006–07;

Health Committee: *Independent Sector Treatment Centres*, HC 934, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6930;

Health Committee: *NHS Charges*, HC 815, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6922;

Joint Committee on Human Rights Committee: *Human Trafficking*, HC 1127, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6696;

Trade and Industry Committee: *New nuclear? Examining the issues*, HC 1122, Session 2005–06 and HC 1663, Session 2005–06; and

Transport Committee: *How fair are the fares? Train fares and ticketing*, HC 700, Session 2005–06 and HC 1640, Session 2005–06.

2. Overseas travel

Resolved, That the Committee approve the following overseas visits:

Culture, Media and Sport Committee to Canada and USA, at a cost not exceeding £69,843;

Defence Committee to India and Afghanistan, at a cost not exceeding £69,139;

Defence Committee to Warsaw, at a cost not exceeding £5,759;

Defence Committee to Washington DC and Ottawa, at a cost not exceeding £76,038;

Defence Committee to Iraq, at a cost not exceeding £67,085;

Education and Skills Committee to China, at a cost not exceeding £61,743;

European Scrutiny Committee to Lisbon, Portugal and Gibraltar, at a cost not exceeding £31,611;

Foreign Affairs Committee to Russia, Iran and Kazakhstan, at a cost not exceeding £83,698;

Foreign Affairs Committee to Portugal, Spain and Gibraltar and Albania, Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo, at a cost not exceeding £53,214;

Health Committee to Nashville and Ottawa, at a cost not exceeding £60,186;

Health Committee to France, at a cost not exceeding £19,859;

International Development Committee to Vietnam and Thailand, at a cost not exceeding £71,491;

Committee of Public Accounts to Copenhagen and Stockholm, at a cost not exceeding £23,480;

Science and Technology Committee to North America, at a cost not exceeding £59,833;

Trade and Industry Committee to Slovakia, at a cost not exceeding £17,003;

Trade and Industry Committee to Lithuania, at a cost not exceeding £21,583;

Trade and Industry Committee to Hungary, at a cost not exceeding £20,739;

Treasury Committee to Ottawa and Washington DC, at a cost not exceeding £82,750;
and

Work and Pensions Committee to North America, at a cost not exceeding £70,833.

3. Annual Report of the Committee

The draft Report [*Annual Report 2005–06*] was amended and agreed to; the Formal Minutes relating to the consideration of the Report will be published in the First Report of the Liaison Committee, Session 2006–07, HC 406, pp 83–84.

4. Improving recognition of select committees

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Administration Committee regarding the proliferation of all party groups and its consequences and that he copy his letter to the Committee on Standards and Privileges.

5. Filming and photography in committee rooms

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Administration Committee regarding the rules in place for filming and photography in committee rooms.

6. Financial scrutiny

a) Working group on financial scrutiny

The Committee considered a report from the working group on financial scrutiny.

b) Supplementary Budget information

The Committee considered a proposal of HM Treasury to change the way in which the supplementary budget information is published.

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Chief Secretary of the Treasury regarding the proposal to change the way supplementary budget information is published.

c) Departmental annual reports and resource accounts

The Committee considered a note by the Scrutiny Unit on a proposal of HM Treasury for merging departmental annual reports and resource accounts.

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Chief Secretary of the Treasury regarding a proposal for merging departmental annual reports and resource accounts.

7. Closure of government websites

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Leader of the House regarding the proposed closure of some government websites.

8. Overlap between Lords and Commons committees

The Committee considered this matter.

9. Scrutiny of European documents by departmental select committees

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned till Thursday 10 May at 9.30 a.m.]

Thursday 10 May 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr James Arbuthnot	Mr Greg Knight
Mr Alan Beith	Peter Luff
Michael Connarty	John McFall
Mr John Denham	Andrew Miller
Mr Andrew Dismore	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Mr Frank Doran	Mr Phil Willis
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody	Dr Tony Wright
Mike Gapes	Sir George Young
Mr Michael Jack	

1. Westminster Hall debates

The Committee *agreed* the reports suitable to be recommended for debate in Westminster Hall as follows:

Communities and Local Government Committee: *Coastal Towns*, HC 351, Session 2006–07 and Cm 7126;

Defence Committee: *Educating Service Children*, HC 1054, Session 2005–06 and HC 58, Session 2006–07;

Health Committee: *NHS Charges*, HC 815, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6922;

Foreign Affairs Committee: *Human Rights Annual Report 2006*, HC 269, Session 2006–07 and Cm 7127;

International Development Committee: *Development Assistance and the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, HC 114 and HC 440, Session 2006–07; and

Science and Technology Committee: *Drug Classification: making a hash of it?*, HC 1031, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6941.

2. Post-legislative scrutiny

The Committee considered a report from the working group on post-legislative scrutiny.

3. Proposal for the establishment of Parliamentary commissions of inquiry

The Committee considered this matter.

4. Financial scrutiny

The Committee considered a progress report from the working group on financial scrutiny.

5. Raising the profile in the Chamber: Use of substantive motions and a weekly committee half-hour

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Chairman of the Modernisation Committee on this matter.

6. Procedures for select committees inquiring into matters which cut across government departments

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 5 June at 5.30 p.m.]

Tuesday 5 June 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Malcolm Bruce	Mr Barry Sheerman
Michael Connarty	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Mr John Denham	Mr Phil Willis
Mr Andrew Dismore	Dr Tony Wright
Peter Luff	Sir George Young
John McFall	

1. Evidence from the Prime Minister

The Committee discussed themes for the forthcoming evidence session with the Prime Minister.

[Adjourned till Thursday 14 June at 9.30 a.m.]

Thursday 14 June 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Beith	Mr Michael Jack
Sir Patrick Cormack	Peter Luff
Mr Andrew Dismore	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody	Dr Tony Wright
Dr Hywel Francis	Mr Tim Yeo
Mike Gapes	Sir George Young

In the absence of the Chairman, Sir George Young was called to the Chair.

1. Debates

a) Estimates Day

Resolved, That the Chairman be given the authority to allocate one or two committee reports for the Estimates Day debates on or about 9 July.

b) Westminster Hall

The Committee *agreed* the reports suitable to be recommended for debate in Westminster Hall as follows:

Constitutional Affairs Committee: *Implementation of the Carter Review of Legal Aid*, HC 223, Session 2006–07 and Cm 7158;

Environmental Audit Committee: *The EU Emissions Trading Scheme: Lessons for the Future*, HC 70 and HC 1072, Session 2006–07;

Foreign Affairs Committee: *Human Rights Annual Report 2006*, HC 269, Session 2006–07 and Cm 7127;

Health Committee: *NHS Charges*, HC 815, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6922; and

Trade and Industry Committee: *Stamp of Approval? Restructuring the Post Office Network*, HC 276 and HC 593, Session 2006–07.

2. Overseas travel

Resolved, That the Committee approve the following overseas visit:

Transport Committee to Stockholm, at a cost not exceeding £20,405.

3. Proposal for the establishment of Parliamentary commissions of inquiry

The Committee considered this matter.

4. Security cover for committee meetings

The Committee considered this matter.

5. Cross-cutting inquiries

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned till Monday 18 June at 10.45 a.m.]

Monday 18 June 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr Kevin Barron	Mr Michael Jack
Mr Alan Beith	Mr Edward Leigh
Sir Stuart Bell	Peter Luff
Malcolm Bruce	John McFall
Michael Connarty	Mr Terry Rooney
Sir Patrick Cormack	Mr Barry Sheerman
Mr John Denham	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Mr Andrew Dismore	Mr Phil Willis
Mr Frank Doran	Dr Tony Wright
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody	Sir George Young
Mike Gapes	

The Committee discussed the proposed line of questioning to the Prime Minister.

Evidence session with the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister, Rt Hon Tony Blair, a Member of the House, was examined.

[Adjourned till Thursday 12 July at 9.30 am.]

Thursday 12 July 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Malcolm Bruce	Andrew Miller
Michael Connarty	Mr Terry Rooney
Mr Andrew Dismore	Mr Barry Sheerman
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Dr Hywel Francis	Mr John Whittingdale
Mr Greg Knight	Dr Tony Wright
Peter Luff	Mr Tim Yeo
John McFall	Sir George Young

1. Westminster Hall debates

The Committee agreed the reports suitable to be recommended for debate in Westminster Hall as follows:

Environmental Audit Committee: *The EU Emissions Trading Scheme: Lessons for the Future*, HC 70 and HC 1072, Session 2006–07;

Foreign Affairs Committee: *Human Rights Annual Report 2006*, HC 269, Session 2006–07 and Cm 7127;

Health Committee: *NHS Charges*, HC 815, Session 2005–06 and Cm 6922;

International Development Committee: *Sanitation and Water*, HC 126 and HC 854, Session 2006–07;

Trade and Industry Committee: *Stamp of Approval? Restructuring the Post Office Network*, HC 276 and HC 593, Session 2006–07;

Treasury Committee: *Financial Inclusion*, HC 848 and HC 1717, Session 2005–06, HC 53 and HC 437, Session 2006–07; and

Work and Pensions Committee: *Personal Accounts*, HC 220, Session 2006–07.

2. Overseas travel

Resolved, That the Committee approve the following overseas visits:

Constitutional Affairs Committee to New York and Toronto, at a cost not exceeding £62,866;

Defence Committee to Turkey and Georgia at a cost not exceeding £58,616;

Environmental Audit Committee to China and Australia, at a cost not exceeding £67,410;

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee to Brussels and Paris, at a cost not exceeding £13,893;

European Scrutiny Committee to Slovenia, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), at a cost not exceeding £34,687;

Foreign Affairs Committee to New York and Washington DC, at a cost not exceeding £65,573;

Foreign Affairs Committee to Iran, at a cost not exceeding £61,200;

Foreign Affairs Committee to Western Balkans, at a cost not exceeding £37,185;

Foreign Affairs Committee to Falklands, Bermuda, Anguilla and Montserrat, at a cost not exceeding £71,675;

Home Affairs Committee to Washington DC, at a cost not exceeding £58,826;

International Development Committee to Afghanistan, at a cost not exceeding £42,907;

International Development Committee to Washington DC, at a cost not exceeding £56,801;

International Development Committee to China, at a cost not exceeding £64,801;

Joint Committee on Human Rights to South Africa, at a cost not exceeding £17,053;

Northern Ireland Committee to Dublin, at a cost not exceeding £7,795;

Public Administration Committee to Washington DC and Chicago, at a cost not exceeding £61,511;

Trade and Industry Committee to Turkey, at a cost not exceeding £27,672;

Treasury Committee to Sweden, at a cost not exceeding £18,344;

Welsh Affairs Committee to China, at a cost not exceeding £37,695; and

Work and Pensions Committee to Denmark, at a cost not exceeding £13,458.

3. Sub-committee: membership

Ordered, That John McFall be a member of the Sub-committee.

4. Government Response to the Liaison Committee's Annual Report

The draft Report [Government Response to the First Report from the Committee, Session 2006–07: *Annual Report for 2005–06*] was *agreed to* and was published as the First Special Report of the Liaison Committee, Session 2006–07, HC 920.

5. “The Governance of Britain” and “Draft Legislative Programme” Green papers

The Committee considered these papers.

Ordered, That the Chairman to write to the Leader of the House to request that in future years the Government presented its draft programme to Parliament earlier to enable committees to include consideration of proposals for new legislation in their programmes.

Resolved, That the Committee invite the Secretary of State for Justice and the Leader of the House to meet informally with them to discuss what role the Liaison Committee and individual committees could play in consultation on the proposals outlined in the Green Paper on “The Governance of Britain”.

6. Parliamentary commissions of inquiry: working group

The Committee considered this matter.

7. Disclosure of internal working papers belonging to the European Scrutiny Committee

The Committee *took note* of a leak investigation by the European Scrutiny Committee and endorsed the Committee's view that the leak amounted to a substantial interference in the work of the Committee and that a special report should be made to the House.

[Adjourned till Monday 25 October at 9.30 a.m.]

Wednesday 17 October 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr Alan Beith	Peter Luff
Malcolm Bruce	Andrew Miller
Mr Andrew Dismore	Mr Mohammad Sarwar
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody	Dr Phyllis Starkey
Dr Hywel Francis	Dr Tony Wright
Mr Greg Knight	Sir George Young

1. "Governance of Britain" Green paper

The Committee held a private meeting with Rt Hon. Harriet Harman QC MP, Leader of the House of Commons and Chairman of the Modernisation Committee and Rt Hon. Jack Straw MP, Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor.

[Adjourned till Thursday 15 November at 9.30 a.m.]

Proceedings of the Sub-Committee

Tuesday 16 January 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr Alan Beith

Mr John Denham

Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody

Dr Tony Wright

Sir George Young

The Committee discussed themes for the forthcoming evidence session with the Prime Minister.

[Adjourned to a place and time to be fixed by the Chairman.]

Tuesday 22 May 2007

Members present:

Mr Alan Williams, in the Chair

Mr Alan Beith

Mr John Denham

Dr Tony Wright

Sir George Young

The Committee discussed themes for the forthcoming evidence session with the Prime Minister.

[Adjourned to a place and time to be fixed by the Chairman.]