

Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion - Decisions

Meeting on 15 November 2016 in the Speaker's Study

Mr Speaker chaired an introductory meeting of the Group.

Meeting on 17 January 2017 in the Speaker's Study

1. Works of Art in the Palace of Westminster

The Commons Reference Group agreed that the ten year rule should be renamed the two terms rule and revised to state that:

- A Member must have left the House of Commons for two terms before their portrait is first hung in the Palace;
- The portrait of a Member who leaves the House of Commons for two terms and subsequently returns should not require removal; and
- The two terms rule should be able to be waived by Mr Speaker.

The Group also agreed to schedule a further discussion at an appropriate junction on future opportunities generated by the Restoration and Renewal programme and on potential individuals and stories for future commission.

2. Terms of reference

Members agreed the Terms of Reference for the Group.

3. Writing to other actors

The Group agreed that Mr Speaker should write to the select committees, ministers and party groups referenced in *The Good Parliament* to draw attention to the establishment of the Commons Reference Group and its intention to work with them over the coming months.

4. Proxy voting

The Group agreed that Mr Speaker should write to the Chair of the Procedure Committee, to refer the issue of how the House might introduce a system of proxy voting for those with caring responsibilities.

Meeting on 22 February 2017 in the Speaker's Study

1. The Good House of Commons Imagined

The Commons Reference Group agreed the text of the *Good House of Commons Imagined*, as drafted by Professor Sarah Childs, to provide a basis for the Group's work.

2. Programme for action

The Group agreed that Anne Milton should consult with the Deputy Leader and Minister for Equalities on recommendations relating to the permanent establishment of the Women and Equalities Committee (WEC) and commencement of section 106 of the Equalities Act 2010.

The Group agreed to administer the proposed survey of Members' parental status and establish a small working group to report back on the data collected and possible ways to address the recommendation in relation to a 'House Statement' on maternity, paternity, parental, adoption and caring leave.

The Group agreed to task the Director General with reviewing the provision of a crèche, with a report to be provided to the Group in due course.

The Group agreed to invite the pairing whips to a future meeting to explore the recommendations under section 5 of the paper.

The Group agreed that officials in the House Service should work with Members to produce case studies detailing and promoting the role and work of MPs.

Members agreed that Mr Speaker would write to the Chair of the WEC on behalf of the Group.

The Group agreed to invite representatives from the Committee Office and the BBC to a subsequent meeting to further discuss witness diversity.

The Group agreed to initiate an Inter-Parliamentary Union Gender Sensitive Audit in 2018 and to arrange an initial meeting with the IPU later in 2017.

The Group agreed that the Speaker's Office should take forward the recommendation to pilot, in the first instance, the systematic monitoring of PMQs on the basis of gender, with the understanding that interventions in debates would not be included.

The Group agreed that:

- A report should be brought to the Group regarding the production of 'explanatory notes' for Standing Orders;
- The Group should press the Leader to make time for a debate on introducing drafting amendments to Standing Orders to ensure they use gender-neutral language;
- A subsequent meeting of the Group would focus on the customs and practices that Members may consider alienating or exclusionary; and
- Officials should be tasked with producing comprehensive website materials showing that a diversity of people are, and can be, MPs.

The Group agreed that Professor Childs should bring a paper, with an initial research proposal on the supply of candidates and costings, to its meeting in May 2017.

Meeting on 28 March 2017 in the Speaker's Study

1. Select committee witness diversity

The Commons Reference Group agreed that:

- Maria Miller would consult the Members of the Women and Equalities Committee to seek their agreement to undertake an inquiry on committee witness diversity and feed back to the Group; and
- Mr Speaker would write to the Liaison Committee to ask it to consider establishing a convention with respect to the diversity of discretionary witnesses.

2. Infants in the Chamber

The Commons Reference Group endorsed Mr Speaker's approach to allowing children up to the age of 5 in the Division Lobbies and into and through the Chamber whilst a vote was underway.

Meeting on 27 June 2017 in the Speaker's Study

1. Progress update and programme for the new Parliament

The Group agreed that a reminder would be sent out to MPs regarding the parenthood survey and that Sarah Childs would draw up a research proposal for the Group to consider regarding the supply of Parliamentary candidates.

The Group agreed that Mr Speaker would write on behalf of the Group to the Leader of the House requesting confirmation that the Woman and Equalities Committee would be permanently established.

The Group agreed that the Group secretary would put together some information on the arguments for setting up a House Business Committee.

2. Emergency childcare

The Group agreed to note the paper on progress towards establishing a House of Commons crèche facility.

3. Practical arrangements

The Group agreed that a web page would be set up providing a description of the Group's work, with a link to the work of Sarah Childs on the Good Parliament report and a record of the Group's decisions.

Meeting on 12 September 2017 in the Speaker's Study

1. International Women's Day

The Group agreed to support Parliament's hosting the 2018 cross-government network International Women' Day event.

2. Parental leave recommendation

The Group agreed:

- That the Speaker would respond to Harriet Harman to ask her to work with the Group on how a system of baby leave might be implemented by the House.
- That Members be consulted by Sarah Petit and Sarah Childs, particularly those who have had babies since in office.
- That Sarah Petit and Sarah Childs consider the best way to involve other actors in the discussions.
- To consider a proposal at their next meeting of 18 October 2017.

3. Research Proposal: Supply Pool for Politics in the UK

The Group agreed to support the proposal for research into the Supply Pool for Politics in the UK, and requested that Professor Childs make an application for external funding.

4. Emergency childcare contract

The Group noted the update on the emergency childcare contract.