



Queen's Speech 2017

Following the State Opening of Parliament, the House of Commons debates the Government's legislative programme, as outlined in the Queen's Speech.

What happens on Monday 19 June 2017

The House of Commons meets at 11.25am, with the Speaker in the Chair. After Prayers, Black Rod arrives. In a symbol of the Commons' independence, the door to the Commons Chamber is slammed in his face and not opened until he has knocked on the door with his staff of office. Black Rod then enters the Chamber to deliver the Queen's command that the House attend her immediately.

Any Member may join the procession from the Chamber which the Speaker, followed by the Clerk of the House, leads to the House of Lords, to stand at the Bar of the House of Lords while the Queen reads the Speech from the Throne outlining the Government's programme.

The Speaker then leads the procession of Members back to the Commons Chamber, and suspends the sitting until the afternoon.

Swearing-in of Members

The Speaker may resume the Chair at about 2pm, if required, to allow any Members who have not yet taken their seats to take the Oath or make the Affirmation required by law. The afternoon sitting begins at 2.30pm.

Outlawries Bill

The formality of giving a First Reading without notice to the Outlawries Bill has a long history and asserts the right of the Commons to deliberate upon matters of its own choosing before turning to the reason for its summons as expressed in the Queen's Speech.

Speaker's statement

In recent years the Speaker has made a statement at the beginning of each Session of Parliament on the role and responsibilities of Members.

Appointment of temporary Deputy Speakers

Up to three temporary Deputy Speakers may be appointed by the Speaker. Their appointment will expire as soon as new Deputy Speakers are elected.

Within a few days of the Queen's Speech, a secret ballot will be held to elect the three Deputy Speakers known as: the Chairman of Ways and Means, the First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means, and the Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.

Motion on the Address

A Government backbencher will move the following Motion for an Address to the Queen –

*Most Gracious Sovereign,
We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.*

Movers and seconders

The Motion will be seconded by another speech from the Government backbenches, before the Speaker proposes the Question on the Motion. Though seconders are not normally required for Motions in the House of Commons, it is the custom for there to be one for Motions on the Queen's Speech.

Debate

The first speech after the Chair proposes the Question on the Motion is made by the Leader of the Opposition, who is followed by the Prime Minister. Debate continues until no later than 10pm, when it is adjourned to the next sitting day. There will also be a 30-minute adjournment debate.

Maiden speeches

The Queen's Speech debate is the first opportunity for maiden speeches to be made. It is usually possible for ten or more new Members to do so on each day of the debate. A separate note on maiden speeches is available from the Vote Office and on the Parliament website.

Subjects to be debated on the Queen’s Speech

In recent years, the Queen’s Speech debate has normally been taken over six days. The Speaker lets the House know what the proposed topics are for each of the remaining days of the debate. The selection of Ministers and Shadow Ministers to open and close the debates on each of the following sitting days reflects the topics chosen for each day. Except when an amendment has been selected (see below), it is in order to discuss anything in the whole range of the Government’s legislative programme, as outlined in the Queen’s Speech, without being limited to the topics announced by the Speaker.

Amendments to the Motion for an Address

Any Member may table an amendment to the Address, or add his or her name to an amendment tabled by any other Member.

On the last but one day of the Queen’s Speech debate, the Speaker usually selects an amendment tabled in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, the scope of which then defines that day’s debate. The amendment is voted on at the “moment of interruption” (10pm on a Monday, 7pm on a Tuesday or Wednesday or 5pm on a Thursday).

On the last day of the Queen’s Speech debate, the Speaker usually selects another Official Opposition amendment, which is generally framed in very wide terms. That amendment is voted upon at the “moment of interruption”. The Speaker may then call up to two other amendments for immediate decision, with no further debate, before putting the final Question on the Main Question.

If no amendment is selected before the last day of the Queen’s Speech debate, the Speaker may select up to four amendments for decision at the moment of interruption on the last day of the Queen’s Speech debate. So there could be as many as five Divisions at the end of the Queen’s Speech debate, but no more than five votes in all over the final two days.

Following the Address on the Queen’s Speech

Westminster Hall does not meet until after an Address has been agreed.

Ways and Means motions may not be made without notice until after the Address has been agreed. So there could be no emergency budget, for example, until after the Queen’s Speech debate is concluded – unless the

House agreed to a Motion to suspend the relevant Standing Order, which would itself require notice.

Other business before the House

From Tuesday 20 June onwards, Ministers may make Statements, followed by questions, before the House resumes the debate on the Queen’s Speech adjourned from the previous sitting day.

It is likely that the Leader of the House will make a statement at the beginning of the sitting on Thursday 22 June outlining the business to be taken over the following two weeks.

Oral question time resumes before the conclusion of the debate on the Queen’s Speech. Other Government business may be taken before the debate on the Queen’s Speech is concluded.

Details will be given in the Order Paper produced for each sitting from Tuesday 20 June onwards.

Reply to the Address

At the beginning of a sitting later in the Session, the Vice-Chamberlain of the Household (a Government Whip) presents the Queen’s formal reply to the Address in the customary form of words: “I have received with great satisfaction the dutiful and loyal expression of your thanks for the speech with which I opened the present Session of Parliament.” There is no deadline for the receipt of the Queen’s reply to the Address, which normally has no procedural consequence.

Contact

If you would like to discuss this guidance, please contact the Table Office, behind the Speaker’s Chair end of the Chamber (x3302/3303/3305).