



HOUSE OF LORDS

House of Lords Liaison Committee review of investigative and scrutiny committees

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Liaison Committee, chaired by the Senior Deputy Speaker, Lord McFall of Alcluth, is conducting a review of House of Lords investigative and scrutiny committees. This will be a full review of the structure of investigative committees, the first for 25 years. The Committee announced its intention to conduct the review in October 2015, at the same time as recommending the establishment of an International Relations Committee (IRC). The aim of the review, as outlined in 2015, was to “rationalise committee activity”, including taking stock of the balance between ad hoc and sessional committee activity, and of the success of the IRC and EU Committee in managing overlap between their respective remits.

More recently, the Brexit vote has profoundly changed the political context, and the review will consider options for adapting the House’s committee structure to suit a post-Brexit world.

The Liaison Committee has also agreed that it would need to consider separately the House’s arrangements for scrutinising the forthcoming Brexit Statutory Instruments, and to respond quickly to any decisions that the House might take in relation to the EU Withdrawal Bill.

The review is also a chance to reflect on what works well about House of Lords committees, and what should change.

Since 2010 the House of Commons has elected the chairs of most committees, and there has been a tendency for Commons committees to focus on shorter, highly topical inquiries. The chairmen of Lords committees are currently appointed rather than elected, and Lords inquiries tend to be longer and cover the responsibilities of more than one Government Department.

The Liaison Committee has agreed that the review should extend throughout the 2017-19 session. In order to allow for the implementation of recommendations at the beginning of the next session it is expected that the report will be agreed by the end of 2018.

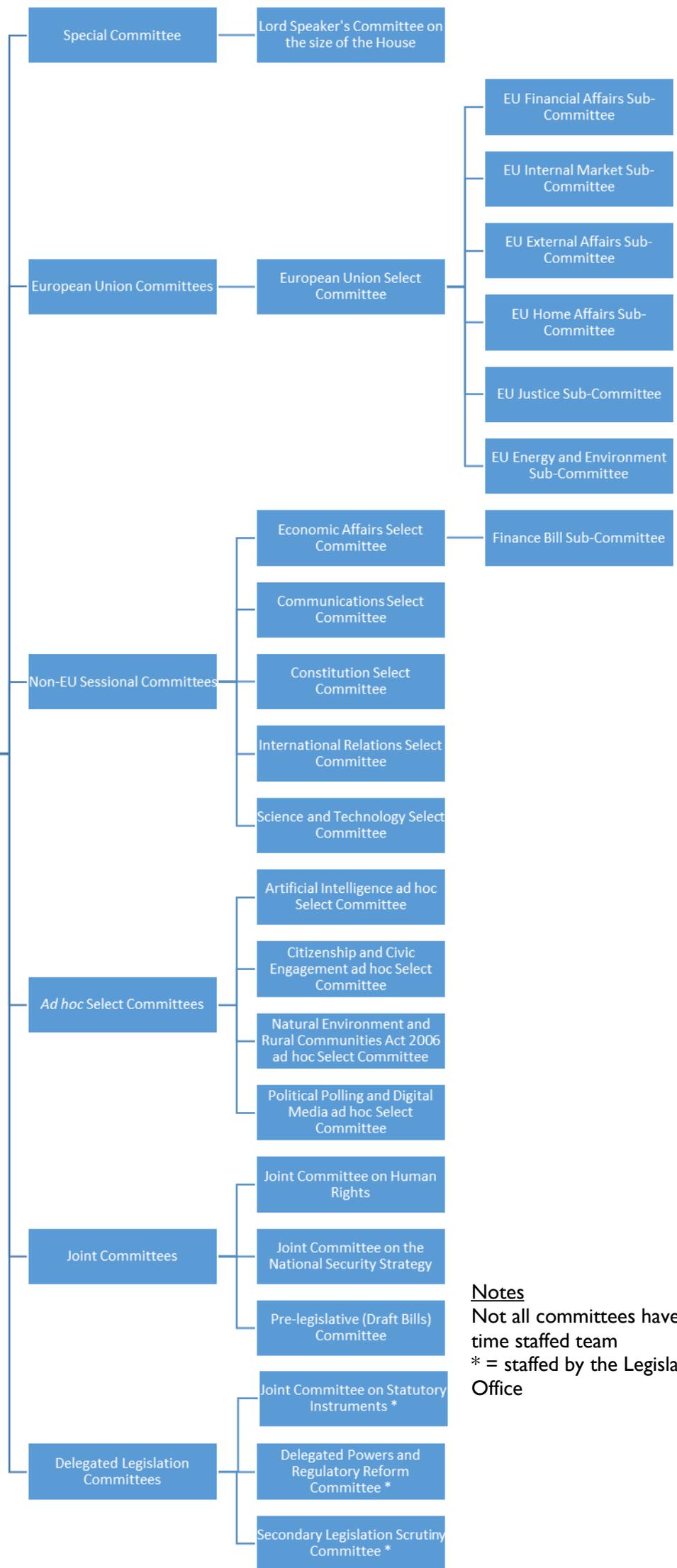
The committee is now seeking written submissions from Members of the House and anybody outside the House who has an interest in the future of House of Lords Committee work.

The deadline for submissions is 5pm on Friday 20 April 2018.

More information about Select Committees in the House of Lords can be found on the Select Committee webpage <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/>. The House of Lords Library has published a background note on House of Lords Select Committees which can be found here: <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2017-0062/LLN-2017-0062.pdf>

A chart of House of Lords investigative and scrutiny committees in 2017–18 can be found below.

House of Lords Investigative and Scrutiny Committees 2017–18



Notes

Not all committees have a full-time staffed team

* = staffed by the Legislation Office

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE REVIEW

The Liaison Committee has agreed the following key questions to be addressed by the review.

- How can Committees add most value to the scrutiny work of the House of Lords as a second chamber?
- How can House of Lords Committees develop a national conversation to complement their inquiry and scrutiny work?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current House of Lords Committee structure and what should change?
- How can House of Lords Committees maximize their impact inside and outside the House?
- How can House of Lords Committees promote inter-parliamentary dialogue both within and outside the UK?

It has also agreed more detailed questions, which are listed on the next page.

The committee invites interested individuals and organisations to make submissions to this review. Submissions do not need to address every question, and short submissions are preferred. A submission larger than six pages should include a one page summary.

Submissions which have been previously published will not be accepted as evidence.

The deadline for written evidence is 5pm on Friday 20 April 2018. The written submissions will guide the committee's further deliberations.

Submissions should if possible be made online using the written submission form available at <http://www.parliament.uk/hl-liaison-review-of-committees-inquiry-submission-form>. This page also provides guidance on submitting evidence.

If you have difficulty submitting evidence online, please contact the committee clerk, preferably by email at hlcommitteereview@parliament.uk or alternatively by telephoning 020 7219 3130.

You can follow the work of the committee at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/liaison-committee/>.

DETAILED QUESTIONS

Subject matter and structure

An overriding question is: How should the structure and working practices of House of Lords committees be rationalised?

To help answer that question:

1. Should the current committee structure be changed?
2. What changes are needed in the wake of Brexit? Are committees needed to scrutinise the UK-EU relationship in future, and if so how?
3. To what extent does it remain desirable to avoid overlap with the House of Commons?
4. What is the best balance between ad hoc committees and sessional committees?
5. What is the best balance between short and long inquiries?
6. What should be the duration of most committees (eg a two or three year term)?

Ad hoc committees

In relation to ad hoc committees, the Liaison Committee has considered proposals for new committees against these criteria:

- Makes best use of the knowledge and experience of members of the House;
 - Complements the work of House of Commons departmental select committees;
 - Addresses areas of policy that cross departmental boundaries; and
 - That the activity proposed should be capable of being completed in one year.
7. Are the present criteria for examining proposals for ad hoc committees the right ones?
 8. Are the current arrangements for following-up committee reports (especially those of ad hoc committees) appropriate?
 9. What is the correct balance between the flexibility of having new committees each year and more sessional committees?
 10. How should the work of post-legislative scrutiny committees be developed?

Engagement with the public

There has been a substantial increase in media coverage of Lords committees in recent years. Committees began using Twitter in 2014. Committees have also engaged with hard-to-reach groups by releasing easy-read versions of some reports. There have been additional efforts to engage with children and young people through a variety of methods, including online surveys.

11. How can Lords committees engage more effectively with the public and media to encourage a national conversation?
12. What has been successful in increasing the levels of engagement on social media, and what more could be done?
13. What new offline channels could be used to engage with the public?
14. How should committees engage with stakeholders in evaluating their activity?

Chairmen and members

15. Are the current arrangements for the appointment of Committee Chairmen and members satisfactory, including the “rotation rule”?
16. What is the ideal number of members for investigative and scrutiny committees?

17. Should there be a written role description for Committee chairmen and members to clarify expectations from the outset?

Committee effectiveness

18. Is there anything committee staff could do to support chairmen and members to be more effective in their committee work?

19. How can the timeliness and content of Government responses be improved?

ANNEX I: GUIDANCE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Written evidence should be submitted online using the written submission form available at <http://www.parliament.uk/hl-liaison-review-of-committees-inquiry-submission-form>. This page also provides guidance on submitting evidence. The deadline for written evidence is 5pm 20 April 2018.

If you have difficulty submitting evidence online, please contact the Committee staff by email hlcommitteereview@parliament.uk or by telephoning 020 7219 3130.

Shorter submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary. Paragraphs should be numbered. All submissions made through the written submission form will be acknowledged automatically by email.

Evidence which is accepted by the Committee may be published online at any stage; when it is so published it becomes subject to parliamentary copyright and is protected by parliamentary privilege. Submissions which have been previously published will not be accepted as evidence.

Once you have received acknowledgement that the evidence has been accepted you will receive a further email, and at this point you may publicise or publish your evidence yourself. In doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee, and you should be aware that your publication or re-publication of your evidence may not be protected by parliamentary privilege.

Personal contact details will be removed from evidence before publication, but will be retained by the Committee Office and used for specific purposes relating to the Committee's work, for instance to seek additional information.

Persons who submit written evidence, and others, may be invited to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster and broadcast online; transcripts are also taken and published online. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed.

Substantive communications to the Committee about the inquiry should be addressed through the clerk of the Committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute formal evidence to the Committee.

This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who may not have received a copy direct.

You may follow the progress of the inquiry at: <http://www.parliament.uk/hl-liaison-review-of-committees>.