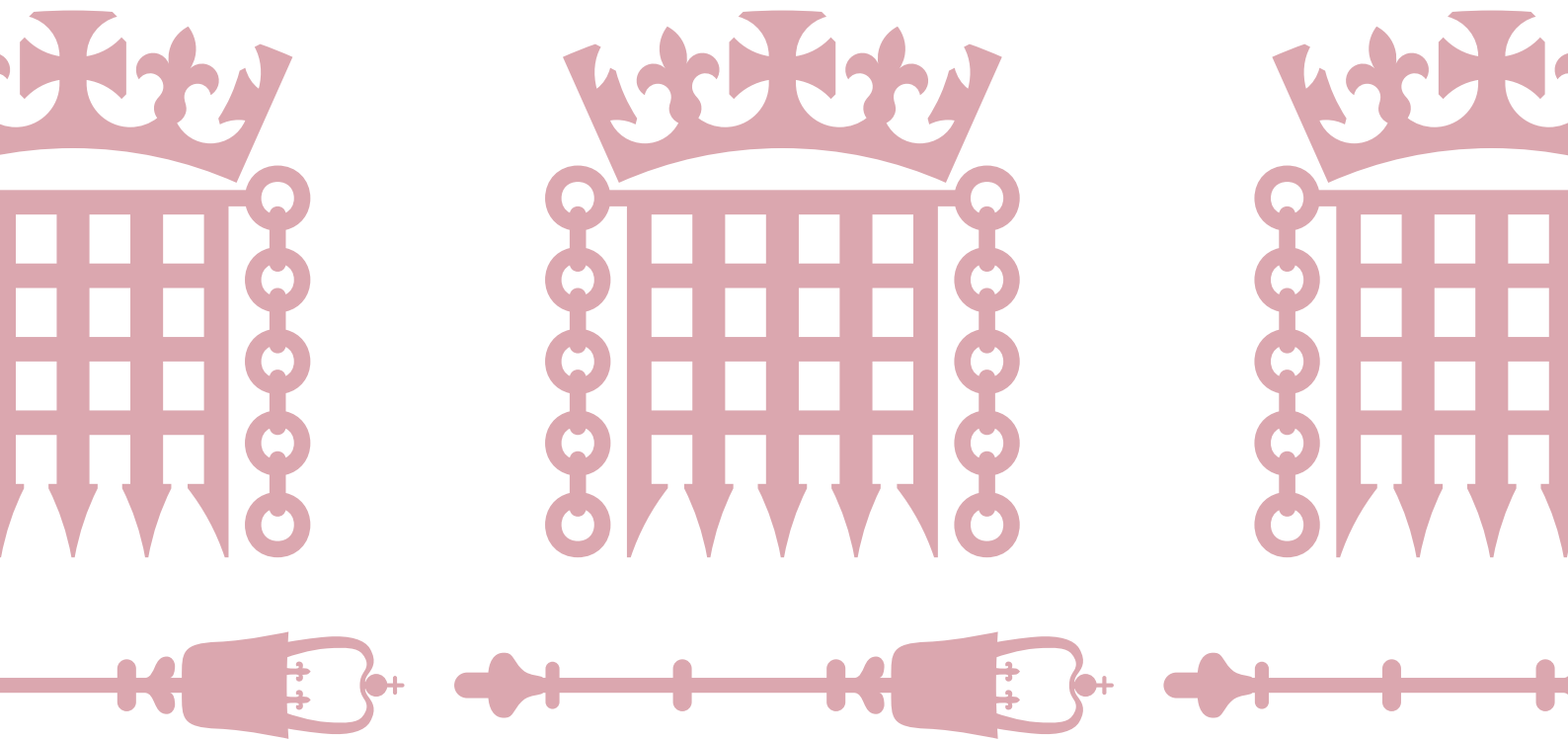


Lord Speaker



Third Report of the Lord Speaker's committee on the size of the House

Published on 8 July 2019

Introduction

1. Following the publication in October 2017 of our original report on reducing the size of the House of Lords, and the warm reception which it received from the House and others, we published a second report in October 2018. That follow-up report analysed the Prime Minister's response to our proposals, provided a summary of departures and appointments/elections in Year 1 of the scheme (8 June 2017 – 7 June 2018), and proposed benchmark figures for Year 2 (8 June 2018 – 7 June 2019). Both reports can be accessed at www.parliament.uk/size-of-house-committee.
2. Year 2 of the scheme has now ended, and substantial further inroads have been made in reducing the size of the House. The table below compares the size of the House on the day of the last General Election (the nominal start of our scheme) with its size at the end of Year 2, in both cases excluding those on leave of absence or disqualified as judges or MEPs. The 2017 numbers include those appointed in the delayed dissolution list of 18 May 2018 which, as we explained in our second report, we regard as a legacy issue.

| Group | Members on 8 June 2017 | Members on 7 June 2019 |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Con | 264 | 243 |
| Lab | 205 | 182 |
| LD | 102 | 96 |
| XB | 177 | 183 |
| Other | 50 | 48 |
| Bishops | 25 | 26 |
| TOTAL | 823 | 778 |

3. This report gives a detailed account of the progress achieved in Year 2 and sets benchmark figures for Year 3. It also draws the House's attention to the report of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) in the Commons, which endorsed our proposals.
4. There is of course another major reason for the committee to report now: the imminent change of Prime Minister. We are grateful for the support of the outgoing Prime Minister and in particular the restraint which she showed in making new appointments to the House. It is our hope that any resignation list of new peerages will be modest in size.
5. We also hope that the new Prime Minister will engage positively with our proposals and act fairly towards all parties, and we look forward to communicating with him in due course. A scheme which is non-statutory and based on co-operation can only succeed with the Prime Minister's backing, which will in turn encourage parties and groups to continue making progress in meeting their departure benchmarks.
6. The House has already made substantial progress towards implementing our proposals, and if that progress continues then it will have achieved an historic reform through self-regulation. If progress stalls, however, then the problem of an excessively large House will persist indefinitely, given the remote prospect of any legislation to tackle it.

Summary of departures and appointments/elections in Year 2

Departures

7. The table below shows the number of departures from each group in Year 2, judged against the benchmarks which we set in our last report.

| Group | Benchmark for Year 2 | Actual departures in Year 2 | | |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | | Retirements | Deaths | TOTAL |
| Con | 9.25 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Lab | 6.25 | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| LD | 4.50 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| XB | 6.25 | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Other | 2.25 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 28.50 | 13 | 13 | 26 |

8. Overall, therefore, the House very nearly reached its benchmark for the year. At group level, the Conservatives were slightly under their benchmark, the Liberal Democrats and Crossbenchers fell only just short of theirs, and Labour exceeded their benchmark. The table below shows how the House as a whole, and each group, is performing against the departure benchmarks for the whole Parliament (to 2022).

| Group | Benchmark for Parliament | Departures in Parliament to date | Remaining departures in Parliament |
|--------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Con | 48 | 18 | 30 |
| Lab | 38 | 21 | 17 |
| LD | 19 | 5 | 14 |
| XB | 35 | 16 | 19 |
| Other | 10 | 2 | 8 |
| TOTAL | 150 | 62 | 88 |

Appointments/elections

9. Only six new members joined the House in Year 2, of which five were elected hereditary peers (three Crossbenchers and two Conservatives) and one was a Conservative life peer appointed directly as a minister. Our proposals do not address the hereditary peer by-elections because they can only be changed through legislation. The House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) (Abolition of By-Elections) Bill, sponsored by Lord Grocott, is currently before the House.
10. The revised appointment figures for the Parliament are as follows. This table excludes the appointments contained in the delayed dissolution list of May 2018.

| Group | Entitlement to appointments over full 2017 Parliament | Eligible appointments/ elections in Parliament to date | Remaining entitlement to appointments |
|--------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Con | 26 | 6 | 20 |
| Lab | 23 | 0 | 23 |
| LD | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| XB | 17 | 12 | 5 |
| Other | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 75 | 18 | 57 |

11. The low level of appointments in Year 2 is to be welcomed, because it meant a bigger net reduction in the size of the House than there would otherwise have been.
12. We are hopeful that the new Prime Minister will continue his predecessor's commitment to allocate peerages "fairly, bearing in mind the results of the last general election and the leadership shown by each party" in bringing about departures from the House. New appointments to the House are essential to refresh the membership, but also to rebalance its composition in line with general election results over time. The Year 3 appointments benchmarks set out below show the figures we have in mind.

Proposed figures for Year 3

13. We have calculated benchmarks for Year 3 in the same way as we did for Year 2: by taking each group's remaining departures and appointments for the Parliament and dividing them by the number of years left in the Parliament if it runs to term (three). The benchmarks are as follows, rounded to the nearest whole number.

| Group | Benchmark departures for Year 3 (to nearest whole number) | Benchmark appointments for Year 3 (to nearest whole number) |
|--------------|---|---|
| Con | 10 | 7 |
| Lab | 6 | 8 |
| LD | 5 | 1 |
| XB | 6 | 2 |
| Other | 3 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 30 | 20 |

Appointments will need to be at or near these levels if the required number of departures is to be achieved.

PACAC Report

14. In November 2018, the House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) published a report entitled *A smaller House of Lords: The report of the Lord Speaker's committee on the size of the House* (HC 662).

15. PACAC's report endorsed in principle our proposals to reduce the size of the House on an "equal contribution" basis using a "two-out, one-in" formula, with the membership being capped at a maximum of 600, but it called for this to happen more quickly than we had envisaged. The Committee also supported our formula for new appointments based on general election results. PACAC concluded that our proposal of 15-year fixed terms for new members was "desirable but not essential", emphasising that further consideration of the term limit should not delay implementation of our proposed cap or appointment formula. Reflecting on our second report, PACAC said it was encouraged by the figures for Year 1 which it thought supported its view that our proposals could succeed and presented "an opportunity which must not be missed".

Conclusion

16. **We welcome the continued progress which the House made during Year 2 in reducing its size, and we urge all groups to do their utmost to meet the Year 3 benchmarks which we have set out in this report. Continued progress will depend on the House having confidence that the new Prime Minister will over time appoint new members to reflect election results and the performance of the groups in meeting their departure benchmarks.**
17. **We hope that the new Prime Minister will take the same constructive approach to our work as his predecessor did, recognising the expressed determination of members on all sides of the House to make progress towards a membership capped at 600. We will continue to promote this key aim at every opportunity, whilst also ensuring that the new Prime Minister does not lose sight of our more far-reaching proposals for fixed terms.**