



Procedure Committee

Oral evidence: Written Parliamentary Questions, HC 1526

Wednesday 15 April 2026

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Cat Smith (Chair); James Asser; Bambos Charalambous; Sir Christopher Chope; Tracy Gilbert; Gurinder Singh Josan; Katrina Murray; Lee Pitcher; Michael Wheeler.

Questions 1-21

Witnesses

I: Alex Burghart MP, Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, His Majesty's Official Opposition; Wendy Chamberlain MP, Chief Whip, Liberal Democrats.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [HM Official Opposition \(WRP 14\)](#)



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Alex Burghart and Wendy Chamberlain.

Chair: Good afternoon to you both and welcome to this meeting of the Procedure Committee. This is the first public oral evidence session of our inquiry into written parliamentary questions, or WPQs for short, as I expect we will be using. They are an important tool for MPs in raising matters of public interest and in dealing with much of their constituency work. They allow MPs to ask questions of Government Departments and to receive a comprehensive answer in a timely manner, and are an important privilege afforded to MPs.

Today, we are very grateful to our witnesses for coming forward to give us views from His Majesty's official Opposition and the Liberal Democrat Front Bench on the workings of the WPQ system. Before we begin, could I ask you to introduce yourselves formally for the record?

Wendy Chamberlain: I am Wendy Chamberlain. I am the Member of Parliament for North East Fife, and I have served as the Liberal Democrat Chief Whip since September 2020.

Alex Burghart: I am Alex Burghart. I am the Conservative Member of Parliament for Brentwood and Ongar, and I am the shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Q1 **Chair:** Thank you both for that. As is traditional for the Chair, I am going to start with the first question. Can you outline how you and your colleagues use WPQs as part of your work on the Opposition Front Benches? What value do WPQs add to the work that you do?

Alex Burghart: Thank you very much for the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee. I am grateful to you all for doing this inquiry, because, as I am sure we will uncover over this session, there are necessary improvements that can be made to the way things work. As we all know, written parliamentary questions are a fundamental tool in the toolkit of any MP who is trying to hold the Executive to account.

As you would expect, we use parliamentary questions as a way of trying to get the Government to tell us what their policy is, what they are doing and what they are spending public money on. We also use them to get the Government to state their position when you have a new Minister, a new Secretary of State or, over the past nearly two years, a new Government, to understand what the Government's thinking and priorities are. Primarily, we use them to get into how Government money is spent and the actions that Government Ministers have taken.

Wendy Chamberlain: Thank you very much. I will try to limit my remarks as much as possible to the role of Front Benchers in the third party, given I am aware that you have invited Back-Bench Members to come and talk about this.



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To follow on from what Alex said, one of the things about written parliamentary questions is that they are the guaranteed way of getting a response. If you are not selected in the ballot for a departmental question, you are bobbing or trying to get in and get attention, and then there are ballots when you are applying for debates, whereas a written parliamentary question is something you will get an answer and a response to. It is such an essential part of the toolkit.

If I think about why we use them as a Front-Bench team, legitimate inquiry is the most obvious thing. They scrutinise the Government, but the particular focus of the written parliamentary questions that our Front-Bench team put in is to get information. They are about scrutinising cost and value for money and, I will be honest, they are about driving forward parliamentary campaigns as well. Particularly, if you have an issue under your portfolio that you are championing that aligns with your party policy, it is an obvious thing to do.

The other reason why we use them is that not only are you guaranteed a response, but it is usually a quicker response than writing to a Minister, because we often wait potentially several weeks for that. Those are the main reasons that we utilise WPQs, and I do not think that has changed, even if the methodology for inputting them has changed.

Q2 Bambos Charalambous: Do you think that the current role of Members' staff regarding WPQs, which includes submitting WPQs via MemberHub, is appropriate?

Wendy Chamberlain: Yes, would be the short answer from me, if I think about it. It is also important that, within MemberHub, you are ultimately responsible as the Member. There are different levels within MemberHub in terms of staff, who is appropriate and at what appropriate level they input. Talking about myself as an individual MP, my senior researcher has permission across MemberHub; other members of staff may not. The reality is that the day-to-day workings of an MP mean that unless you are inputting them directly to the Table Office in person, it is essential that MemberHub can be utilised by staff.

Alex Burghart: I agree with what Wendy said.

Q3 Bambos Charalambous: As a follow-up, do you think that it is appropriate for Members to submit WPQs on behalf of charities, lobby groups or party headquarters?

Alex Burghart: As a Member of Parliament and as a Member of the Front Bench, you obviously have people within the party who are sometimes not in Parliament who suggest parliamentary questions for you to ask, but any question I ask is my question. It will always go through the filter of what my team and I are doing. It would be quite difficult to know where to draw the line beyond that. Wendy, what do you think?

Wendy Chamberlain: I think exactly the same. Clearly, third sector or other organisations see that opportunity to suggest written parliamentary questions as a key part of the engagement they have with



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parliamentarians. It is then the responsibility of the parliamentarian to ensure that that is not just submitted without thought or consideration of what they believe as individuals.

Q4 **Tracy Gilbert:** To your knowledge, do you or other Members of your party use FOI requests in support of their parliamentary work?

Alex Burghart: We certainly do. This is a big topic. As you may have seen in my submission, this is a big issue that we are concerned with. It is very useful to have parliamentary questions and the FOI regime, but increasingly we are finding with some Government Departments that we do not get answers through parliamentary questions, only to subsequently get answers through an FOI.

That feels wrong. It should not be the case that the Government refuse to answer questions from an elected Member of Parliament and stonewall them—in some cases, as you will have seen from my evidence, repeatedly—and only when it is presented as a freedom of information request realise that they have to give up the information and do so.

That makes it feel as though, in this instance, that Members of Parliament are getting a worse service than everybody else. If you do not have access to parliamentary questions, you go straight to FOI, which means you are meant to get your response within 28 days. Whereas if you are a Member of Parliament, you might go round the PQ circuit repeatedly for several weeks before saying, “Blow it, I’m going to have to put in an FOI to get the information.”

I asked Darren Jones, my opposite number, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, about this in the House on 22 January. I asked him, speaking for the Cabinet Office, whether he thought it was acceptable. To be fair to him, he said, “No, it isn’t acceptable and I will look into it.” Since then, nothing has changed, but I think Ministers instinctively know this is wrong. We ought to be in a position where parliamentary questions are treated at least in exactly the same vein as FOI.

Wendy Chamberlain: I agree with a lot of what Alex said. Any of us who sit in the Chamber for any length of time will have heard a point of order being made by an individual Member in relation to response rates from Departments in terms of letters and written parliamentary questions. I can certainly see circumstances where I have used written parliamentary questions to get some initial information that I have potentially followed up with an FOI, but there is definitely a question about why the written parliamentary question did not provide that information in the first place.

I have certainly had feedback from colleagues—this may be one reason that the number of WPQs has increased—that if a Member submits a number of written parliamentary questions to elicit short answers, they will get more information than trying to submit one question that is requesting a longer response.

There is also that piece around education, which includes staff as well. Sometimes there is value in going to the Commons Library in the first



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instance for statistics you might be looking for. That is certainly something that should be given consideration. Why would we go to written parliamentary questions first? We would go there because we would expect it to be more timely, particularly if we had submitted named day questions, as opposed to the timescales Alex referred to.

I would certainly say, from my Front Benchers' perspective, we are submitting more FOIs, largely as a result of poor written parliamentary question responses. There is definitely a correlation with those Departments that seem to receive a greater amount of WPQs, for example, the Department of Health and Social Care.

Alex Burghart: Building on what Wendy just said, if we take a step back and look at how the House expects Ministers to behave, looking in "Erskine May", the ministerial code and the Nolan principles, there is a very clear duty to be open and accountable. Indeed, it is explicit in the ministerial code, in "Erskine May" and from a 1997 resolution of the House that Government should withhold information only when there is a public interest reason to do so. We totally understand that that public interest test should exist. If the Government say, "We are not obliged to tell you about formulation of policy," "This is sub judice," or "This is subject to legal professional privilege," that is fair enough. All those things are acceptable.

What is not acceptable is when the Government basically say, "We don't want to tell you," "We don't regularly publish this," or "We have no plans to publish it," and they do not give that public interest reason. That is very clearly outwith the expectations of the House set down in "Erskine May", the expectation on Ministers in the ministerial code, and the Nolan principles. It would not be a difficult thing to adjust.

It would not be a difficult thing for Ministers to say, "You can't have this information and this is why we think you can't." Although often the non-answers one gets are not on particularly important issues, it is in contempt of the House. It is not right that Members should ask for the release of information and for the Government to refuse just because they feel like refusing.

Wendy Chamberlain: Alex has pulled out a good point. Bambos, you asked a question about staff and access to MemberHub in relation to asking the questions, but I think what Alex was talking about is the responsibility of the Minister in relation to the response. I can think of a very good example from just a few weeks ago. I have a fishing community in my constituency, and they had been raising concerns about rising fuel costs. We submitted a written parliamentary question to both DEFRA and the Energy Department. The response from the Energy Department basically talked about fuel costs for drivers, which was a completely incorrect response. It should have said, "The responding Department should be DEFRA. You should direct your question to there." That did not happen, and a number of the fishing press picked up that response and it did not look very good for the Government.



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Alex Burghart: We had a case yesterday. We have been asking questions about how money was spent on the refurbishment of Downing Street. They were repeated questions over probably a five-month period saying, "Here's the budget. We can see it has been spent. What has it been spent on?" We got stonewalled repeatedly, and then we put in an FOI request, and the detail has now been published. All of that time—time in the Table Office and in Government Department—is unnecessarily wasted. It should be a simple thing. There is no public interest test to stop it, as we now know because of the FOI, so just release it. Stop playing cat and mouse and just make things available.

We know that there is a lot of pressure on the Table Office. When you see things like this, you realise that if you submit 10 questions and nine of them receive a non-answer, it encourages you to dig deeper, thinking that they are trying to hide something. The Government are greatly amplifying the work that the Opposition, the House authorities and certain Members in their Departments need to do. It is not necessary.

Chair: I remind witnesses that, although I know there are strong feelings, we need to urge caution when it comes to accusations of contempt. The rules in Select Committee are the same as in the Chamber on that. Just a gentle reminder there.

Q5 **Lee Pitcher:** Alex, I do not want to make you repeat yourself, so only mention something if it is in addition. In your submission, you expressed a number of concerns about the Government's approach to WPQ responses and their approach to FOI responses. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about?

Alex Burghart: I will say this now, but it might be relevant to other things that we will talk about later. There is clear disparity in the regimes in that with an FOI there is a clear appeals process. MPs do not have the appeals process if the Government are clearly not fulfilling their obligations to the House. I have no simple solution to that off the top of my head, but I would be interested in the Committee's thoughts about how that might be treated, particularly in the most egregious examples. Indeed, I wonder whether there would be a role for the Procedure Committee itself.

Q6 **Lee Pitcher:** Wendy, have you and other Liberal Democrat MPs had a similar experience?

Wendy Chamberlain: There is an issue with the quality of responses. There is the old saying, "Ask a stupid question, get a stupid answer," so there is always that piece where there is a responsibility on Members. It is not unreasonable to point out that more than half of the House is new, so we are all learning. If your Committee report looks at the different options that are available to Members and helps them consider where their inquiry might best go in the first instance, I do not think that would be a bad thing. I would certainly say that, from speaking to colleagues, we are in a position where more WPQs are being submitted because the quality of responses is not meeting the requirement that we need and would expect as an Opposition party.



Q7 Sir Christopher Chope: Can I ask you both whether you use named day WPQs in a different way from ordinary WPQs, and what criteria you apply?

Alex Burghart: Obviously, there are times when one just wants an answer quickly—because perhaps there is a parliamentary debate coming up, or you have got oral questions or whatever. One is to hit a deadline.

I certainly use named day parliamentary questions when I think I am going to have to wait a very long time for an answer. I know that a number of colleagues feel the same way. The open-endedness of ordinary questions, particularly with certain Departments, means that you think, “Well, I better start with a named day question, otherwise I will be waiting until the cows come home.” Maybe if there was a limit on the time expected for ordinary questions, one might be more tempted to use them more often. Increasingly, one reaches for named day questions so as to not be pushed into the ever after.

Wendy Chamberlain: I concur with the majority of what Alex said, other than the fact that I encourage colleagues to be mindful of their use of named day questions and whether it is to elicit an urgent response—which can potentially be for what is happening out there—and be mindful of the need for that, as well as the deadlines that Alex refers to. The reality is that those named day questions go to the front of the queue and the ordinary questions that colleagues are still waiting for a response on will just take longer.

I do not want to suggest that we get into a position where named day questions become the default. We should encourage colleagues to think about them as the expectation rather than the rule, but some of the challenges that we have both found mean that there is probably an increasing number of named day questions emerging. Again, I have sat in the Chamber at times where people have made points of order about failures to respond within the timescale for named day questions as well. Just because it has a deadline set, it does not mean that that is met either, in a number of circumstances.

Q8 Sir Christopher Chope: One of the distinctions between those two sorts of questions is that if you fail to answer a named day question by the specified date, then you provide a holding answer. It always used to be that when you got your final answer, there would be a reference to the date of the holding answer supplied. In a sense that was a bit of a deterrent for delay. I am looking specifically—and keeping this topical—at today’s bulletin.

There were written questions answered yesterday. One of them was from Alex Burghart, question 115550. On a quick glance, it appears that, since that question, about 9,000 other questions have been asked, so it must have been asked quite a long time ago. Can you remember whether it was a named day question or an ordinary one?

Alex Burghart: Off the top of my head, Sir Christopher, I do not remember. I am very happy to go away and find out for you.



Q9 **Sir Christopher Chope:** Perhaps I can jog your memory. The question was: "To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards' review into Labour Together is being assisted by the Propriety and Ethics Team". On the face of it, that seems a very straightforward question with a yes or no answer.

Alex Burghart: I do not wish to mislead the Committee, but I imagine that was a named day question because, obviously, we had a number of debates in the Chamber that touched on Labour Together and the potential conflict of interest within the propriety and ethics team. I would need to check, but I imagine that I would have seen that as an urgent question.

Q10 **Sir Christopher Chope:** You probably will not need me to point out that you did not get an answer to that question in the end. Instead of yes or no, the answer extended to seven lines. If you read them through, you can see that there is no answer to the question at all, so it may be that you will have to ask further questions.

Another example from the same bulletin is a question that our colleague Mike Wood put down at about the same time, probably weeks ago: "To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Prime Minister's ministerial direction of 16 February 2026, what the value of the special severance payment was." It was a straightforward question, and an obviously much delayed answer came out yesterday: "Details of any payments made to the previous Cabinet Secretary will be published in the Cabinet Office annual report and accounts". I do not understand why they could not give a straight answer to that question.

Alex Burghart: Neither of us can understand why we would not get a straight answer to that, particularly because I suspect very strongly, based on previous precedent, that if we were to make a freedom of information request for that information, we would receive an answer within 28 days. Having received another non-answer, that is probably what we will do.

It is a very good illustration of what we were talking about a moment ago: the Government deciding that they will not answer questions through the parliamentary question route, only to reveal information through FOI. The danger is that we reach a point where Members of Parliament think, "I might as well go straight for FOI." That would be unnecessary and a bit of a sadness.

Q11 **Sir Christopher Chope:** My final question is this. Do you both think that it would be desirable to reintroduce the practice of identifying when a holding answer was given to a named day question?

Alex Burghart: Yes, absolutely.

Wendy Chamberlain: Yes, of course, because that is how it is supposed to be.

Q12 **Michael Wheeler:** You both alluded to the issue and potential reasons for it, but we have obviously seen a significant increase in the total number of WPQs submitted in this parliamentary Session compared with recent



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Sessions. I invite you to go a little further on what you think the reasons behind that are.

Alex Burghart: As you touched on, when you get poor answers, it encourages you to try again because you believe that the Government are hiding something. When we get answers of the sort that Christopher has just raised, we seek more information, so it generates more work.

Also, at the start of a Parliament, when you have new Ministers, new Secretaries of State, a new Government, new policies and an evolving picture, it is natural that a lot of questions will be put down because there are many unknowns. The reason we have this means of public scrutiny is so that we can find out what the Government think and what they are doing.

Wendy Chamberlain: I broadly agree with Alex. The only other interesting point is that we have obviously seen a marked decrease in the number of SNP MPs in this new Session. From a straightforward perspective, they do not engage with devolved legislation, so they would not submit written parliamentary questions to a number of Departments. Now, frankly, we have an increased number of Liberal Democrats, who are all determined to show what hard-working constituency MPs we are, so I can imagine that a good number of written parliamentary questions come from our enlarged group.

Q13 **Michael Wheeler:** To press a little further, I accept that those might be part of it, but we are looking at a comparison over time. In this Session, we saw an uptick in WPQs as we got into it, rather than at the beginning, which might run counter to the point about asking questions of the new Government. I also would gently push the view that Governments of any colour might try to be obfuscatory, whether they should be or not, but are you saying to the Committee that you think that this Government in particular, compared with recent ones, give more non-answers, or are other factors at play potentially in the uptick—the significant increase of numbers in WPQs that we have seen?

Alex Burghart: I would raise two things about what you have just said. After a kind of pause at the start, I think that the uptick is just representative of the fact that we had a huge number of new MPs in this Parliament who probably—I know from when I was new—took a little time to work out what mechanisms were useful to them in the pursuit of their parliamentary duties. Having become accustomed to that, they could start to play in this space. That is explicable.

Without wishing to make too many party political points, whenever we have a Government that is beset by controversy, that generates a lot of work, and gives the Opposition an opportunity to ask a lot of questions and to try to understand what mistakes might have been made and to expose Government failings. That will inevitably play a part in it as well.

Wendy Chamberlain: I apologise to the Committee, as I have not looked at the number of written parliamentary questions in the '17-19 Parliament, but in the '19-24 Parliament, I suggest that covid probably played a big



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role, in that that was such a huge part of it. I was elected in December 2019, and I can honestly say that written parliamentary questions were not a factor in my decision making, beyond trying to get the support needed for my constituents at the early stages. That would definitely have been a factor for me. I am interested to see what the '17-19 stats look like in that regard. I think that would be a factor.

Also, the MemberHub is, in parliamentary terms, relatively new—everything is relatively new in parliamentary terms—but there is no doubt that increases in technology make submitting questions much easier than it was historically. Therefore, it is not surprising that we have seen an increase in this Parliament. Frankly, I think we will continue to see increases in subsequent Parliaments as well. I suppose that is one of the reasons why the Committee is looking at this and at what is appropriate.

Q14 Katrina Murray: We have heard anecdotal evidence of AI being used to draft WPQs. In your view, first, should it be? Secondly, does the system need to adapt to the growth of AI?

Alex Burghart: I think that AI is increasingly going to be used in work and life, across the board. The key thing, obviously, is that you have a Member who owns what the question is. Sometimes a suggested question might be drafted by a researcher, and sometimes in the future it might be drafted by AI, but ultimately, if I ask a question, it is my question and I am responsible for it.

The same thing is true on the Government side. If the Government decide that they want to use AI to draft answers to questions, I have no particular problem with that, provided that we do not get to a position a few months down the line when a Minister says, "Well, it wasn't me, guv; it was AI. So it's not my fault that it's a bad or misleading answer." You can use these tools or you can use people to help you, but ultimately a person has to be responsible for the questions that are asked and the responses that are given. We must not get away from that.

Wendy Chamberlain: Katrina, in your question, you mentioned evidence, so I suppose I am interested to know whether MPs would say that they had utilised AI. As you can imagine, in preparation for this session, I asked both Front Benchers and Back-Bench colleagues. Certainly no one from the Front-Bench team is using AI for drafting, and the response I got from one of my Back Benchers was, "It would take longer to write the prompt required to table the written parliamentary question than it would to just write the parliamentary question." There are a variety of factors, as we have already touched on, responsible for the increase in numbers, but I am not convinced that AI is a part of that.

Q15 James Asser: The Government, in their written evidence, have suggested or put forward that consideration could be given to limiting the number of WPQ submissions that could be made, citing the cost to taxpayers. Do you agree? What are your thoughts on that?

Alex Burghart: No, I don't agree.



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James Asser: I had a feeling you might not.

Alex Burghart: Particularly in the context of receiving large numbers of inadequate responses, I could see that the Government might well say, “We will put a limit, and then we will fill up that limit with inadequate answers.” That would significantly reduce the level of scrutiny that the Executive would receive, so I would be quite strongly against that.

Wendy Chamberlain: I largely share Alex’s view in that I think the current limits are appropriate. If colleagues want to submit more, there are ways to do that in person at the Table Office, so they can go and do that. I have already touched on this in my evidence, but colleagues are potentially thinking, “I will submit multiple short questions to elicit short answers, rather than putting a long one.” If we want to change that culture that is developing, we need to have better responses in relation to it.

The only other thing I would say, as I said to Sir Christopher, is that we need to make sure that the balance between named day questions and written questions is appropriate overall, because we don’t want that system—to be misused would be the wrong word—to cause frustration to build, where that becomes the default option rather than PQs generally.

Q16 **Chair:** Until recently, the number of WPQs submitted in a recess period was significantly lower than what was tabled when the House was sitting. That trend is changing at the moment. Currently, Members can submit an unlimited number of WPQs during a recess, whereas on MemberHub, during sitting days it is obviously limited to 20, of which five can be named day. What is the value of submitting WPQs during a recess period?

Alex Burghart: Research does not stop because it is recess or because you are in your constituency. There is great value in being able to continue to put down questions, even if they are not submitted to Departments until the House returns, so I think that is helpful. When we are here, there is obviously a limit on how many questions you can table electronically, but as Wendy says you can physically go into the Table Office and put in your additional questions. You cannot do that easily if you are in Essex, so I think the way the system works is fair in that regard.

Wendy Chamberlain: At a very basic level, why would I submit questions during recess? Usually it would be because the work that is associated with the questions I would want to ask comes across my desk in that period, and sometimes that is the opportunity when staff, particularly the staff based here, have the opportunity to draw a bit of breath, as we all do, because we are not in the middle of sitting days. I would need to be convinced that it had increased so markedly that it was a problem before I would feel that things needed to change.

Q17 **Chair:** Following up on your responses to that, because there is an unlimited number that Members can submit on MemberHub electronically—remotely, if you will—during a recess, would you support that being the same as it is when the House is sitting, or potentially even



lower?

Alex Burghart: I would not because, as I say, when the House is sitting you have an alternative, which is to come in in person and speak to the Table Office. You just do not have that if you represent a seat in Scotland or even further afield, so it makes sense that the calibration is slightly different during recess.

Wendy Chamberlain: I am probably of a similar view. I accept that the evidence says that the numbers are increasing, but I suppose that what we need to know—we have not touched on this so far—is House resource in terms of responding from the Table Office and so on. Unless the Committee were persuaded that that is an issue from a resourcing perspective with the Table Office, I would not feel the need to change it.

Q18 **Lee Pitcher:** I will come to you first this time, Wendy, if that is okay. On Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, WPQs submitted via MemberHub up to 6.30 pm will be tabled on the same day. What impact, if any, would you envisage for Members if the cut-off time for electronic tabling were earlier in the day?

Wendy Chamberlain: The only thing that that would impact is named day questions, as it would extend the named day question by one. I personally don't feel too strongly about that. I suppose my question would again be about the reasoning for that. If it is down to the Table Office and resource, I would be open to that.

Alex Burghart: Just to probe that, why do you ask the question? What would be the driver for change?

Q19 **Lee Pitcher:** It is more that we just want to understand what the options might be going forward and whether, based on the data and the analysis that we have, that is something we would consider.

Alex Burghart: I haven't considered this one deeply. One should look at the hours of the House. It is certainly conceivable that something might be said in Parliament that a Member then wants to dig into. On Mondays, we are here till 10 pm, on Tuesdays till 7 pm and so on. I would not want us to end up in the position where, as Wendy says, you could not start the named day process when significant things are going on in the Chamber.

Lee Pitcher: Understood.

Q20 **Chair:** I don't know whether this helps our witnesses to answer differently, but this is on MemberHub: "Members can still table a hard copy in the Table Office until the rise of the House". Does that change anyone's answer? I just wanted to make you aware of that.

Wendy Chamberlain: Coming back to the fact that more than half of the House is new, I would ask whether colleagues are actually aware of that. It is probably one of those things that you don't know until you need to ask the question to find out, so that is an interesting point.



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I am very conscious that when we have an Opposition day coming up, we are back and forward with the Table Office landing our motion, and other parties are looking at amendments that they might table. I am conscious of the pressures on the Table Office at the end of the day, so in some respects I wouldn't want to encourage too much of that going to the Table Office after the cut-off date for MemberHub. We have that option as Members, and we should utilise it judiciously and be conscious of the overall business of the House.

Q21 Bambos Charalambous: As you both know, the Table Office checks and, where necessary, sub-edits WPQs under the authority of the Speaker and in line with the set of rules set out in "Erskine May". The rules state that questions must have a factual basis and must be within ministerial responsibilities. They must not be about matters that are sub judice and must not be about matters where there is a Government block due to the Government declining previously to answer some of the questions. Do you think the rules of order for WPQs remain appropriate?

Wendy Chamberlain: I don't know if I can answer the question in terms of appropriateness, but it is always good to review these things on a regular basis. I have certainly picked up from Members—both Front Benchers and Back Benchers—that it feels that there is an increased number of cardings by the Table Office. That is more for oral questions, if I am honest. Obviously, you are working to a deadline for oral questions—*[Interruption.]*

Chair: Order. Apologies for interrupting, but the Division bell is ringing. Thank you so much for your evidence so far. Unfortunately, we will have to adjourn today's evidence session due to the Divisions in the House. Our witnesses have said that they will return to us at the same time next week, so we will put the remainder of our questions then.