



Error! document property name. Unknown property name.

Error! property name. Unknown property name.

document

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! document property name.

Unknown property name. Error! property name.

document

Page 1 of 6

Backbench Business Committee

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! Unknown document property name.

Representations: Backbench Debates

Tuesday 30 November 2021

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 30 November 2021.

Watch the meeting

Members present: Ian Mearns (Chair); Duncan Baker; Bob Blackman; Patricia Gibson; and Nigel Mills.

Questions 1 to 12

Representations

I: Wendy Chamberlain

II: Damian Collins



Error! document property name.

Error! Unknown property name.

document

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! Wendy Chamberlain document property name.

document

Page 2 of 6

property name.

Error! Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to the Backbench Business Committee. We have two applications in front of us this afternoon. The first is from Wendy Chamberlain—welcome, Wendy. Your application is on the subject of global vaccine access.

Error! Unknown document property name.

Wendy Chamberlain: Thank you, Chair. In the few days since I submitted this application last week, the issue of vaccine access has arguably become even more relevant. On the one hand, the WTO conference considering issues including vaccine access, which I referred to in my application, has been postponed, but the reason for that is the spread of the omicron variant and restrictions being placed on face-to-face meetings.

Instead of the debate being needed now because it will give parliamentarians the opportunity to discuss the outcomes of that conference, I would argue that it is needed now because we are seeing the inevitable outcome of a lack of global vaccine access through the arrival of new strains of covid-19. An emergency session of the WHO on this very issue is happening as we speak, which demonstrates both the urgency and importance of the issue.

A further development since I submitted my application this week is a letter sent by nursing unions around the world to the UN about the need to waive patents for covid vaccines and about the cost to life in developing nations. The WTO conference may have been postponed, but that issue also remains on the table. There is significant support for this application from across the House and the third sector. It is supported by the all-party parliamentary group on vaccines for all in Parliament and the Missing Medicines coalition of campaign groups. A number of members of the International Development Committee also support it.

As I mentioned in my application, the debate would arguably not be limited to the covid-19 pandemic and vaccines. Tomorrow is World AIDS Day, marking 40 years since the first case of AIDS. Covid-19 has devastated programmes responding to HIV, TB and malaria such as the Global Fund, which is supported by the UK Government. The result is that last year’s UN AIDS global HIV targets were missed.

It is vital that the subject is debated in the House and it is incredibly timely that it should take place during the month of World AIDS Day. At the very least, we know that the knock-on impact of new strains and travel restrictions will provide further difficulties when it comes to providing routine treatment and vaccinations. These are vital issues that ought to be debated by the House. I thank you for your consideration.



Error! document property name.

Error! Unknown property name.

document

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! document property name.

Chair: Thank you very much, Wendy. Pardon my ignorance, but what is the month? Is it December?

Page 3 of 6

Error! Unknown document property name.

Wendy Chamberlain: It would be December, yes—tomorrow is 1 December.

Error! Unknown document property name.

Q3 Chair: This is a run-of-the-mill thing. Your application is fine, but you seem to have only one Conservative name on it. Is there any chance of you getting some more?

Wendy Chamberlain: I can certainly try to get some more in the timescales. Obviously, I have one supporting Conservative Member, to ensure balance in the debate. Actually, I don't think this topic necessarily sits along party lines. The support from International Development Committee members shows that there is a cross-party interest.

Chair: Absolutely, and you have a good range of other parties; it is just the shortage of people on the Government side. If you could get some more names, that would be really useful.

Q4 Bob Blackman: Obviously, as the Chair has said we need to see a balanced debate with probably six or seven Government-side colleagues. The only chance of getting this debated before Christmas would be on the last day—16 December, probably in Westminster Hall. Would that be acceptable to you?

Wendy Chamberlain: It would. It is important that we have the debate rather than kicking it on, given the very live situation that we are seeing with omicron as well.

Chair: Wendy, thank you very much indeed.

Wendy Chamberlain: So the next steps are for me to go and find those other names for the application.

Chair: And feed them into the Clerks, please. That would be very good of you. It is a live application—it is in, so from that perspective it can be added to. Okay?

Wendy Chamberlain: Lovely—thank you very much.

Damian Collins made representations.

Q5 Chair: Next up we have Mr Damian Collins, whose application is about a report of the Joint Committee on the draft online safety Bill. Damian, welcome—make yourself comfortable and get a breath. In your own time, why would you like a debate on the report of the Joint Committee on the draft online safety Bill?



Error! document property name.

Error! Unknown property name.

document

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! document property name.

Damian Collins: Thank you. I am Chair of the Joint Committee, and this is the formal process of prelegislative scrutiny of the draft online safety Bill. This has been an inquiry and a report will be published shortly, based on the inquiry of the members of the Joint Committee from the Lords and Commons.

Error! Unknown property name.

document

Page 4 of 6

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! Unknown document property name.

The online safety Bill is obviously a much anticipated piece of legislation about which there has already been a lot of debate and discussion within Parliament. The formal prelegislative scrutiny report is an important document for the House to consider. Committee members feel that both in the Lords and the Commons we want to create an opportunity as soon as possible after the report is published so that Members have a chance to debate it when the Government are considering their response.

The Government say that they expect to introduce the Bill for Second Reading in this Session. The Committee therefore thinks that it is important to give the House a chance to have a say on the report that we publish.

Q6 Chair: Is it time sensitive?

Damian Collins: We have to agree the report by 10 December—next Friday—and it will be published around that time. It might be published at the end of next week, or at the beginning of the final sitting week. Realistically, to give Members a chance to read the report, which is quite lengthy, we would like a debate as soon as possible after that. Obviously, we go into recess slightly earlier this year. What we would really like is a Chamber debate by the earliest date we could secure in January.

Chair: That is useful to know—thank you very much indeed.

Q7 Bob Blackman: There are two options, and it sounds as if your application has the right balance. How wedded are you to having the debate in the Chamber, as opposed to Westminster Hall?

Damian Collins: Normally when I am asked that question in this Committee I am pretty flexible, but this is a major report commissioned by the Government involving a Joint Committee. We do not have Joint Committees very often—it is not as if it is a standard procedure. Normally we have them only once or twice in a Parliament, usually for Bills that are considered to be important new areas of law.

There have been Westminster Hall and Adjournment debates on aspects of this issue for a long time. I feel that if it is going to be done at all, it should be done as a Chamber debate.

Q8 Bob Blackman: The only reason I say that is that you could get a guaranteed three-hour debate in Westminster Hall, but if it is the



Error! document property name.

Error! Unknown property name.

document

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! document property name.

Chamber you would be lucky to get more than two hours.

Error! Unknown property name.

document

Page 5 of 6

Error! document property name.

Error! Unknown document property name.

Damian Collins: I understand that—the point is well made—but the Lords will try to get a debate of some sort in their Chamber using their mechanisms. The stature of the report suggests that the debate should be in the main Chamber, rather than in Westminster Hall.

Error! Unknown document property name.

Bob Blackman: Okay.

Q9 **Chair:** You have set out your stall, Damian. You would like a debate as soon as possible after the Christmas recess.

Damian Collins: Yes. As you know, the Government have not committed to a date to respond to the report. Even if it was not the first week back, during that period in, say, January, when they are considering the report before they respond to it, it would be good to allow Members a chance to have their say.

Q10 **Chair:** I would think that the Government would take their full time to respond to the report, and it would be four to six weeks minimum.

Damian Collins: Yes, I think that is right.

Q11 **Chair:** And you have to add the recess, so I would suggest that at the earliest it would be before the end of January when the Government make their response.

Damian Collins: I agree. If you are already committed for the first week back, it would not matter if it was a week or so after that.

Q12 **Bob Blackman:** Another consideration is that almost certainly 6 January will be a Backbench Business day, so there is almost a guarantee that we could, if you wanted 6 January, allocate that.

Chair: I think that that is a good possibility, just from the jungle drums that I have heard.

Damian Collins: That would be great.

Chair: Damian, thank you very much. I hope that I am not the first person to say this, but I certainly will not be the last. I wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Damian Collins: Thank you. You are the first this year—much appreciated.

Nigel Mills: It's not even December yet!

Chair: Not for another few hours. Thanks a lot, Damian, that is very much appreciated.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! Unknown property name.

document

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! Unknown document property name.

That brings to a conclusion applications for this afternoon. We will now go into private session.

Error! Unknown property name.

document

Page 6 of 6

Error! Unknown document property name.

Error! Unknown document property name.