



Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Appointment of the UK's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, HC 658

Wednesday 16 December 2015

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Members present: Mr Bernard Jenkin (Chair); Ronnie Cowan; Oliver Dowden; Paul Flynn; Kate Hoey; Kelvin Hopkins; Mr David Jones; Gerald Jones; Mr Andrew Turner.

Questions 1-54

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP**, Leader of the House of Commons, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: May I welcome our witness to this one-off session about the manner in which the House of Commons appoints its delegation to the Council of Europe? Could I ask the Leader of the House to identify himself for the record, please?

Chris Grayling: I am Chris Grayling, and I am Leader of the House of Commons.

Q2 Chair: We do not think we will need to detain you for very long, and, if your answers are short, and our questions are short, it need not be very long at all.

Chris Grayling: Fine.

Chair: If you are going on for too long or the questions are going on for too long, I will shorten them.

Chris Grayling: You are very kind.

Q3 Kelvin Hopkins: This is a factual question. How is the UK delegation to PACE selected at present, and do the different parties vary in their approach?

Chris Grayling: I can't answer for the Scottish Nationalists, because I don't know. From a Conservative Party point of view, it is an appointment made in consultation with the Prime Minister. From the Labour Party's point of view, there is a theoretical election—albeit not

actually an election, because only the requisite number of nominations were received, but that is an election carried out within the Labour Party, rather than across the House.

Kelvin Hopkins: I would like to confirm whether that has always been so for the Labour Party, and my colleague Mr Flynn, who is a member, will know.

Paul Flynn: There are regular elections, including for replacements. It just so happened that this time it was the exact number of nominations to the places available, but the election process goes on and the head of the delegation, Lord Prescott, was elected as the Labour leader.

Q4 Mr Jones: I suppose I should declare an interest as an appointed member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

Nevertheless, we are advised that the United Kingdom is unique in appointing its members in this way—in other words, no democratic process at all. Do you know why the British delegation is appointed, rather than elected?

Chris Grayling: I am not aware that we are unique, in that rule 25 of the arrangements—I have it here—specifically says, “The Consultative Parliamentary Assembly shall consist of Representatives of each Member, elected by its Parliament from among the members thereof, or appointed from among the members of that Parliament”, so both are provided for in the arrangements. I certainly am not aware that all the members of the Parliaments elect their representative of the consultative group.

Q5 Mr Jones: That was not quite what I said. We are advised that the United Kingdom is unique in having its delegation appointed. There are various methods of selecting members of other delegations, but we are the only one that is wholly appointed. Is this a quirk of history or do you know why this should be the case?

Chris Grayling: I cannot answer for other countries. All I do know is that appointment is specifically provided for in the articles that established the Assembly of the Council of Europe and, in appointment terms, given the fact that there is a requirement to balance by political party as well as, I should say, by gender, it is difficult to see how you can appoint if the appointment is not done by the political parties, because who else would provide that appropriate mix?

Q6 Chair: In a survey provided to us by the Library, conducted by ECPRD in June 2014—which I think is a parliamentary research service across Europe—as far as I can see, ours is the only delegation where it says, “Delegations are formally appointed by the Prime Minister”. There is no other group that has that method of appointment.

Chris Grayling: Of course, that may be a misunderstanding. They may be formally appointed by the Prime Minister—indeed, now the nomination passes through the Speaker. That is a pure formality. The nominations, the appointments, come from the political parties however they choose to do so, the Prime Minister cannot decide that Mr Flynn is or is not a member of the delegation. It is a matter for the political parties. The Prime Minister is simply the person who holds the position, is the person who tables the

statement to Parliament to say, “These are the people who have been nominated”. It is also now for the Speaker—and has been since 2010—to formally notify the Council of Europe who the members are.

Q7 Chair: We have established that the Labour Party elect their nominated members. I understand that the SNP also elects their nominated members. I would imagine that the Liberal Democrats used to elect their nominated members. In our system the Chief Whip decides who it would be expedient upon whom to bestow patronage, and the names are passed to the Prime Minister. Why do you think we have that system?

Chris Grayling: We have that system for two reasons. One is that that is what our party has chosen to do. The other point is—and this is something that I think is quite a difficult issue to resolve without a degree of selection by the representative parties—how do we achieve a gender balance if there is not a degree of appointment? If we were to have, for example, an approach that was exactly the same as the Select Committee approach, where the members of the delegation were elected in proportion to party balance across Parliament, what do we do when all of the successful people are men? We are in a position where a relatively small minority of Select Committee chairs are women, for example. In a situation where, because of the result of our election, we are unable to conform to the requirements that we have signed up to, to provide a gender-balanced delegation, how then do we resolve that?

Chair: We will come back to that gender balance thing in a moment.

Q8 Kate Hoey: I just want to say that gender balance is used for excuses for all sorts of things. That is really not the reason for this, as we know, or I think we know. Can you tell us, is it that the Conservative Party—because it is not the Government, it is the Conservative Party initially—leadership don’t trust their own Members of Parliament to elect their delegates the way the Labour Party does? What are you frightened of?

Chris Grayling: That is a judgment. I don’t think it is a question of being frightened; it is a question of each party being free to choose to do as it wishes.

Q9 Kate Hoey: Of course you are free to choose, but I am saying, why do you do it in a way that does not allow your Members of Parliament to decide who they would like to be their delegates, the way the Labour Party does and the Scottish National Party does?

Chair: You are free to answer on behalf of the Conservative Party as well as Leader of the House.

Chris Grayling: I have just set out two reasons why I think appointment has been the chosen route for the party. One is because the party has decided that it is appropriate to appoint, as is provided for under Article 25, but also believes that you get an appropriately balanced delegation that is consistent with our obligations under the agreement by taking this approach. Now, it is a matter of judgment who the parties—

Q10 Kate Hoey: Do you think the Labour Party doesn’t, then?

Chris Grayling: That is a matter for the Labour Party to decide how its systems work, and not for me.

Q11 Kate Hoey: So you do not think the Labour Party delegation could possibly be balanced because they elect?

Chris Grayling: I am not passing judgment on the way the Labour Party takes its approach; I am simply explaining why the Conservative Party does as it does.

Kate Hoey: Thank you.

Q12 Gerald Jones: I appreciate you cannot answer for the member nations but, from your knowledge, can you give us a view on how the present system that is used compares to other member nations?

Chris Grayling: I cannot comment in detail about how other member nations pick their delegations. What I can tell you is that it is certainly not the case that delegations from all 47 members are elected by their Parliaments, in the way perhaps that we do with our Select Committees. That is certainly not the case. What I would say is that the United Kingdom approach—which is a mix, depending on the choice of the individual parties—is completely consistent with Article 25 of the agreement that we signed up to; otherwise we would not do it.

Q13 Gerald Jones: Can you give any examples of how it is done with other member nations? I appreciate you cannot answer for them, but, from your knowledge, would you be aware?

Chris Grayling: I do not have detailed knowledge of the other member nations. You would have to take evidence from the officials involved with the Council of Europe on that. My point remains that Article 25 is completely clear about the ability to appoint or the ability to elect, and if it is not appointment by the representative groups of the Parliament, who does the appointing?

Q14 Ronnie Cowan: In your view, is the system fully in line with the democratic principles of the Council of Europe?

Chris Grayling: Yes. It is our job to fulfil the principles of Article 25 as a nation, to submit a balanced—politically and in gender terms—delegation to the Council of Europe. That we have done. As is entirely within its rights, each of our political parties has the freedom to choose, within the parameters of Article 25, how to select its own nominations for that delegation and that is what happens.

Q15 Ronnie Cowan: Within our delegation we have five Lords, four Baronesses and the Earl of Dundee, a peer, so it is not exactly a cross-section of British society, is it?

Chris Grayling: We have a bicameral system. Of course, that is the other point in relation to appointment versus election: it is the case that typically in the House of Lords they do not elect in the same way.

Q16 Paul Flynn: Yes, they do. Labour elect their Lords representatives of the Council of Europe. You are very badly briefed about the issue.

Chris Grayling: No, that is not the point I was making. Typically, the system for electing to Committees in the House of Commons is very different to what exists in the House of Lords. We are a bicameral system and it is, of course, natural that we would have representatives from both Houses of Parliament, as has always been the case.

Q17 Paul Flynn: The Labour delegation to the Council of Europe is elected.

Chris Grayling: I was not talking about the Labour delegation; I was talking about election to the Select Committees in the House of Lords.

Q18 Ronnie Cowan: We currently have 18 first choices and 18 back-ups as substitutes for the first 18. Am I right that it is 25 men and 11 women?

Chris Grayling: There is a requirement, in the terms of the agreement to which we are party, to balance our delegation in line with representation of men and women in our Parliament.

Q19 Ronnie Cowan: We are not looking for 50:50?

Chris Grayling: We do not have the—

Ronnie Cowan: If Parliament is skewed, that skew is then carried on into—

Chris Grayling: There is a specific requirement in the agreement that says that the group that we nominate should, in gender terms, reflect the balance of gender in our Parliament. Ideally, it should be more than that, but at the very least it should reflect the gender balance in our Parliament.

Ronnie Cowan: At the very least?

Chris Grayling: Yes.

Q20 Paul Flynn: You said the Conservative Party decided to choose their delegation this way. When and how did they take that decision?

Chris Grayling: I think that is a matter for the Conservative Party, I am afraid. I am speaking on behalf of the Government. I am not here to speak on behalf of the Conservative Party and it is not appropriate for me to start to comment on the workings of—

Q21 Paul Flynn: I think it is safe to assume it was not taken by a process that we would understand as democracy. Do you approve of the move following the Wright reforms that mean there is less influence for the Whips here to exercise their muscle or for a Prime Ministerial diktat—that there has been a spread of democracy within all parties and throughout Parliament? Is that something that you should support as Leader of the House?

Chris Grayling: It is a matter of fact that, in the case of international delegations like this, it is for the individual political parties to decide how they nominate. There are certain obligations in terms of our role in the Council of Europe. The obligations give us the freedom to appoint or to elect. It is a matter for the individual political parties to decide how they do it. My role, as Leader of the House, is to ensure that we have a properly constituted delegation. When the motions are tabled before the House to appoint the delegation, it is important to ensure that it is a properly constituted delegation that is consistent with the rules that have been applied, and that is the case.

Q22 Paul Flynn: The three people who were sacked from the Council of Europe delegation claim they were sacked because of their anti-European views and the way that they voted on a particular issue. Would you agree with their view?

Chris Grayling: That is purely a matter for speculation and I do not think it is appropriate for me to comment.

Q23 Paul Flynn: If it is that, they have a grievance about it, which they pursued and that is why we are all here today. The Council of Europe have said that our standards for selecting the Conservative Party delegation are below the standards that they wish to lay down, and we know it is a unique system within all the 47 countries. Would you support a reform of the system and to make sure that the present delegation—it is not a legitimate one—is not proceeded with?

Chris Grayling: Let us be clear, the present delegation is a legitimate one under the terms of the agreement. I am not aware that there is any proposal to extend a system of election of the kind that we have for Select Committees in this House across all 47 members of the Council of Europe. If such a proposal is made by the Council of Europe, I am sure that we, and indeed this Committee, would consider it carefully, but I am not aware that any such proposal is on the table.

Q24 Paul Flynn: How is the leader of the delegation, Mr Roger Gale, appointed or elected?

Chris Grayling: Clearly, as all the members of the delegation were appointed, he was appointed.

Q25 Paul Flynn: Was there a vote among the Conservative delegation?

Chris Grayling: As I have said to you, Mr Flynn, I have said very clearly that the Conservative Party has chosen the approach that it has. It is entirely within Article 25. It is as simple as that.

Q26 Paul Flynn: The Chairman did invite you to speak on behalf of the Conservative Party. If you won't, then that is up to you, and I do not blame you because it is clearly an indefensible position that they find themselves in. You have seen three of your—

Chris Grayling: If we are talking about indefensibility, I can think of other current examples in our political world where things that might be deemed to be unacceptable are happening. I think people in glass houses, frankly.

Paul Flynn: What are you talking about?

Chair: I think we are in danger of straying from the point. Not your question—

Paul Flynn: I have not finished. I really want to make a point.

Chair: It is not a criticism of your question, Mr Flynn. Do you want to ask something else?

Paul Flynn: Yes, I do. We are not getting anywhere. You are evading the whole subject of this, which is a matter of grievance by three MPs who have been treated badly—

Chair: That is not a question.

Q27 Paul Flynn: Well, no, but I have no idea what the point you made about undemocratic people was, unless you were referring to Prince Charles, who has not been elected by anyone, unlike the rest of us. If that is what you are referring to, we could have a very interesting discussion on that.

Chris Grayling: There are many political grievances around Westminster at the moment. The fact that the Conservative Party has chosen to appoint a delegation of experienced Members of Parliament, from different generations, different intakes, to the Council of Europe, in a way that is consistent with what has happened over many years, seems to me to be a very straightforward matter.

Chair: Mr Cowan. *[Interruption.]* Sorry, Mr Flynn, that is enough. Mr Cowan—

Paul Flynn: No, it is not enough.

Chair: Last question, all right?

Paul Flynn: Look, Chairman, you constantly abuse your position and I have expressed before my unhappiness about the fact—

Chair: I was elected.

Paul Flynn: Yes, indeed you were elected, but we also had a very good predecessor of yours, Tony Wright, who led the way and has his name on the Wright reforms. There will be no Jenkin reforms, I am sure, in the future, and you must not try to silence me on an issue I know more about than anyone else around this table because I am the longest-serving member of the Council of Europe in Parliament.

Chair: Could you please ask your question?

Q28 Paul Flynn: Well, I would if you would be quiet and let me ask the question. We could get on with it and we could all go home.

There is one member of the delegation appointed who was the subject of an inquiry by the Standards Committee in the House of Lords and was forced, after two investigations, to make an apology for forgetting that he had signed an agreement with the Cayman Islands about the £12,000 a month that he receives from them. He had forgotten the purpose of it and he was forced by the House of Commons Standards Committee, when his contract was leaked, to make an apology to the House. Do you think he would have been an improvement on the delegation to the three splendid Members that the Conservative Party have sacked? Do you think we should be allowed to question his appointment?

Chris Grayling: I am not going to comment on any individual appointment. I do not think that would be right or appropriate. The political parties have, in their different ways, brought forward nominations. I am not aware that anybody has come to the House and said, “This is a nomination that is inappropriate and should be blocked,” and therefore I do not think it would be appropriate for me to comment.

Q29 Paul Flynn: The Council of Europe in their wisdom has urged the House—I will get the words right—“urges the House of Commons to review with the utmost diligence the procedure for appointing the National Delegation to Parliamentary Assembly in order to bring it fully into line with the democratic principles upheld by the Assembly”. Will you do that?

Chris Grayling: Well, I simply repeat that Article 25 specifically provides for appointment or election. If the Council of Europe wishes to bring forward proposals to change Article 25, I am sure the United Kingdom will consider them carefully, as will other countries.

Paul Flynn: The Council of Europe is asking us to bring this up to the democratic standards of Bulgaria and Azerbaijan. That’s reasonable.

Q30 Chair: Order. Can we just be absolutely clear, then, that you as Leader of the House do not agree with the conclusion of the Rules Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which has reached an interpretation of Article 25? You have your own interpretation and you do not agree with their interpretation? Is that the position?

Chris Grayling: All I read is something that says: “or appointed from among the Members of that Parliament”. They have not made any proposal to us about how we could appoint people differently. If they are saying we should no longer appoint, then of course that would require a change to the Article 25 more generally, which would require—

Q31 Chair: So you do disagree with the Rules Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly?

Chris Grayling: I do not agree that our current approach is inconsistent with Article 25. Of course—

Q32 Chair: Just a minute. While they are saying our arrangements are not fully in line with the democratic principles upheld by the Assembly, you say they are? That is the difference between you and the Rules Committee?

Chris Grayling: I simply look at the text and say—

Chair: It is a yes or no.

Chris Grayling: I do not see how what they are saying is consistent with Article 25.

Chair: Mr Jones?

Q33 Mr Jones: I was about to put the point that you have just put, but it does seem to me, if I may seek the Leader of the House's observations on this, that the Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly seems to be acknowledging that what is done by this House, by this Parliament, is fully in line with the requirements of Article 25A and what they are objecting to is the contents of Article 25A itself?

Chris Grayling: Indeed, and I think there is therefore a broader discussion to have. It may be something that this report can provide as an insight into how things might be done differently. I have no doubt that if the Committee decides that things should be done differently in this House, it will report accordingly. It may be also that that report should be provided to the Council of Europe to say that everyone should do this differently. Clearly a new rule should not simply apply to the United Kingdom. It should apply to everyone.

Chair: Very good point.

Q34 Ronnie Cowan: Peter Bone MP described the current situation involving Sir Edward Leigh, Christopher Chope and Cheryl Gillan as, "Utterly undemocratic and utterly wrong. I am afraid to say that the Prime Minister should be ashamed of himself". Do you agree with your Conservative colleague?

Chris Grayling: I think everyone in this House is entitled to express their views in a democratic environment.

Q35 Ronnie Cowan: Do you agree with him?

Chris Grayling: I think everyone is entitled to express their views, but I would perhaps have phrased it slightly differently.

Ronnie Cowan: What is your view?

Chris Grayling: My view is that the party has done what it has always done in the past, which is to appoint a selection of experienced colleagues. Nobody has looked at that list of colleagues and said there is anybody on that list—apart from you, Mr Flynn—who should not be on that list. It is a decision that has been taken, rightly or wrongly, by the Conservative Party. It is a number of people who have served for a long time, a number of other people who are interested in serving, to make a change on the delegation. That is, of

course, a matter for the Conservative Party to do, in the same way that it would be a matter for the Labour Party to decide to elect a wholly different group of people. Perhaps in the current climate it might be inclined to elect a different group of people to those elected in the past.

Q36 Ronnie Cowan: Clearly a lot of people are not happy with the outcome, but is there any scope to look at other European countries and see if maybe they are doing it better than us?

Chris Grayling: I guess that is the point of this Committee: that you may well come back and suggest that we do things differently. I shall read that report with care when it comes.

Q37 Mr Turner: Can I ask, if this system were to be changed, how could Parliament ensure that the delegation is appointed by the Council of Europe's rules on gender representation?

Chris Grayling: I think the only way in practice that you could do it would be to designate a certain number of places for women, and only women would be able to stand for that. I am never comfortable with a system that simply says, "Right, those are the places for women and those are the places for men." I prefer to elect or appoint on merit, but to make sure we fulfil our obligations in doing so. You could take the approach that says very simply, "Right, there are three in 10 women in Parliament, therefore there will be three in 10 places on the delegation." If the right people are all women, or if it is 60% women, that should be the way we do things. I am never instinctively in favour of having specific blocks allocated for gender.

Q38 Mr Turner: I can well understand it. What I am asking you is: what happens if 10 males are elected?

Chris Grayling: We would be in breach of our agreement.

Q39 Mr Turner: What do they expect us to do about that?

Chris Grayling: That is a very good question. There is no simple answer to that, Mr Turner, because if we do elect 10 men and if the Labour Party were to elect 10 men, we would probably have to, in order to fulfil our obligations, adapt accordingly from within our list of appointments.

Q40 Chair: Do you think we could ask the Labour Party how they do it?

Chris Grayling: By all means.

Paul Flynn: I would be very happy to tell you.

Q41 Chair: How does the Labour Party elect a certain number of men and a certain number of women? It must be possible.

Kate Hoey: We are just naturally good at that.

Chris Grayling: So there is no mechanism to prevent 10 men being elected?

Kate Hoey: No, but it has not happened.

Kelvin Hopkins: For other internal elections we do have reserved seats for a proportion of women.

Chair: As indeed does the House of Commons for one of the Deputy Speakers, so all is possible.

Q42 Mr Turner: Sorry, I don't think I had an answer, and perhaps—

Chair: I don't think he wants to give you one, Mr Turner.

Chris Grayling: The answer to your question is that if we elected 10 men, we would be in breach of the agreement. I am not clear that I know how we would resolve that situation.

Q43 Chair: If we had a system of election that stipulated that a certain number of female places should be available and a certain number of male places should be available, and people were effectively voting in two sets of elections, as we do for the Deputy Speaker, then we could probably circumnavigate that particular obstacle.

Chris Grayling: I imagine so. The issue fundamentally with the situation you described of electing 10 men is that there is no obvious mechanism to unpick that, unless you allocate a certain number of places on gender. That is a judgment as to whether you think it is appropriate to have a certain number of places allocated by gender and what you do if the numbers are above that. What provision do you make if there are three allocated places for women and five women get elected? Do you have a mechanism to address that?

Q44 Chair: That is the system of election that the Prime Minister has to sort out all on his own. All we are suggesting is that more people should be involved in the process of election, not that the allocation of places for men and women should be altered in any way.

Chris Grayling: Mr Jenkin, of course that is the prerogative of this Committee: to make a recommendation accordingly if it chooses to do so.

Chair: Anything more on gender representation?

Q45 Mr Turner: Yes. Can I ask, what is the consequence if we elect 10 women? Is that different from the election of 10 men?

Chris Grayling: It is the same situation.

Mr Turner: Exactly the same?

Chris Grayling: The obligation is to have a gender balance.

Q46 Mr Turner: Right, so that is a both-ways gender balance, not a one-way gender balance?

Chris Grayling: Yes. Typically it is to try to get more women, but if we suddenly found, hypothetically, found an Assembly dominated by women then it would apply both ways.

Q47 Chair: The House agreed, on 16 November, not to immediately rescind the names of the delegation that was approved at the time, and obviously it would not be possible to revisit that particular motion. If this Committee were minded to recommend a different method of appointment—perhaps a House procedure rather than party procedures—what thought have you given to when it might be appropriate to introduce a new system?

Chris Grayling: Typically it would be done for the start of each Parliament, when a whole delegation is appointed. I would not be in favour of pulling people off the existing delegation. I think that would be inappropriate and unfair. I think it is something that would start the next time the full delegation is appointed.

Chair: Are there any other questions? Can we let Kate have a go first?

Paul Flynn: Yes, of course.

Q48 Kate Hoey: Mine is slightly tangential, but I am sure the Leader of the House does not mind that. Given that we are talking about Europe as distinct from the EU, coming up with the Prime Minister perhaps coming back with something sometime soon on the question of renegotiation, as the Leader of the House, do you feel that you are going to be able to have very much control over how much debate Parliament gets on the issue before it goes out to the process of having a referendum?

Chris Grayling: That is a very different question. Of course the Council of Europe and the EU are different bodies.

Kate Hoey: I do know that.

Chris Grayling: I would expect Parliament to have a full opportunity to question the Prime Minister after the February summit. We will have to make a decision at the time about what is done in terms of debating time.

Q49 Kate Hoey: Obviously the summit this week the House will have lifted. Will we have the opportunity when Parliament comes back on the Tuesday in January to question him on this summit this week?

Chris Grayling: That is a matter I probably would not address here. I would have to address it in the House for Business questions or whatever.

Q50 Kate Hoey: Would it be your view, as Leader of the House, that that should happen?

Chris Grayling: I have noted your view.

Kate Hoey: Thank you.

Chair: I have indulged you to ask that question.

Kate Hoey: Thank you.

Q51 Paul Flynn: Many of your predecessors have distinguished careers—people like Robin Cook—in improving the reforms of this House and making it a more democratic body. Are you content that you will deny the request of an international body to improve our democracy, and that you are content with a system that uses Prime Ministerial diktat and the power of Whips to discipline your members in a way that is wholly undemocratic in denying the House the choice of people who should represent us in this important institution?

Chris Grayling: Mr Flynn, that is your view and you are entitled to hold it, in terms of your perspective on a decision by the Conservative Party to make changes to its nominated group.

Paul Flynn: Would you like to defend yourself?

Chris Grayling: What I would say is that if the Council of Europe seeks to change Article 25 and to remove the provision for appointment, then of course we will work with them, as I am sure other nations will too.

Q52 Paul Flynn: So what are you going to do? Nothing?

Chris Grayling: What do you mean, what am I going to do?

Q53 Paul Flynn: Well, I think you should suspend the delegation and you should have elections for the delegation. That is what they are asking for.

Chris Grayling: You are entirely entitled to your opinion, Mr Flynn, but of course—

Paul Flynn: That would be the democratic thing to do.

Chris Grayling: So what you are saying is that you do not accept Article 25?

Paul Flynn: I do accept Article 25, but I accept the interpretation of it by the people who wrote Article 25, which is the Council of Europe.

Chris Grayling: I feel you are trying to have your cake and eat it, I am afraid, Mr Flynn.

Paul Flynn: You have already made fools of yourselves on the Council of Europe.

Q54 Chair: May I just ask one final question? Whether or not we are in line with Article 25 or not—and that matter seems to be in dispute—would it not fall naturally to the House of Commons to set the best possible example for democratic representation on the Council of Europe? Would that not be an appropriate thing for the House of Commons to consider?

Chris Grayling: No doubt it will consider it, because I have no doubt that we will expect an insightful report from this Committee, which the House will give very careful consideration to, and I look forward to reading it.

Chair: I hope it will be a short and concise one. Leader of the House of Commons, thank you very much for being with us.