



PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 30 April 2020

Present:

L. Ashton of Hyde	L. McFall of Alcluith (Chair)
L. Bew	L. Mancroft
L. Eames	L. Morris of Aberavon
B. Evans of Bowes Park	L. Newby
L. Foulkes of Cumnock	B. Smith of Basildon
L. Fowler	L. Stoneham of Droxford
L. Geddes	B. Thomas of Winchester
B. Harris of Richmond	V. Ullswater
L. Judge	B. Warwick of Undercliffe
L. McAvoy	

with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

No apologies were received.

The Chair started the meeting by reminding members that:

- the House was coming to the end of the second week of virtual proceedings on MS Teams which was the basic package agreed so that the House could continue some scrutiny while a more advanced package was prepared;
- from the following week all virtual proceedings would be on Zoom and live broadcast; and
- the purpose of the meeting was to reflect on lessons learnt from the first two weeks and to prepare to take some legislation in virtual proceeding.

I. Feedback from stage I of Virtual Proceedings

The Chair introduced the paper (PC/19-21/24) which reflected feedback from various sources.

The Chief Whip said that he thought most Members were largely happy with Virtual Proceedings which had allowed the House to hold the Government to account. He said he would resist any extension of the number of Oral Questions or the time allowed for them because the arrangements for Oral Questions in Virtual Proceedings were already more generous than those for Oral Questions in the Chamber and almost every day there had been a PNQ. He also pointed out that once the House started to consider legislation in Virtual Proceedings, the House would have less time available.



Each Member of the Committee was invited to comment in turn.

The Committee *agreed* that the Usual Channels should discuss these issues further and that concrete proposals should be brought back to the Committee.

2. Proposals for the next stage of virtual proceedings

The Chair introduced the following documents which had been circulated as a bundle:

- letter from the Leader of the House (PC/19-21/25);
- note from the Clerk of Legislation (PC/19-21/26) and
- note from the Clerk of the Committee ((PC/19-21/27).

The Leader spoke to her letter. The main proposal was for the Committee stage of bills to take place in virtual proceedings. There were two other proposals about bringing forward the deadline for changing the text of oral questions, and time limiting debates on statutory instruments.

The Clerk of Legislation proposed that the following should be added to the Business of the House motion, “A bill amended in virtual committee may be published.” The Committee agreed this proposal.

The Committee further agreed that the following sentence was unnecessary and should be deleted from the guidance: “Proactive issue management is encouraged, to reduce the number of amendments, the complexity of proceedings and the volume of associated documentation.”

The Committee **agreed** to approve the proposals from the Leader as embodied in the guidance from the Clerk of Legislation. The Committee further **agreed** to the Leader’s proposals on the deadline for changing oral questions and to the guidance on varying time limits on oral questions.

The Committee **agreed** that the Revised Guidance on Virtual Proceedings should be published as soon as possible and sent to all members by email.

3. Any Other Business

It was agreed that the Procedure Committee should meet regularly – perhaps weekly – for the time being. The Chairman agreed that at the next meeting the Committee would discuss wider issues relating to Virtual Proceedings.

A member asked whether there were any proposals for the House to be able to vote using an on-line system. The Clerk confirmed that preparatory underwork was underway and that the Committee would be kept informed.



The Committee asked the Clerk of the Parliaments to pass on its thanks to those involved in facilitating Virtual Proceedings at such short notice which represented a remarkable effort.

Chloe Mawson
Clerk of the Procedure Committee