

PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 3 March 2022 at 2.00pm

Present:

Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Chair)	Lord McFall of Alcluith
Lord Eames	Lord Mancroft
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Lord Newby
Lord Faulkner of Worcester	Baroness Quin
Baroness Harris of Richmond	Baroness Sanderson of Welton
Baroness Humphreys	Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury
Lord Judge	Lord Stoneham of Droxford
Lord Kennedy of Southwark	

with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Lord Ashton of Hyde, Lord Bew, Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall and Baroness Smith of Basildon. The Chair welcomed Baroness Humphreys, Baroness Sanderson of Welton and Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury to their first meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were *agreed*.

3. Companion to the Standing Orders

The Chair introduced the paper (PC/21-22/20) and a supplementary note (PC/21-22/24).

After discussion, the Committee *agreed* to the proposed changes to Chapters 1-6 of the Companion. The House's endorsement of the substantive changes would be sought. The Clerk undertook to circulate a revised version of these chapters, including some minor amendments suggested by the Government Chief Whip to reflect current practice, before the Committee's next meeting.

The Committee *agreed* to review the remaining chapters of the Companion, including the appendices, at its next meeting.

The Chair informed the Committee that he had asked the Clerk to consider methods by which the Companion could be kept up to date in future.

4. Reading speeches prepared by other members

The Chair introduced the paper (PC/21-22/21).

The Committee *noted* that the proposed changes to the Companion should not make it harder for members with disabilities, some of whom require their speeches to be read by a third party, to participate in debates.

The Committee *agreed* to include a new rule in the Companion that forbids members asking another member to read their speech, and any member agreeing to do so. The Committee *agreed* a draft change to the suggested Companion text proposed by the Leader. As a substantive change the House would be invited to endorse it.

5. Sitting times

The Chair introduced the paper (PC/21-22/22).

Several members said that earlier sitting times should only be considered on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. An earlier sitting time on Mondays would cause difficulty for members who lived a long way from Westminster.

Lord Newby and Lord Stoneham of Droxford said if the House was asked to sit earlier, it should also rise earlier. If the House sat earlier, Lord Stoneham of Droxford asked if oral questions would continue to be the first item of business or take place at a later stage.

Several members said that because of the pressures on the House's time, the importance of exercising restraint and greater discipline on speaking times should be considered alongside the possibility of earlier sitting times, and the Leader proposed that members should be asked about this as part of any consultation on sitting times. The Committee *agreed*, however, that the two issues should be kept separate.

The Committee *agreed* to conduct a formal consultation with members on the possibility of earlier sitting times being introduced before any proposals were made. The consultation document should include the pros and cons and any practical considerations.

The Clerk was instructed to bring forward a draft consultation document for the Committee to consider at its next meeting.

6. Divisions: contingency arrangements

The Clerk introduced the paper (PC/21-22/23).

The Committee *agreed* that the option of holding deferred divisions, as a contingency arrangement in the event of a possible failure of the pass-reader system, and which had been introduced on a temporary basis as part of hybrid House procedures, should be put on a permanent footing.

7. Any Other Business

The Chair informed the Committee that a convenient date for conducting a test of the pass-reader system, involving members, would be confirmed in due course. The Clerk reported that a test of the new system on 27 February, involving officials, had worked well and there were no technical issues to report.

The Committee will meet again on Tuesday 22 March at 12 noon.

Christopher Johnson
Clerk of the Journals