



House of Commons
Procedure Committee

Proxy voting: review of pilot arrangements: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2019–21

**Third Special Report of Session 2019–
21**

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Procedure Committee

The Procedure Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to consider the practice and procedure of the House in the conduct of public business, and to make recommendations.

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Committee reports are published on the [Committee's website](#) and in print by Order of the House.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Martyn Atkins (Clerk), Zoë Backhouse (Second Clerk), Paul Connolly (Media Officer), and Jim Lawford (Committee Operations Officer).

Contacts

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You can follow the Committee on Twitter using [@CommonsProcCom](#)

Third Special Report

The Procedure Committee published its Fourth Report of Session 2019–21, [Proxy voting: review of pilot arrangements](#), HC 10, on 10 September 2020. The Government Response to the Report was received from the Leader of the House, Rt Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, on 22 September 2020, and is published as an Appendix to this Report.

Appendix: Government Response

The Government is grateful to the Committee for its work in reviewing the proxy voting pilot arrangements.

Proxy voting for parental absence

The Government broadly agrees with the conclusions and recommendations relating to proxy voting for parental absence but would note that those recommendations relating to the administration of the scheme are matters for the Speaker and House Authorities. We also note that recommendation four (that any future arrangements for proxy voting by Members should include provision for any Deputy Speaker to certify eligibility for a proxy vote, under the Speaker's authority) should only be undertaken in agreement with the Speaker. A motion for approval of a new permanent Standing Order on proxy voting for parental leave has now been tabled by the Government.

Proxy voting for public health reasons

The Government agrees that, in the current circumstances, it is important to provide continuing provision for proxy voting for public health reasons relating to the coronavirus pandemic. The Government's view is that the broad eligibility criteria, covering Members absent for "medical or public health reasons relating to the pandemic", provide appropriate flexibility in the current circumstances. A motion to approve the continuation of these temporary arrangements has now been tabled by the Government.

The Government notes the Committee's recommendations relating to the administration of the scheme and the current infrastructure. We are committed to continuing to work with the House Authorities to ensure that voting arrangements are resilient and support efforts to minimise the administrative burden.

The Government disagrees with the Committee's recommendation 22 (that the remote voting system be reinstated as a means of conducting divisions for as long as the division lobbies are unavailable for use in the traditional way). In the context of a physical return of Parliament, not returning to physical voting would be a significant anomaly. The new voting system has been an effective way of managing safe physical voting and, by ensuring members are physically present to vote, there are fallback arrangements should the arrangements fail (as it did, due to human error, on Wednesday 16 September). We note that the House itself rejected remote voting on 2 June. However, the Government will, as ever, keep the situation under review.

Technical amendments required

The Government agrees with the technical amendments to the Standing Order recommended by the Committee and these are reflected in the motion that has been tabled.