



## Liaison Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 5675 Email: [liaisoncommittee@parliament.uk](mailto:liaisoncommittee@parliament.uk)

Website: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/103/liaison-committee-commons>

From Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair

Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP  
Leader of the House of Commons  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

16 October 2020

Dear Jacob,

I have been asked by a number of Select Committee Chairs to write concerning the operation of the House whilst Covid-19 cases continue to rise. We would like to see a resumption of hybrid proceedings across all House business – including voting, as recommended by the Procedure Committee – whilst cases continue to rise and higher-level restrictions remain in place across large parts of the country, particularly London itself.

As more areas come under greater restrictions to control the spread of Covid-19, it will become increasingly difficult for the public to understand why Members are still required to travel to and from London in order to represent them. Of necessity, the current arrangements for debate in the Chamber can hardly be considered business as usual. The Government has said that people who can work from home should do so. Hybrid proceedings have their own limitations, but they have been shown to work and to allow Members from across the UK to participate without risking further spread of the virus. Moreover, they avoid the situation where some constituencies are denied full representation due to their MPs' risk profile or personal circumstances. A number of Select Committee Chairs are in this position and are excluded from participating fully in the work of the House in absence of hybrid proceedings. One of the core purposes of Select Committees is to inform debate in the House. It cannot be right that elected Chairs are unable to fulfil this aspect of their role, especially when the remote operation of the Committees themselves have proven to be so successful.

We would also like a guarantee that any further move to hybrid proceedings, if it is forthcoming, will not be used by the Government to prioritise its own business to the exclusion of everyone else's. There was a case for this when hybrid proceedings were first introduced, given the backlog caused by the March lockdown and the time-sensitive nature of some of that business. We do not believe those circumstances hold now. In the event that hybrid proceedings do resume, we would expect to see some time for non-government business – in particular, adequate time for Backbench Business, including debates on Select Committee reports. It has also been suggested that Westminster Hall should be opened for remote participation.



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I hope that you will take these views into account in your discussions on this matter. This letter has been circulated to all Liaison Committee Members and has received widespread support, save for one Member asking that their concerns over remote voting (but not participation in debate) be noted. If I receive further views, I will, of course, ensure you are made aware of them.

I am copying this letter to the Speaker, Government Chief Whip, Shadow Leader of the House, Tommy Sheppard MP and the Chair of the Procedure Committee.

*Yours ever*

**Sir Bernard Jenkin MP**

**Chair of the Committee**