

**THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS
COMMISSION**

**External members of the House of
Commons Commission: nomination of
candidate**

Report presented to the House of Commons by the Speaker

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Commissioners

The Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle) (Chair), The Leader of the House of Commons (Penny Mordaunt), Nickie Aiken, Deidre Brock, Thangam Debbonaire, Sharon Hodgson, Sir Charles Walker, Sir John Benger (Clerk of the House), Marianne Cwynarski (Director General (Operations)) and Shrinivas Honap (External member).

Secretary to the Commission: Gosia McBride

Assistant Secretary: Ed Potton

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Introduction

1. Since the 2014 Report by the House of Commons Governance Committee, and the subsequent passing of the House of Commons Commission Act 2015, the Commission has been required to have two external members who are appointed by Resolution of the House. The external members cannot be Members of either House or members of staff of either House.
2. Louise Wilson left the Commission in November 2022. The Commission agreed a recruitment process to fill this vacancy and this report puts forward their recommended candidate.

Recruitment process

3. In December 2022, the Commission agreed the recruitment process to appoint a new external member, including the following essential and desirable skills and experience required for the successful candidate:

Essential

- Senior executive leadership experience within a complex organisation in either the private, public or not-for-profit sectors.
- Experience of non-executive work on public or private sector boards, including participation in ancillary non-executive duties such as senior appointment processes.
- Excellent analytical skills combined with strong decision-making skills that have been tested and proven on complex and sensitive issues.
- Extensive experience of successfully managing relationships with a range of senior stakeholders, which demonstrates the ability to work in a complex political environment.
- Excellent communication and presentation skills, with the ability to inspire confidence and respect.
- A commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Desirable

- Experience of assurance and/or audit processes.
 - A combination of commercial and public sector experience.
 - Familiarity with the workings of Parliament.
4. The recruitment process asked candidates how they would effectively contribute to their roles as members of the Commission, R&R Client Board and Audit Committee.

5. The House of Commons Resourcing Team worked with an Executive Search Agency, Miles Advisory, to recruit to the position. The post was advertised on the Guardian online job listings, LinkedIn, the House of Commons careers site, the Civil Service jobs website and the Executive Appointments website.
6. In March to April, a first panel, consisting of the Nickie Aiken MP, a member of the Commission, the Director General (Operations), Marianne Cwynarski CBE, Isabel Doverty, a former Civil Service Commissioner, and the Secretary to the Commission, Gosia McBride, sifted applications and undertook a first round interview.
7. The final selection panel comprised:
 - Mr Speaker (Chair)
 - Shadow Leader of the House, Thangam Debbonaire MP
 - Isabel Doverty, a former Civil Service Commissioner
 - Clerk of the House, Sir John Benger

The nominated candidates

8. Following the process set out above, the selection panel recommended to the Commission that Catherine Ward be nominated as its new external member.
9. Catherine Ward is a non-executive Director with a background in people management roles at Board level. She currently holds non-executive roles with the London Contemporary Dance Trust (LCDT) as well as remuneration committee roles with Manchester Metropolitan University and RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects). In addition, Catherine is a Non-Executive Director for the HR Policy and Strategic Support Group at the House of Commons. Between 2006 and 2021 Catherine held Board level people director roles with the British Council, Interserve PLC and BMI Healthcare.
10. The Commission believes that the candidate will bring a diverse range and depth of experience. This will benefit the work of the Commission in the coming years as the House of Commons Administration implements the Independent Review of Financial Management and works through the challenges of Restoration and Renewal.
11. All the candidates were required to provide written declarations regarding past political activity and potential conflicts of interest. The selection panel was satisfied that Catherine had not undertaken any political activity within the last five years that might affect the perception of their political impartiality. The panel was also satisfied that she did not have any private, voluntary, charitable, or political interests that might pose a conflict of interest in conducting the role of external member of the Commission.
12. The House of Commons Commission recommends that the House appoint Catherine Ward as an external member, for an initial period of 18 months, with the possibility to extend for a further two years.