



**LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL
LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
THE RT. HON. JACOB REES-MOGG M.P.**



The Rt. Hon. Karen Bradley M.P.,
Chairman, Procedure Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Our Ref: JRM/MP905
21 December 2020

Dear Karen,

The challenges presented by the covid pandemic have meant that, throughout this year, we have all had to respond quickly to the evolving situation. As a consequence, the House has made changes to our procedures at unprecedented speed. I have been grateful to the Procedure Committee for its nimble advice and assessment of these new procedures in recent months. Following your correspondence to me of 17 December, I am writing to update you about the implications of Saturday's announcement on Tier 4.

As a consequence of the measures confirmed over the weekend, it is the Government's intention to bring forward a motion to extend remote participation to substantive proceedings in the chamber when the House next sits. This will allow any member who wishes to participate in debates remotely to do so, thereby extending the measures that are already in place to allow remote participation in questions and statements. Proxy voting, which has worked well in recent months, will continue in its current form. The precise details of these changes are being discussed with the House authorities and I will share the motion with you when it is to be tabled. I do not plan to include eligibility criteria in the motion for members to take part remotely.

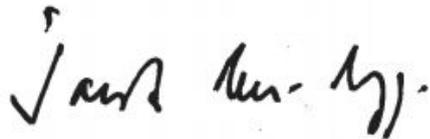
I have always been clear that we have been keeping our approach to the pandemic in Parliament under review. Since March, the Government has taken a range of steps to ensure that Parliament can continue to do its important work, whilst allowing members to participate in some proceedings remotely. The Government firmly believes that our constituents are best served when Parliament meets physically to the fullest extent possible and this remains my strong view. However, it is right that we balance this with the need to lower the risk of transmission of this new strain of the virus. Given that this new strain is more easily transmittable, we have taken this decision with the aim of reducing physical attendance on the estate, whilst allowing members to continue to contribute to business.

In tabling a motion, I am sure you will understand that the focus must be on ensuring that the business in the main chamber, including scrutiny of the Government and the legislative agenda, can progress as effectively as possible under the new restrictions. It is essential that Parliament is able to carry out its vital legislative functions and play this key constitutional role. We will have to assess how these changes affect other elements of our proceedings, such as Westminster Hall. It is the Government's intention to bring forward these changes as soon as possible, at the start of the next sitting, subject to our continuing discussions with the House authorities. The motion will be time limited and I welcome the Committee's continuing views on how our procedures are working.

I would be very happy to discuss this with you and look forward to meeting the Committee in the New Year. I am copying this letter to Mr Speaker and I will place a copy in the House of Commons library so that other members are aware of the Government's intended approach.

With every good wish,

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Hargrave". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.