



Procedure Committee

Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP
Speaker
House of Commons

17 January 2024

Mr Speaker

Thank you for your letter of 7 December on the Commission's updated proposals for risk-based exclusions that were published on 14 December. The Procedure Committee discussed the proposals with the Leader and the Shadow Leader of the House on 18 December.

The Committee recognises that the Commission has listened to the concerns raised by the Committee and other colleagues about the initial proposals put forward in June and has sought to respond to them. We also acknowledge that the Commission faces a difficult task in balancing potentially competing priorities in these proposals.

However, we do retain several concerns. The current proxy voting arrangements for parental leave, illness and injury, were arrived at after substantial detailed work and deliberation by the Committee. As you know it has resulted in some "hard cases". We remain concerned that the proposal to extend that provision to Members accused of a serious violent or sexual offence has implications for the wider scheme.

That Members accused of such an offence will receive a proxy, but those with substantial caring responsibilities or serious long-term chronic conditions will not, will strike some as unfair. The Committee recognises, that formally excluding a Member from the estate (and therefore from voting) would have significant democratic implications, especially if a future Government does not have a secure majority. However, the Committee does not support the proposal to extend proxy votes to those accused of a serious violent or sexual offences. Furthermore, we believe it risks bringing the House of Commons into disrepute.

As I said in my letter to the Leader in June the proposal to provide a proxy vote to a Member who is excluded may result in their anonymity being compromised. It is also likely to lead to Members in receipt of proxy votes for parental leave, illness, or injury, being subjected to intrusive questioning and unwarranted speculation, or worse. This obviously has implications for their and their family's right to privacy.

The Committee welcomes the proposal that the Risk Assessment Panel will be made up of MPs, however it is concerned that they will be drawn only from the membership Commission. It would suggest that consideration is given to selecting the third member from a wider pool of senior Members of the House, for instance the membership of the Liaison Committee.



Procedure Committee

Finally, the Committee recognises that this proposal is related solely to managing risk on the Parliamentary estate, to which you and the House can control access. However, members of the Committee do remain concerned about how constituency staff and constituents can be safeguarded if a Member is assessed to pose a potential risk to them. This is a matter that further work is required on, and we hope proposals can be brought forward quickly.

I am copying this letter to the Leader and Shadow Leader of the House.

Best regards,

Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley MP
Chair of the Procedure Committee