

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

FORMAL MINUTES FOR 2024

FORMAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 9 January 2024

SPEAKER'S STUDY

Mr Speaker, in the Chair	
Clive Betts	Rachel Hopkins
Kirsty Blackman	Cat Smith
Felicity Buchan	William Wragg

*In private***1. Minutes of last meeting**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of 22 November 2023.

The Committee noted its best wishes to Craig Mackinlay and for his recovery.

2. Consideration of NAO reports and advice from Treasury

The Committee considered (i) the latest value for money report from the National Audit Office and (ii) the Treasury's advice on the Electoral Commission Supplementary Estimate for 2023-24.

3. Briefing and discussion of lines of questioning for session on the supplementary estimate.

The Committee considered this matter.

4. Electoral Commission: supplementary estimate 2023/24

John Pullinger, Chair, Rob Vincent, interim Chief Executive Officer, and David Moran, Director of Finance, Electoral Commission, gave oral evidence on the Electoral Commission's supplementary estimate for 2023-24.

5. Consideration of Electoral Commission supplementary Estimate 2023/24

The Committee considered the Electoral Commission's supplementary estimate for 2023/24.

The Committee noted the Chief Secretary to the Treasury's view that the specific item requesting for funding to cover the cost of a pay rise above what the Commission had expected at the start of the financial year would not have been supported if it had been a request made through Government.

The Committee expressed concern over the Electoral Commission's decision to commit money for its staff pay settlement prior to seeking the approval of the Committee. It was noted that the Commission accepted that this was a mistake. The Commission had set out the steps it was taking to strengthen its internal financial function and processes to prevent such a recurrence and make its budgeting capability more effective.

On balance, having considered the Treasury's advice and the Commission's position, the Committee agreed to approve the Commission's supplementary estimate request without modification. The Committee did so noting the regulated period for next general period was commencing shortly and that a reduction at this point could have a detrimental impact on the Commission's core services.

The Committee agreed to publish comments on the Electoral Commission's supplementary estimate on its website.

6. Any other business

No items were raised.

[The Committee adjourned

The Committee agreed by correspondence its First Report of 2024 entitled “Comments on the Electoral Commission’s Supplementary Supply Estimate 2023/24”, HC593.

SCEC FM 02 (2024)

FORMAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 6 MARCH 2024 COMMITTEE ROOM 15

Mr Speaker, in the Chair	
Mr Clive Betts	Rachel Hopkins
Simon Hoare	

In private

1. Declarations of interests

Simon Hoare was introduced as a new member of the Committee. Mr Hoare did not declare any interests in addition to those listed in the current Register of Members’ Financial Interests.

2. Minutes of last meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of 9 January 2024.

The Committee agreed to write to Mr William Wragg to thank him for his service to the Committee.

3. Designation of Electoral Commission Accounting Officer

The Committee agreed to approve the designation of Vijay Rangarajan as Accounting Officer of the Electoral Commission, following his appointment as Chief Executive.

4. Electoral Commission Strategy and Policy Statement

The Committee noted a letter from Simon Hoare, the Minister for Local Government, of 20 February 2024, on the designation of the Electoral Commission Strategy and Policy Statement.

5. Consideration of Treasury advice on LGBCE and Electoral Commission Main Estimates 2024/25

The Committee noted the Comptroller and Auditor General’s economy, efficiency and effectiveness report on the subject of voter engagement, as required by Paragraph 14(4)(a) of Schedule 1 of PPERA. The Committee also noted the latest NAO report on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

The Committee considered letters from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, dated 1st and 5th March 2024, on the Main Estimates for 2024/25 for the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and the Electoral Commission respectively. The Committee agreed to publish both letters.

6. Publication of correspondence and explanatory memoranda

The Committee agreed to publish:

- A letter from Professor Colin Mellors, Chair, LGBCE, regarding the Main Supply Estimate 2024/25 and corporate plan, dated 14 February 2024;
- LGBCE’s Main Supply Estimate 2024/25 memorandum;

- A letter from Rob Vincent, interim Chief Executive, Electoral Commission, regarding the Main Supply Estimates 2024/25, dated 14 February 2024; and
- Electoral Commission’s Main Supply Estimate 2024/25 memorandum.

In public

7. Local Government Boundary Commission for England Main Estimate 2024/25 and Corporate Plan

Professor Colin Mellors OBE, Chair, Ailsa Irvine, Chief Executive, and Kathryn Towers, acting Director of Corporate Services, Local Government Boundary Commission for England gave oral evidence.

8. Electoral Commission Main Estimate 2024/25 and Corporate Plan

John Pullinger, Chair, Rob Vincent CBE, interim Chief Executive, Vijay Rangarajan CMG, Chief Executive, and David Moran, interim Director of Finance, Electoral Commission, gave oral evidence.

In private

9. Consideration of Main Estimates 2024/25

The Committee agreed to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s Main Estimate for 2024/25, and agreed to lay it before the House unmodified.

The Committee agreed to the Electoral Commission’s Main Estimate for 2024/25, and agreed to lay it before the House modified.

10. Any other business

There was no other business.

[The Committee adjourned

SCEC FM 03 (2024)

SPEAKER’S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

FORMAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 4 DECEMBER 2025

SPEAKER’S STUDY

Mr Speaker, in the Chair	
Rushanara Ali	Rachel Hopkins
Florence Eshalomi	Lisa Smart
Stephen Gethins	Sir Jeremy Wright
Simon Hoare	

In private

1. Declarations of interests

Members' interests were noted as listed in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

It was noted that Simon Hoare is the Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee and that Rachel Hopkins is a member of the Public and Commercial Services Union and Unite the Union.

2. Correspondence from the Electoral Commission

The Committee noted:

- a letter from John Pullinger to Mr Speaker providing a budget update, dated 12 July 2024; and
- a letter from Vijay Rangarajan to Mr Speaker on the qualification of the Commission's accounts, dated 4 November 2024.

3. Committee annual report

The Committee agreed to publish an annual report for financial year 2023-24.

4. Appointments to Commissions

The Committee noted:

- a letter from John Pullinger to Mr Speaker regarding commencement of procedures for reappointing or recruiting Electoral Commissioners, dated 9 July 2024;
- a note by the Secretary on Appointments to the Electoral Commission and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

5. Committee working practices

It was agreed that the Committee may take decisions by email correspondence, provided that: (a) proposed decisions were first sent by email to all members of the Committee; and (b) members of the Committee were given 24 hours from the email being sent to object to any proposed decision.

6. Discussion with Local Government Boundary Commission England - introductions and update

Professor Colin Mellors OBE, Chair, and Ailsa Irvine, Chief Executive Officer, LGBCE, gave a briefing on the Commission's work and planning for new five-year corporate plan.

7. Discussion with Electoral Commission - introductions and update

John Pullinger CB, Chair, Vijay Rangarajan CMG, Chief Executive, and Chris Pleass, Director of Corporate Services, Electoral Commission, gave a briefing on the Commission's work and planning for new five-year corporate plan.

The Committee noted a letter from John Pullinger to Mr Speaker on plans for five-year corporate plan, dated 30 July 2024.

8. Appointment of Commissioners to the Electoral Commission

The Committee agreed to:

- write to Electoral Commissioners, the Chief Executive of the Electoral Commission and relevant stakeholders, seeking views on John Pullinger's performance during his term as Chair of the Electoral Commission.

- consult the Welsh Parliament on the re-appointment of the lead Commissioner for Wales, Dame Elan Closs Stephens, to the Commission.

It was noted that Section 3(2)(b) of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended, requires that a proposal to appoint (or re-appoint) a member of the Electoral Commission must be the subject of consultation with the registered leader of each registered party to which two or more Members of the House of Commons belong.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

[The Committee adjourned