

## **Appointment of a Chair of the Electoral Commission: background note**

Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, the Chair of the Electoral Commission is appointed by Her Majesty The Queen on an Address from the House of Commons. A motion for such an address can only be made if:

- the Speaker of the House of Commons agrees that the motion may be made;
- the motion has been the subject of consultation with the registered leader of each registered party to which two or more Members of the House of Commons then belong; and
- the person whose appointment is proposed in the motion has been selected in accordance with a procedure put in place and overseen by the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission.

### **The process**

The Speaker's Committee asked Mr Speaker to appoint a panel to run the process for selecting a candidate for the Chair of the Electoral Commission. Mr Speaker appointed the following people to the panel:

- Philippa Helme CB, independent chair;
- Tony Hobman, former Electoral Commissioner;
- Sarah Laessig, independent panel member;
- Christian Matheson MP, member of the Speaker's Committee; and
- William Wragg MP, member of the Speaker's Committee and Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

The recruitment consultants, GatenbySanderson, were appointed to assist the panel in the process.

The post was advertised between 30 October and 20 November in a range of national and specialist media, on the Cabinet Office Public Appointments website, and on social media.

The panel met on 25 November to longlist candidates. It decided on a longlist of 14 candidates for initial interview with GatenbySanderson, one of whom subsequently withdrew from the process.

The panel met again on 9 December to consider the consultants' reports on the 13 remaining candidates, which included a summary of GatenbySanderson's interviews with the candidates. It also considered outcomes of a 'due diligence' exercise which had trawled the internet, social media, and Companies House and Charity Commission records for information about the candidates: this exercise did not identify any issues of concern. The panel agreed on a shortlist of six candidates to go forward to interview.

Each shortlisted candidate was offered, and took up, the opportunity to meet the Chief Executive of the Electoral Commission and a serving Commissioner to discuss the role of the Commission and the Commission's current programme of activity.

Two oral references were taken on the shortlisted candidates ahead of their interview. The shortlisted candidates took part in two psychometric tests and a media test, the outcomes of which informed the panel's questioning.

Panel interviews were held remotely on 6 and 7 January. Candidates were told that they would be asked at the outset to give a five-minute presentation setting out what they saw as the three most important challenges for the Electoral Commission over the next four years.

The interviews each lasted around an hour. Questioning addressed each of the criteria in the person specification in turn, drawing on the outcomes of the tests where relevant. At the end, the candidates were asked about how they would handle the time commitment, any potential for perception of conflicts of interest, and whether there was anything else in their backgrounds that the panel should be aware of.

The panel unanimously agreed to recommend John Pullinger for appointment.

### **Statutory consultation**

The Speaker's Committee considered the panel's report at its meeting on 26 January. It agreed to put John Pullinger's name forward for statutory consultation with party leaders.

Mr Speaker subsequently wrote to the leader of each registered party to which two or more Members of the House of Commons belong, seeking their views on Mr Pullinger's appointment. No objections were received.

### **Next steps**

The Speaker's Committee will meet John Pullinger at 9.45am on Monday 1 March. The meeting will be held virtually and will be broadcast on the Parliament website.

Following this meeting, the Committee and Mr Speaker will consider whether to recommend Mr Pullinger's appointment to the House of Commons. If so, a motion will be tabled in the House of Commons to the effect that Her Majesty The Queen be requested to appoint Mr Pullinger. This motion will be subject to debate and decision in the House of Commons. It is proposed that he be appointed for a four-year term.