

Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP
Speaker of the House of Commons
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

04 November 2025

Dear Mr Speaker

I am writing ahead of our meeting on 11 November to provide an update on the Commission's activity and priorities.

Since we last appeared in front of the Committee, and thanks to its support and investment, we have begun delivering our new Corporate Plan. We are making good progress in many areas of work including the Political Finance Online project and strengthening our cyber security. The Commission has now achieved Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation with a 100% pass rate, giving us and our partners external assurance that we have strong information security.

We are expanding our democratic education work, and we strongly agree with the Speaker's Conference on the role of education in tackling the issue of candidate abuse and intimidation. As you know, we are already working with schools, colleges and young people to grow their understanding of our democratic system, and develop their skills in media literacy, debating and how to argue robustly but respectfully. We are looking closely at all the Conference's recommendations, including on codes of conduct and will write to you shortly with more detail on our thinking.

Elections

The Commission is working closely with a range of organisations, including the Defending Democracy Taskforce, the Ethics and Integrity Commission, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, police, parliamentary security and fellow regulators, to protect the integrity of UK elections. We have also increased engagement with international peers, learning from their recent experiences and sharing best practice.

Our immediate priority is supporting the electoral community to prepare for a significant set of elections in May 2026, including implementing the recent legislative changes in Scotland and Wales. We have produced guidance for administrators to manage the elections in their areas and are working with political parties to offer advice and training. As ever, we will be delivering public awareness activity to ensure voters have the information they need to take part with confidence.

We are also working with partners on new threats in the form of mis- and dis-information, including engaging with the Home Office on plans to run a political deepfake identification pilot early next year, covering the 2026 elections.

We continue to work with our partners in Northern Ireland, looking ahead to the Assembly and local elections in 2027, including on the important issue of candidate safety.

Elections Bill

The UK Government's forthcoming Elections Bill offers an opportunity to make significant improvements to the experience of voters, parties, campaigners and administrators. It will also include new areas of responsibility for the Commission, and work to support stakeholders to prepare for and manage the changes. We are currently working closely with MHCLG officials to ensure the legislation is workable and effective in all parts of the United Kingdom. A number of proposed changes require specific consideration in respect of Northern Ireland, including donor checks, and voter registration and the franchise given the different arrangements for electoral administration.

We will be engaging with parliamentarians in the coming months as they consider the proposals included in the legislation.

Finances

As budgeted for in our Main Estimate, we are scaling up our work to prepare for the implementation of these changes, but we await further detail on the legislation to better understand the cost implications for future years. Given the current significant uncertainty, we have avoided including speculative costs for 2026/27 and will propose using the annual budget process to request additional funding should it be required. We recently carried out an impact assessment for MHCLG on the Bill, and a significant proportion of the Commission's costs are expected to be associated with the recruitment of additional staff to reflect new functions and responsibilities. We also expect to undertake substantial public awareness activity ahead of the introduction of votes at 16.

In terms of our Supplementary Estimate for this year, we anticipate returning around £3.7m of resource funding. Following a risk assessment, funds for events such as an unscheduled Northern Ireland Assembly election, non-pay inflationary increase provisions, National Insurance Contribution increases, and some by-elections will be surrendered as these are now highly unlikely to materialise. Additionally, we have recognised cost reductions from our Main Estimate as more detailed information became available on the phasing of recruitment and project activity, as well as efforts to deliver efficiencies including contractual savings and rebates on utility costs. We intend to retain a proportion of our funded contingency given that a number of contingent events remain relevant until the end of the financial year. These include the implementation of a new performance related pay regime and opportunities to accelerate spend in strategic areas of importance, such as targeting misinformation by using new technologies to counter deepfake AI.

I hope this overview of our ongoing work is helpful, and I look forward to discussing these and other areas with you and the Committee next week.

Yours sincerely,



John Pullinger
Chair