

Political Parties, Elections and Referendums
Act 2000



The Speaker

Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission

Fourth Report of 2026

Appointment and reappointment of
nominated Electoral Commissioners

Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission

The Speaker's Committee is a statutory body whose role is defined by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended by the Elections Act 2022, and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The work of the Committee relates to the Electoral Commission and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The Committee reviews the annual estimates of resources of the Electoral Commission and LGBCE, in order to ensure they are consistent with the economical, efficient and effective discharge of their functions. It also considers the two organisations' five-year plans.

The Speaker's Committee oversees the recruitment processes for the Chair of the Electoral Commission, Electoral Commissioners and the Chair of the LGBCE. The candidates for these posts are then approved by the House of Commons and appointed by the King.

The Speaker's Committee also has the power to examine the performance by the Electoral Commission of the Commission's duty to have regard to a Strategy and Policy Statement. The Committee is one of the three bodies the Government is statutorily required to consult before the Secretary of State can lay a Strategy and Policy Statement for Parliament's approval.

Current membership

[Rt. Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle](#) (Speaker; Chorley) (Chair)

[Samantha Dixon MBE](#) (Labour; Chester North and Neston)

[Florence Eshalomi](#) (Labour; Vauxhall and Camberwell Green)

[Simon Hoare](#) (Conservative; North Dorset)

[Rachel Hopkins](#) (Labour; Luton South and South Bedfordshire)

[Alison McGovern](#) (Labour; Birkenhead)

[Rt. Hon. Steve Reed OBE](#) (Labour; Streatham and Croydon North)

[Lisa Smart](#) (Liberal Democrat; Hazel Grove)

[Rt. Hon. Sir Jeremy Wright](#) (Conservative; Kenilworth and Southam)

Powers

The Speaker's Committee is appointed in accordance with the provisions of section 2 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendum Act 2000 to perform the functions conferred on it by that Act.

Publication

This Report was presented for laying before the House of Commons in the name of the Speaker pursuant to paragraph 1(1) of schedule 2 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 on 6 July 2026.

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Contents

Appointment and reappointment of nominated Electoral Commissioners	1
Introduction	1
Appointment of Commissioner nominated by the “smaller” parties	2
<i>Assessment panel recommendation</i>	3
Reappointment of Commissioner nominated by the Labour Party	4
Reappointment of Commissioner nominated by the Liberal Democrats	4
Statutory Consultation	5
Approval	5
Appendix 1: Commissioner role and person specification	6
Appendix 2: Mr Hywel Williams’ CV	9

Appointment and reappointment of nominated Electoral Commissioners

Introduction

1. The Electoral Commission was established by Parliament as a body independent of Government. Both the Chair of the Electoral Commission and Electoral Commissioners themselves are appointed by His Majesty the King, following an Address from the House of Commons. The Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission is required under section 3 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA), as amended by the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009, to oversee the procedure for selecting candidates for appointment to the Electoral Commission. Candidates' names are put before the House of Commons with the agreement of the Speaker.
2. Section 5 of the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009, which inserted a new section 3A into PERA, provides for four of the Electoral Commissioners to be persons put forward by the registered leader of a qualifying party for consideration for appointment. These Commissioners are described in the statute as "nominated Commissioners". Three of the Commissioners are nominated respectively by the three largest parties in the House of Commons (currently the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, and the Liberal Democrats). In the case of the fourth nominated Commissioner, the other qualifying parties (the "smaller parties") are all invited to nominate candidates for the one post.
3. The consent of the Speaker and consultation with the registered leaders of each political party to which two or more members of the House of Commons then belong are also required before a motion for an Address may be presented to the House.^{1, 2}

1 Section 3 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended by section 4(2) of the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009.

2 On 10 June 2026, Your Party was recognised as one of the qualifying "smaller parties" under the Act once two MPs were affiliated as members of that Party in the House of Commons.

4. It has been the usual practice of the Speaker's Committee to recommend the appointment of Electoral Commissioners for a standard four-year term. However, in the case of the candidate selected to represent the "smaller" parties it has been the Committee's practice to make the appointment for a shorter term to enable greater rotation between the "smaller" parties, if this is desired. In 2023, the candidate nominated to represent the "smaller" parties was appointed for a three-year fixed term.
5. On this occasion, three vacancies are due to arise on the Electoral Commission:
 - a Commissioner nominated by the "smaller" parties, from 1 October 2026;
 - a Commissioner nominated by the Labour Party, from 1 November 2026; and
 - a Commissioner nominated by the Liberal Democrats, from 1 February 2027.
6. This report provides information about the procedures followed by the Speaker's Committee during the selection of candidates to fill these upcoming vacancies.

Appointment of Commissioner nominated by the "smaller" parties

7. On 6 November 2025, Mr Speaker wrote to the leaders of the "smaller parties" asking them to put forward candidates for consideration as a new nominated Commissioner to fill a vacancy that will arise on 1 October 2026, which will need to be filled by a candidate nominated by the "smaller" parties.³
8. Rhun ap Iorwerth, Leader of Plaid Cymru, wrote to Mr Speaker in response on 18 December 2025 to nominate Hywel Williams, former MP for Arfon, for this appointment. Mr Williams' nomination was also supported by the Scottish National Party, the Green Party and the Social Democratic and Labour Party. No nominations were received from the Democratic Unionist Party or Reform UK.

3 Roseanna Cunningham was appointed as a Commissioner from October 2022 for a four-year term, having been nominated by the SNP. Her tenure as a Commissioner ends on 30 September 2026. Ms Cunningham indicated to the Chair of the Electoral Commission that she did not wish to be considered for reappointment at the end of her first term.

9. Mr Speaker appointed a panel to consider Mr Williams' CV and supporting letter, conduct an interview, and make a recommendation to the Speaker's Committee on his suitability for the role. The interview panel comprised of the following:
- Stephen Gethins MP, then a member of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission;
 - Philippa Helme CB (independent Chair);
 - Rachel Hopkins MP, member of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission; and
 - John Pullinger CB, Chair of the Electoral Commission.
10. The panel interviewed Mr Williams on 20 April 2026. The role and person specification for nominated Electoral Commissioners is set out under Appendix 1.

Assessment panel recommendation

11. The panel's recommendation was that Hywel Williams should go forward as the nominated Commissioner for the "smaller" parties.
12. Overall, the panel agreed that Hywel Williams would bring experience and an understanding of the "smaller" parties and devolved nations to the Electoral Commission, as well as commanding confidence amongst his colleagues and the public. An extract from Mr Williams' CV is reproduced as Appendix 2.
13. Having considered the panel's report and recommendation, we agreed on 21 May 2026 to recommend Mr Hywel Williams' appointment as an Electoral Commissioner and put his name forward for a statutory consultation with the leaders of the qualifying political parties.
14. In line with previous practice, the Committee agreed the appointment should be made on basis of a three-year term.

Reappointment of Commissioner nominated by the Labour Party

15. Mr Speaker wrote on 9 January 2026 to the Prime Minister, as Leader of the Labour Party, asking whether he wished to renominate Mr Chris Ruane for a further term. On 3 March 2026, we received a confirmation that the Prime Minister was content for Mr Ruane to be reappointed as the Commissioner nominated by the Labour Party.
16. Mr John Pullinger provided us with a positive appraisal of Mr Ruane's contribution to the Commission's work. He told us that Mr Ruane had brought his depth of parliamentary and education sector experience to the Commission's Board, and that he was a member of the Commission's remuneration and human resources committee. We were told he had also made a significant contribution to the development of the Commission's new five-year Corporate Plan.
17. In light of Mr Pullinger's assessment, the Speaker's Committee agreed at its meeting on 11 March 2026 to recommend that Chris Ruane be reappointed for a further four-year term, beginning on 1 November 2026.

Reappointment of Commissioner nominated by the Liberal Democrats

18. Ms Shiela Ritchie's first term as the Commissioner will come to an end on 31 January 2027. Ms Ritchie was originally nominated by the Liberal Democrats to represent the "smaller" parties but following the 2024 general election, the Liberal Democrats became the third largest party in the Commons.
19. As Ms Ritchie had indicated that she would be available for reappointment, Mr Speaker wrote on 24 March 2026 to Rt Hon Sir Ed Davey MP, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, asking whether he wished to renominate Ms Ritchie for a further term. On 2 April 2026, Sir Ed Davey wrote to confirm that he was content with Sheila Ritchie's reappointment.
20. Mr John Pullinger provided us with a positive appraisal of Sheila Ritchie's contribution to the Commission's work. He told us that Sheila Ritchie had brought experience of party campaigning to the Commission and that she had been a member of the Commission's audit and risk committee. We were also told she had made a significant contribution to the development of the Commission's new five-year Corporate Plan.
21. In light of Mr Pullinger's assessment, the Speaker's Committee agreed on 21 May 2026 to recommend that Sheila Ritchie be reappointed for a four-year term, beginning on 1 February 2027.

Statutory Consultation

22. Section 3(2)(b) of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended, requires that the proposal to appoint (or reappoint) a member of the Electoral Commission be 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. Mr Speaker accordingly wrote to the leaders of the qualifying on 26 March 2026 and 21 May 2026.⁴⁵ No objections or concerns were received in response to the Speaker's consultations.

Approval

23. **CONCLUSION**

The Committee invites the House to approve an Address to His Majesty for:

- the appointment of Mr Hywel Williams as an Electoral Commissioner for a for three-year term, commencing 1 October 2026,
- the reappointment of Mr Chris Ruane as an Electoral Commissioner for a four-year term, commencing from 1 November 2026, and
- the reappointment of Ms Sheila Ritchie as an Electoral Commissioner for a four-year term, commencing 1 February 2027.

4 The Committee consulted on Mr Ruane's position on 26 March 2026 and on Mr Williams' and Mr Ritchie's appointments on 21 May 2026.

5 The Leader of Your Pary was consulted on 22 June 2026, following that party having two Members affiliated to it in the House of Commons from 10 June 2026.

Appendix 1: Commissioner role and person specification

Electoral Commissioners are responsible for and carry out the following duties:

- Set the overall strategic direction of the Commission across the UK and ensure delivery of its strategic goals within the statutory framework and with the resources determined by the UK, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments to ensure public confidence in democracy;
- Contribute to the Commission's role as a UK-wide body, understanding the issues faced on a UK-wide level and effectively supporting the work of the devolved parliaments.
- Set the Commission's priorities and monitor its activity – including, for example, approving strategy and expenditure on promotion of public awareness of UK electoral arrangements, and the oversight of the publication of statutory election reports;
- Consider key policy issues within the Commission's remit – this may include for example matters relating to the regulatory framework for political parties and candidates, the conduct of elections and referendums; oversight of statutory schemes such as policy development grants to political parties; and review of the overall framework of performance standards for local authority electoral registration and returning officers;
- Ensure efficient and effective use of public funds, that the Commission operates within the limits of its statutory authority to high standards of governance, and that it manages risk effectively; and
- Ensure that the Commission understands and responds to technological and societal change which will impact on the democratic process in the years ahead.

They may also be asked to:

- Serve as a member on the Audit and Risk or Remuneration and Human Resources Committees and participate in informal groups from time to time; and

- Perform other related roles or functions which the Commission asks you to discharge personally.

Person specification

It is desirable that, in common with other Commissioners, nominees for the post of nominated Commissioner should be able to demonstrate substantial successful experience and/or understanding of:

- Experience in contributing to the leadership and strategic direction of a comparably complex organisation, reviewing financial and other resource plans, and the ability to scrutinise and challenge, whether in a non-executive or executive role engaging with a board.
- Ability to provide visible and authoritative leadership, and to act with independence, credibility and objectivity in complex environments, demonstrating complete integrity and commitment to transparency in decision making.
- Supportive team member who can work well with both fellow Commissioners, staff of the Commission and others, able to build consensus and deal with issues of ambiguity.
- Understanding of the relevance of equality, diversity, and inclusion to the work of the Electoral Commission and a track record of supporting positive outcomes in this area.
- Understanding of the UK-wide democratic context in which the Electoral Commission operates and of the challenges and opportunities ahead.

In addition, nominees for the post of nominated Commissioner should be able to demonstrate that they have:

- Highly-developed political understanding and awareness including the ability to work closely and productively with colleagues from other political parties.
- Excellent analytical ability and in particular the ability to think clearly about regulatory decisions from a principles-based perspective.
- The ability to apply regulatory frameworks in and to a political environment.
- The ability to scrutinise and challenge from a non-executive perspective, including the ability to comment on issues involving a wide range of conflicting viewpoints.

- Knowledge of key corporate governance issues including those with particular relevance to the work of the Commission.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills with the ability to win the confidence of colleagues and operate as a team player.
- Complete integrity and a commitment to transparency in decision making and a knowledge of, and commitment to, the principles of public life.

Appendix 2:

Mr Hywel Williams' CV

Previous roles and employment

2001	Elected Plaid Cymru Member of Parliament for Caernarfon:
2004–05	Draft Mental Health Bill (Joint Committee)
2004–10	Welsh Affairs Committee
2005	Re-elected for Caernarfon:
2005–15	Panel of Chairs
2010	Following boundary changes elected to the new seat of Arfon.
2015, 2017 & 2019	Re-elected for Arfon:
2010–15	Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art
2012–14	Science, Innovation and Technology Committee

Committee Memberships

2004–05	Draft Mental Health Bill (Joint Committee)
2004–10	Welsh Affairs Committee
2005–15	Panel of Chairs
2010–15	Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art
2012–14	Science, Innovation and Technology Committee
2014	Welsh Affairs Committee
2015–17	Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art
2017–19	Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art
2017–19	Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union

2020–21	Speaker’s Advisory Committee on Works of Art
2021	Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill
2021	Health and Care Bill
2022–23	Welsh Grand Committee
2023	Powers of Attorney Bill
2023	Media Bill

Academic Career

1985

- Joined the new North and West Wales Social Work Practice Centre at Bangor University developing its groundbreaking Welsh medium teaching provision and publications.
- Author of ‘Geirfa Gwaith Cymdeithasol’ the standard Welsh social work vocabulary (University of Wales Press 1992).
- Developed a standard short course on language awareness in the context of anti-discriminatory practice.

1987 (and then annually):

- Published the first uprating guidance chart of welfare benefits in Welsh.

1987–1993:

- Member of the Welsh Committee of the Central Council for Education in Social Work (CCETSW).
- Chair of CCETSW’s Welsh Language Sub-Committee and joint author of its pioneering 1989 Welsh Language Policy, well ahead of the 1993 Welsh Language Act.
- Jointly authored and edited publications and initiatives for CCETSW and UWP.

1992:

- Dissolution of the Language Sub-Committee as its activity was by then sufficiently embedded in the work of the main Welsh Committee.

1993:

- Appointed Head of the Practice Centre, responsible for its work to seven partners and funders, the University, 3 local authorities, 1 probation service, CCETSW and the Welsh Office.