House Administration Response: Campaign material

Cat Smith
Chair, Procedure Committee

Dear Ms Smith,

Thank you for your committee's report Elections within the House of Commons, published 11 February 2026. We are writing in response to the recommendation in paragraph 104, relating to the election of select committee chairs

> *We recommend that the House Administration facilitate giving each candidate the opportunity to film a short video to be published through the Parliamentary website. The House Administration should trial this in any by-elections for select committee chairs during this Parliament, ahead of its full introduction at the start of the next Parliament. The House Administration should report back to us within three months on how this could be facilitated in practical terms, and further report back on its operation in any by-elections held before the end of the Parliament.*

We are replying on behalf of the House Administration and our respective Teams will be leading efforts to pilot an approach to implementing the recommendation with a view to having a fully worked plan in place for the start of the next Parliament.

Offering each nominated candidate the opportunity to film a short video to be published through the Parliamentary website as recommended would be a substantial undertaking – House staff would need to schedule appointments with candidates; and conduct the filming, editing and clearance process with candidates who will be subject to the pressures on time that all Members face. In the last full round of Select Committee Chair elections in September 2024, there were a total of 52 candidates standing for 27 posts; we would need to prepare to be able to roll out the offer for a potentially significantly larger number. We also know from experience that some nominations will come in shortly before the deadline.

Timelines

Standing Order No. 122B provides for the closure of nominations at 5pm the day before the election is held (or 12pm for by-elections under SO No. 122C). However, the Speaker has the power to vary the timings for elections set out in the Standing Orders. For the last set of Chair elections at the start of this Parliament, the deadline for nominations was Monday at 4pm for elections on the Wednesday.

The Committee acknowledged in its report the challenges of producing the booklet of candidates in the short time between the closure of nominations and the election. It also noted the desirability of Members having more time to study the material and recommended that the Speaker use his powers on a pilot basis to facilitate this. The addition of recording videos will also require lengthening this period – especially at the start of a Parliament, when there may be 50-60 videos (or more) to film and edit. We will engage with the Committee further on the implications of this for the timeline as proposals are developed and the pilots progress. We would expect that the appropriate period will vary from election

to election but would be likely to require nominations closing the week before a Wednesday election.

Rules applying to videos

Members will be responsible for the content of their videos, and they will not be branded as House productions. At the same time, hosting video material on parliamentary channels involves accessibility, legal and reputational considerations.

We will therefore engage with the Committee on a set of light touch rules to meet these concerns which we can review as the pilot progresses. As a starting point, these should include rules requiring subtitling (which we can help with), ensuring legal use of copyrighted material, and around references to third parties, including other Members. We anticipate that the nature of the elections process will mean the inclusion of unsuitable or unparliamentary material in videos is unlikely. Decisions regarding the application of these rules would be made by House staff under the authority of the Speaker.

Given the tight timescales involved and the numbers of potential candidates involved, we would propose that videos should be limited in duration to two minutes. In order to ensure all candidates have a level playing field we suggest the videos would be filmed by House staff in a set venue on the parliamentary estate (such as a committee room), with the same backdrop, and would be restricted to "piece to camera" format. This will provide consistency in terms of production values and format and avoid a difference in quality (which might lead to a perceived difference in message) which might occur if Members were to arrange their own filming and production of their videos.

We will share a draft of guidance for Members, incorporating these rules, prior to the first pilot.

Resource implications

For elections at the start of a Parliament, we would expect the bulk of video production and editing to support candidates to be done by Select Committee Team and Central Communications staff alongside their other responsibilities. Demand after an election may be unpredictable with substantial numbers of nominations coming in late in the day; we will explore the scope for use to be made of external support if required. Use of any external support would represent an additional expense.

For by-elections to posts that become vacant during the course of a Parliament, this additional demand on Select Committee Team and Central Communications Teams may coincide with high levels of demand from Committees or other stakeholders in the House. We would identify this work as a priority for the House consequent on the agreement of rules relating to campaigning on 28 April and would look to mitigate any risks to other priorities through a collaborative approach between SCT and Central Communications.

Distribution

Edited videos will be made available through parliamentary channels and linked to beside their nomination on the parliament website; they will be taken offline after the election. Videos may take up to 48 hours to be published online.

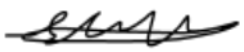
Timing of the pilot

As proposed by the Procedure Committee, we propose to trial this approach in forthcoming by-elections and will come back to the Committee to consider lessons learned. We would propose not to operate the pilot for the current election of the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee. We would look to begin the pilot, with your agreement for any other future Committee Chair by-elections.

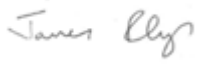
We both look forward to discussing the points raised in this letter with you at the most appropriate opportunity and look forward to working with you further on this.

We are copying this letter to Dame Meg Hillier as Chair of the Liaison Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Liz Hickey
Director of Communications



James Rhys
Managing Director of the Select Committee Team