

POLITICAL PARTIES, ELECTIONS AND
REFERENDUMS ACT 2000



**THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE
ON THE ELECTORAL
COMMISSION**

THIRD REPORT 2021

Re-appointment of an Electoral Commissioner

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 7 July 2021*

The Speaker's Committee

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

Membership

[Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP](#), Speaker of the House of Commons (Chair)

[Rt Hon Michael Gove MP](#), Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*

[Luke Hall MP](#), Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government in the Members section

[Craig Mackinlay MP](#)

[Christian Matheson MP](#)

[Karl McCartney MP](#)

[Cat Smith MP](#)

[Owen Thompson MP](#)

[William Wragg MP](#), Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Previous Publications

First Report 2021 was published 3 March 2021 as HC 1276 of Session 2019–21

Second Report 2021 was published 7 July 2021 as HC 522 of Session 2021–22

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* Michael Gove's membership of the committee is exercisable concurrently with any Minister in the Cabinet Office with responsibilities in relation to the constitution

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Re-appointment of an Electoral Commissioner

1. The Electoral Commission was established by Parliament as a body independent of the Government. The Chair of the Electoral Commission and the other Electoral Commissioners are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen, following an Address from the House of Commons. The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2009, provides for the Electoral Commission to have nine or ten Commissioners.* The Commission comprises:

- Up to six ‘ordinary’ Commissioners who are subject to restrictions on political activity and who are recruited by competition, under a procedure put in place and overseen by the Speaker’s Committee; and
- Four ‘nominated’ commissioners, who are persons put forwards by the registered leader of a qualifying party for consideration for appointment

2. The Speaker’s Committee on the Electoral Commission is required by section 3 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended by the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009, to oversee the procedure for selecting candidates for appointment to the Electoral Commission. Under section 3(5A) of the Act, this duty encompasses the recommendation of candidates for re-appointment to the Electoral Commission. There is no presumption in the statute either for or against re-appointment.

Sarah Chambers

3. The current term of office of Sarah Chambers, an ‘ordinary’ Commissioner, expires on 30 March 2022. She has served as an Electoral Commissioner since 31 March 2018.

4. Sarah Chambers was previously Chief Executive of the Postal Services Commission, from 2004 to 2008. She has also been a board and committee member of a number of public organisations, including the Competition and Markets Authority, the Bar Standards Board and the Judicial Appointments Commission. She is currently Chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel.

5. At our meeting on 12 May 2021, we discussed a letter from John Pullinger CB, Chair of the Electoral Commission, inviting us to consider re-appointing Sarah Chambers for a second term. Mr Pullinger included an appraisal of Sarah Chambers’ work as an Electoral Commissioner over her first term, which drew on his conversations with the Chief Executive and other Commissioners. Mr Pullinger’s appraisal was positive, pointing to the contributions Sarah Chambers had made to shaping the Commission’s plans, as a member of the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee, and as the Commissioner representative on the Regulation Steering Group. Mr Pullinger added that she had met the high expectations of performance set for all Commissioners. He concluded that he had no hesitation in recommending her for re-appointment.

6. Having considered John Pullinger’s appraisal, we concluded that we were content to recommend Sarah Chambers for re-appointment, subject to the statutory consultation with the relevant party leaders.

* S1(3) of the 2000 Act as amended by s6 of the 2009 Act

Statutory consultation

7. Section 3(2)(b) of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended, also requires that the proposal to appoint (or re-appoint) 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 parties giving them a deadline by which to respond. Mr Speaker indicated that if he did not receive a reply by this date that he would proceed on the basis that the leaders were content for the appointment to be made. No objections were received.

8. Appointments to the Electoral Commission are made by Her Majesty on an Address from the House of Commons. We commend to the House the re-appointment of Sarah Chambers for a four-year term.