



PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 6 October 2020

[Items highlighted will be redacted before publication of the Minutes]

Present:

L. Ashton of Hyde	L. Morris of Aberavon
L. Eames	L. Newby
B. Evans of Bowes Park	B. Smith of Basildon
L. Geddes	L. Stoneham of Droxford
B. Harris of Richmond	B. Thomas of Winchester
L. Judge	V. Ullswater
L. McAvoy	B. Warwick of Undercliffe
L. McFall of Alcluith (Chair)	L. Whitty
L. Mancroft	

with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

The Chair welcomed Lord Whitty to the Committee.

1. Ping Pong in Hybrid House

The Chief Whip had written a letter to the Committee setting out a proposal for changes to the procedures for the Hybrid House to allow the timely consideration of Commons amendments to bills. He explained that if the current hybrid House procedures were applied to consideration of Commons amendments, a round of “ping pong” could take up a week to complete. The proposal contained in the letter was that one Government, Labour and Liberal Democrat frontbencher and one nominated Crossbencher would be able to participate either physically or remotely per group, and where a Member tabled a counter proposition to a Commons message, that Member would also be able to take part physically or remotely. No other Members would be able to take part remotely but any Member could take part physically. His proposal had been agreed by the Usual Channels.

The Leader of the Opposition supported the proposals put forward by the Government and said that by the time a bill reaches these late stages, the issues had already been well debated. These proposals were an attempt to replicate as closely as possible the House’s usual rhythms for ping pong in physical sittings. The Leader of the Liberal Democrats and the Convenor associated themselves with these remarks.

The Chairman then introduced a paper which invited the Committee to agree wording for a report to the House and for the hybrid House guidance to give effect to these proposals. The Committee agreed to add to paragraph 8, “Members not intending to speak on the



group under discussion should give priority to members who do.” and that paragraph 10 of the draft should be changed to read, “A member intending to oppose the Minister’s motion must give notice by tabling an amendment.” The Committee also agreed to dispense with reasons Committees in the hybrid House in the interests of expediency.

The Committee **agreed** the draft report and the resulting amendments to the hybrid House guidance.

2. Amendments to Hybrid House guidance relating to debates on SIs

The Chair told the Committee that the Liberal Democrat Chief Whip and several Deputy Speakers had raised the current inability of members to intervene during a Minister’s winding speech on a statutory instrument with him. The clerk introduced a paper which set out a model which would allow limited scope for interventions following the Minister’s speech.

Lord Stoneham of Droxford said that he thought the opportunity for spontaneous debate was lacking in the hybrid House procedures and this would bring a small amount of spontaneity to proceedings on Statutory Instruments. The Government Chief Whip said that whilst he would agree with this proposal, he wanted the Committee to discourage members from using this unless necessary and to limit the questions and replies to two minutes maximum.

The Committee **agreed** the proposal set out in the paper and further agreed that two minutes should be allowed for these exchanges from within the existing time limits for debates on Statutory Instruments.

3. Draft report to the House on decisions previously agreed

The clerk introduced a draft report to formalise changes to the Standing Orders and Companion which the Committee had already agreed on the following issues:

- Leave of Absence
- Committee rotations
- Changes to procedure relating to legislation
- Deletion of Standing Order 76
- Wording in the Companion relating to "the closure"
- Wording in the Companion relating to "That the noble Lord be no longer heard"
- Changes to SO 64

The report also contained the revised procedures relating to notifying the House when legislative consent had been refused which the Committee had agreed at its previous meeting.

The Committee **agreed** the report.

4. Any Other Business



The Clerk of the Parliaments suggested to the Committee that while social distancing remained in place, peers should be allowed to speak from the Bishops' benches if they were not being used by bishops. The Committee **agreed** that the hybrid House guidance should be updated to include this change.

The Usual Channels reported that their discussions on the representation of members from minority parties on Speakers' Lists were ongoing and they would report to the Committee in due course.

The Leader of the Opposition said that she had seen some members of the House being too robust with the doorkeepers when the doorkeepers had told them there was no room for them in the Chamber because of social distancing. The Committee **agreed** that the Chair should remind members of the need to treat staff with courtesy and respect in his next all-member email.

Chloe Mawson
Clerk of the Procedure Committee