



Procedure Committee

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From Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, Chair

Wendy Chamberlain MP

House of Commons

22 November 2021

Dear Wendy

Thank you for your letter of 16 November relating to voting and the Wright Reforms, which the Committee considered at its meeting this afternoon.

On the question of whether a Member should not be permitted to vote on their own suspension, you cite paragraph 5.17 of *Erskine May*. As you note, the grounds for a motion of objection under that process relate to a direct, immediate and personal financial interest. While the prospect of a 30-day suspension would clearly have had a financial consequence for Mr Paterson, there is a prior question of whether he should have voted at all.

The conventions of the House are that while a Member may speak at the start of a debate on their suspension, they should subsequently withdraw. The clear implication of that convention is that a Member would not return to vote in any relevant division. It may be that this convention needs codification, but there may be alternatives to doing so through Standing Orders in general, and S.O. No. 39 in particular.

As you may be aware, the Committee on Standards is nearing the conclusion of its inquiry into the Code of Conduct. I have copied our correspondence to the Chair of that Committee to seek his Committee's view on whether the Code might be a better vehicle for setting the matter on a firmer footing.

You have also raised the question of the management of parliamentary time. The Constitution Unit's recent report *Taking Back Control: Why the House of Commons Should Govern its Own Time* considered the matter in some detail, including the legacy of the Wright Committee. That Committee had impact because it enjoyed a high degree of support from the Government from an early stage.

Ultimately, the initiative for and success of procedural reform lies with the Government. Rather than risk duplicating the thorough work conducted by the Constitution Unit,

the Committee has agreed in principle to raise the matter at its next meeting with the Leader, as part of the wider question of what constitutes 'House business' and how it should be treated.

I would be happy to discuss either matter with you and have asked the Clerk of the Committee to arrange a time for us to speak.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP

cc. Chris Bryant MP