

PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25 November at 2.30pm

Present:

Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Chair)	Lord Mancroft
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Lord McFall of Alcluith
Lord Eames	Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Lord Newby
Lord Faulkner of Worcester	Baroness Quin
Lord Geddes	Baroness Smith of Basildon
Baroness Harris of Richmond	Lord Stoneham of Droxford
Lord Judge	Baroness Thomas of Winchester
Lord Kennedy of Southwark	Viscount Ullswater

with the Clerk of the Parliaments.

1. Apologies for absence

An apology was received from Lord Bew.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were *agreed*.

3. Review of Retained Hybrid House procedures

The Senior Deputy Speaker introduced the paper (PC/21-22/13). He explained that the Committee was being asked to consider the issue of the queue for oral questions as a result of representations from Lord Naseby and Baroness Thornhill.

The Committee unanimously agreed that they preferred the ballot system for allocating oral questions. Members also felt that there were not widespread concerns about it.

4. Debate before second reading in Grand Committee

The Senior Deputy Speaker asked the Chief Whip to introduce the paper (PC/21-22/14 and PC/21-22/15).

The Chief Whip explained that he and the Leader of the House were trying to introduce some formal procedures around a process that had been used a few times before. He explained that the procedure proposed was analogous to the one used for SIs in Grand Committee.

The Committee discussed the reasons for making this change and agreed that the report must explain these. The Committee also discussed how it would be decided which bills could have their debate before second reading in Grand Committee, and the need to explain such decisions to members in a sensitive manner. They agreed that the report should make it clear that bills could only be subject to this procedure with the agreement of the usual channels and the House.

The Chief Whip confirmed that this procedure would not reduce the current minimum intervals between stages.

The Committee *agreed* the recommendations in the paper.

5. Pass-Reader Voting

The Chair introduced the paper (PC/21-22/16).

The Committee *agreed* that they still want to go ahead with pass reader voting once the public health situation had improved.

The Committee agreed to consider a further draft report which would suggest removing the pass readers from all locations other than the division lobbies and reinstating tellers, with a view to getting the report agreed in the House in January or February. The pass-reader system could then be implemented once COVID rates were reduced enough to allow safe use of the lobbies.

6. Leave of Absence

The Chair introduced the paper (PC/21-22/17).

The Committee agreed to amend the text of proposed new standing order 21 (7A) to say that the House “may” refuse or end leave of absence, rather than “shall” refuse or end leave of absence. The Committee noted that this change would make no difference to the operation of SO 21, which would continue to be delegated to the Clerk of the Parliaments, consulting the Leave of Absence Sub-Committee (or its ex officio members) as necessary.

7. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed recent changes to table clerks’ uniforms and agreed that they were content with the outcome.

The Leader of the Opposition raised the question of the sitting times of the House on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The Committee agreed that staff should undertake preliminary work to assess the factors that would need to be considered if sitting times were to be changed.

The Committee will meet again on Tuesday 18 January at 12 noon.

Christopher Johnson
Clerk of the Journals