



## BRIEFING PAPER

Number 7176, 12 March 2020

# Select committees: election of chairs and members

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## 1. Committees whose chairs are elected by the whole House

The chairs of the following select committees are elected by the House in accordance with paragraphs (2) to (14) of [Standing Order No 122B](#) to serve as chair throughout the Parliament. At the beginning of the 2019 Parliament, these are:

- the 20 departmental select committees appointed under Standing Order No 152:

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy;	International Trade;
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport;	Justice;
Defence;	Northern Ireland Affairs;
Education;	Science and Technology;
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;	Scottish Affairs;
Foreign Affairs;	Transport;
Health and Social Care;	Treasury;
Home Affairs;	Welsh Affairs;
Housing, Communities and Local Government;	Women and Equalities; <sup>1</sup> and Work and Pensions.
International Development;	

- the Environmental Audit Committee;
- the Petitions Committee;
- the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee;<sup>2</sup>
- the Committee of Public Accounts;
- the Procedure Committee; and
- the Committee on Standards.

In addition, the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee is elected each Session in accordance with [Standing Order No 122D](#).<sup>3</sup>

### Committee on Exiting the European Union

During the 2015 Parliament and at the beginning of the 2017, the House agreed temporary Standing Orders to establish the Committee on Exiting the European Union Committee. The House also agreed that the Committee's chair should be elected by the whole House.<sup>4</sup>

Standing Order No 122A sets term limits for select committee chairs of two full Parliaments or eight years. On 21 January 2020, the House [agreed](#) to disapply Standing Order No 122A for the 2019 Parliament. In the 2017 Parliament, on 18 April 2018, the [House agreed](#) to extend the limit to 10 years for the remainder of the 2017 Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> On 3 June 2015, the House added the Women and Equalities Committee to this list, with effect until the end of the 2015 Parliament [[HC Deb 3 June 2015 cc704-720](#)]. A motion to make this a permanent select committee under Standing Order No 152 was agreed to on 4 July 2017 [[HC Deb 4 July 2017 cc1077-1088](#)]

<sup>2</sup> formerly Select Committee on Public Administration: it was renamed and its terms of reference were amended on 3 June 2015 [[HC Deb 3 June 2015 c720](#)]

<sup>3</sup> See section 3

<sup>4</sup> On 11 October 2016, the Exiting the European Union Committee was established and added to list of committees whose Chair is elected by the whole House [[HC Deb 11 October 2016 cc254-260](#)]. The Committee was appointed until the end of the 2015 Parliament. A motion to re-establish this Committee in the 2017 Parliament,

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On 16 January 2020, the House agreed to appoint the Committee on Exiting the European Union for twelve months.<sup>5</sup> (The Committee was included in the motion to allocate chairs, tabled on 9 January 2020 (see section 2).)

On 2 March 2020, the Committee on Exiting the EU was renamed the Committee on the Future Relationship with the EU.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Allocation of select committee chairs between the parties

On the day after his election, the Speaker is required to “communicate to the leaders of each party represented in the House the proportion of chairs of select committees to be elected under this order falling to each such party which would reflect the composition of the House”.<sup>7</sup>

The parties entitled to one or more chairs of select committees subject to election then determine from which party each chair is to come.

A motion, tabled in the name of the leaders of those parties, specifies the allocation of the chairs between the parties. The motion allocating chairs to parties does not have to match the proportions which the Speaker communicated to the party leaders.

Under Standing Order No 122B (3) and (5), if the motion tabled by the party leaders is debated within a week of the Queen’s Speech, debate is limited to one hour. If two weeks elapse without the party leaders tabling such a motion, any Member can propose an allocation of chairs. On 20 December 2019, the House agreed to extend the one-week period to three weeks and the two-week period to four weeks (to allow for the Christmas Recess).<sup>8</sup>

At the beginning of the 2019 Parliament, the election of the Speaker took place on 17 December, and the Queen’s Speech on 19 December.<sup>9</sup>

On 9 January 2020, the leaders of the three parties entitled to chairs tabled a motion to allocate the chairs among the parties.<sup>10</sup>

The motion was agreed, without debate or division, on 16 January 2020:

#### **Select committees appointed under Standing Order No. 152:**

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Labour
Defence	Conservative
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	Conservative
Education	Conservative
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Conservative

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and to provide for the election of the Chair, was agreed to on 4 July 2017 [[HC Deb 4 July 2017 cc1077-1088](#)]

<sup>5</sup> [HC Deb 16 January 2020 c1266-1267](#)

<sup>6</sup> [HC Deb 2 March 2020 c712](#)

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons, *Standing Orders – Public Business, 2019*, November 2019, HC 314 2019, [Standing Order No 122B](#) (2)

<sup>8</sup> [HC Deb 20 December 2019 c145](#)

<sup>9</sup> [HC Deb 17 December 2019 cc2-4](#); [HC Deb 19 December 2019 cc31-33](#)

<sup>10</sup> House of Commons, Order of Business, 13 January 2020, [Remaining Orders Item 6](#)

Foreign Affairs	Conservative
Health and Social Care	Conservative
Home Affairs	Labour
Housing, Communities and Local Government	Labour
International Development	Labour
International Trade	Scottish National Party
Justice	Conservative
Northern Ireland Affairs	Conservative
Science and Technology	Conservative
Scottish Affairs	Scottish National Party
Transport	Conservative
Treasury	Conservative
Welsh Affairs	Conservative
Women and Equalities	Conservative
Work and Pensions	Labour

**Other specified select committees:**

Environmental Audit	Conservative
Exiting the European Union	Labour
Petitions	Labour
Procedure	Conservative
Public Accounts	Labour
Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs	Conservative
Standards	Labour <sup>11</sup>

The Government indicated that it planned to make Machinery of Government changes after the UK left the EU. In response to a question from Valerie Vaz, the Leader of the House, Jacob Rees-Mogg “absolutely assure[d] the right hon. Lady that any changes that are made will lead to consultation with the Opposition about any changes to Committees”.<sup>12</sup> As noted above, the Committee on Exiting the European Union was renamed the Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union.

**Box 1: Allocation of chairs – 2010, 2015 and 2017**

**2010:** A motion to allocate the chairs of the 19 departmental select committees appointed under Standing Order No 152 and four further committees specified under Standing Order No 122B (1) was agreed on 26 May 2010, the day after the Queen’s Speech.<sup>13</sup>

**2015:** A motion to allocate the chairs of the 20<sup>14</sup> departmental select committees appointed under Standing Order No 152 and six<sup>15</sup> further committees specified under Standing Order No 122B (1) was agreed on 3 June 2015, one week after the Queen’s Speech.<sup>16</sup>

**2017:** A motion to allocate the chairs of the 20 departmental select committees appointed under Standing Order No 152 and seven further committees specified under Standing Order No 122(B) (1) was agreed on 4 July 2017, almost two weeks after the Queen’s Speech.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [HC Deb 16 January 2020 cc1267-1268](#)

<sup>12</sup> [HC Deb 9 January 2020 cc618](#)

<sup>13</sup> [HC Deb 26 May cc171-173](#)

<sup>14</sup> Including the Women and Equalities Committee, appointed for the duration of the 2015 Parliament

<sup>15</sup> The Petitions Committee was established on 24 February 2015 [[HC Deb 25 February 2015 cc248-256](#)]; the House ordered that the Chair of the Committee on Standards should be elected by the House on 17 March 2015 [[HC Deb 17 March 2015 cc695-706](#)]

<sup>16</sup> [HC Deb 3 June 2015 cc720-721](#)

<sup>17</sup> [HC Deb 4 July 2017 cc1077-1088](#)

### 3. Nomination and election of select committee chairs

The procedure for nominating candidates for chairs is set out in [Standing Order No 122B](#) (8).

The Speaker used his powers under Standing Order No 122B to shorten the two-week period between the House agreeing the allocation of chairs between the parties and their election.

On 16 January 2020, following the agreement of the allocation of chairs, the Deputy Speaker announced that elections would be held on Wednesday 29 January, with nominations closing at 4pm on Monday 27 January. The same timetable would apply for the election of the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee.<sup>18</sup>

Details of the nomination and election process were set out in the *Announcements* section of the Order Paper:

#### **ELECTION OF SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

##### **Nominations**

Nominations must be received in writing in the Table Office by 4pm on Monday 27 January.

Each nomination must consist of a signed statement made by the candidate declaring their willingness to stand, accompanied by the signatures of 15 Members elected to the House as members of the same party as the candidate, or ten per cent of the members of that party, whichever is the lower. Statements may (optionally) be accompanied by signatures of up to five Members elected to the House as members of any party other than that to which the candidate belongs, or members of no party. In the case of the Backbench Business Committee, candidates require signatures of between 20 and 25 Members, of whom no fewer than 10 shall be members of a party represented in Her Majesty's Government and no fewer than 10 shall be members of another party or no party.

No Member may sign more than one such statement in relation to candidates for the same chair; if any Member does so, their signature will no longer be valid. Candidates for select committee chairs should declare any relevant interests. Candidates also have the option of providing a 500-word supporting statement. Nominations will be published in the House's business papers and on the Parliament website each day.

As soon as possible after the close of nominations, the full list of candidates and their sponsors will be placed in the Table Office and the Vote Office in the Members' Lobby and will be published on the website. A booklet will also be published containing a photograph of each candidate, supporting signatures, any declared interests and any supporting statement.

##### **Ballot and count**

The ballot will be held in Committee Room 16 between 10am and 4pm on Wednesday 29 January.

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<sup>18</sup> [HC Deb 16 January 2020 c1269](#)

Members should vote by ranking as many candidates as they wish in order of preference, marking 1 by the name of their first preference, 2 by the name of their second preference, and so on.

The ballot will be counted under the Alternative Vote system.

For further details, please see the Briefing Note available in the Vote Office and Table Office.<sup>19</sup>

A list of those nominated was published each day and was available with the [Summary Agenda and Order of Business](#).

### Box 2: Nominations – 2010, 2015 and 2017

**2010:** The motion to allocate chairs to parties was considered on 26 May. In accordance with the timetable in the Standing Orders, nominations closed at 5pm on 8 June and the election took place on 9 June.

**2015:** In 2015, the Speaker exercised his powers to vary timings. The allocation of chairs motion was considered on 3 June. Nominations closed on 10 June and the election took place on 17 June.<sup>20</sup>

**2017:** In 2017, the Speaker used his powers to vary timings and shorten the timetable. The allocation of chairs motion was considered on 4 July. Nominations closed on Friday 7 July and the election took place on Wednesday 12 July.<sup>21</sup>

## 4. Election results: Chairs

In January 2020, two announcements reporting the results of the election of chairs were made to the House:

- On 27 January 2020, when nominations closed, the chairs elected unopposed were announced.
- On 29 January 2020, following elections, the results of the contested elections were announced.

In previous Parliaments, a single announcement was made, following the conclusion of the contested elections.

### Chairs elected unopposed (27 January)

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** The House will be aware that the deadline for nominations of Select Committee Chairs was 4 pm today. The following Committees received a single nomination, and therefore the following candidates will be elected unopposed:

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Elected</i>
Backbench Business	Ian Mearns
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Rachel Reeves
Education	Robert Halfon
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Neil Parish
Exiting the European Union	Hilary Benn
Home Affairs	Yvette Cooper
Housing, Communities and Local Government	Clive Betts
Public Accounts	Meg Hillier
Scottish Affairs	Pete Wishart

<sup>19</sup> House of Commons, [Order Paper](#), 20 January 2020

<sup>20</sup> House of Commons, [Business Today](#), 4 June 2015, Announcements – Election of Select Committee Chairs

<sup>21</sup> [HC Deb 4 July 2017 c1077](#) (for Speaker's statement) and cc1087-1088 for the agreement on the allocation of chairs

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Standards	Kate Green
Treasury	Mel Stride
Welsh Affairs	Stephen Crabb
Women and Equalities	Caroline Nokes

I congratulate all Members who have thus been elected. The ballot for the remaining posts will take place on Wednesday 29 January between 10 am and 4 pm in Committee Room 16, and a final list of candidates and their supporters will be available shortly in the Vote Office.<sup>22</sup>

### Chairs elected following contested elections (29 January)

**[Mr Speaker:]** We now come to the announcement of the results for the election of Select Committee Chairs. The results for Chairs who were unopposed were announced on Monday and the election for the contested votes were held by secret ballot today. Five hundred and eighty-six ballot papers were submitted. The results are as follows:

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Elected</i>
Defence	Mr Tobias Ellwood
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	Julian Knight
Environmental Audit	Philip Dunne
Foreign Affairs	Tom Tugendhat
Health and Social Care	Jeremy Hunt
International Development	Sarah Champion
International Trade	Angus Brendan MacNeil
Justice	Sir Robert Neill
Northern Ireland Affairs	Simon Hoare
Petitions	Catherine McKinnell
Procedure	Karen Bradley
Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs	William Wragg
Science and Technology	Greg Clark
Transport	Huw Merriman
Work and Pensions	Stephen Timms

I congratulate colleagues who have been elected and thank all the candidates for taking part. The full breakdown of voting in each contest is set out in the paper that will be available shortly from the Vote Office and on the website. The Members elected take up their positions formally when the Committee has been nominated by the House.<sup>23</sup>

A list of chairs since 2010 can be found in the Library Briefing Paper [Chairs of Commons select committees since 2010](#) (CBP 4400).

#### Box 3: Election of chairs – 2010, 2015 and 2017

**2010:** The election of select committee chairs took place on 9 June 2010 and the Speaker announced the results of the election on 10 June 2010.<sup>24</sup>

**2015:** The election of select committee chairs took place on 17 June 2015 and the Speaker announced the results of the election on 18 June 2010.<sup>25</sup>

**2017:** The election of select committee chairs took place on 12 July 2017 and the Speaker announced the results of the election on the same day.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> [HC Deb 27 January 2020 c558](#)

<sup>23</sup> [HC Deb 29 January 2020 c895](#)

<sup>24</sup> [HC Deb 10 June 2010 c465](#)

<sup>25</sup> [HC Deb 18 June 2015 c469](#)

<sup>26</sup> [HC Deb 12 July 2017 cc397-398](#); House of Commons news, [Winning candidates for select committee chairs announced](#), 12 July 2017

## 5. Election of members to select committees

Once chairs have been elected, the remaining members can be nominated. On 4 March 2010, the House endorsed “the principle that parties should elect members of select committees in a secret ballot by whichever transparent and democratic method they choose”.<sup>27</sup>

Once individual parties have determined which members to nominate, under their own internal arrangements, the names are presented to the Committee of Selection. The Chair of the Committee of Selection then tables motions listing the names of Members nominated by parties and the motions are considered by the House. Standing Orders require that notice of any such motion must be given at least two sitting days before it is considered on the floor of the House.<sup>28</sup>

In the 2019 Parliament nominations to 19 of the 20 departmental select committees were agreed by the House on 2 March 2020.<sup>29</sup> In addition, on the same day, members were nominated to the seven other specified select committees, the Backbench Business Committee and other select committees that choose their own chair.

### Box 4: Nomination of members of select committees – 2010 and 2015

**2010:** Motions to approve the nomination of members to 18 departmental select committees; the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee (appointed for the 2010 Parliament only); the Public Accounts Committee; the Public Administration Committee; and the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments (whose chair is not elected) were agreed on 12 July 2010. Members of the remaining departmental select committee (Northern Ireland Affairs) were appointed by the House on 26 July 2010, along with the members of a number of other committees.<sup>30</sup>

**2015:** Motions to approve the nomination of members to six departmental select committees; and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee were agreed on 6 July 2015. Members of the remaining departmental select committees were nominated on 8 July (11 committees) and 13 July (three committees).<sup>31</sup> Members of the remaining committees whose chairs are elected were nominated on:

- Public Accounts Committee – 7 July;
- Procedure Committee – 13 July
- Environmental Audit Committee and Petitions Committee – 20 July
- Standards Committee – 9 September

**2017:** In the 2017 Parliament, the responsibilities of the Committee of Selection were undertaken by the Selection Committee. It was appointed on 12 September 2017, for the duration of the 2017 Parliament.<sup>32</sup> Members of select committees were confirmed the previous day, when the House agreed Government motions setting out the names of nominated members.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> [HC Deb 4 March 2010 c1095](#)

<sup>28</sup> House of Commons, *Standing Orders – Public Business, 2019*, November 2019, HC 314 2019, [Standing Order No 121](#) (2)

<sup>29</sup> [HC Deb 2 March 2020 c714ff](#). The motion to nominate members of the Scottish Affairs Committee was being debated at the moment of interruption – the debate stands adjourned

<sup>30</sup> [HC Deb 12 July 2010 cc763-766](#); [HC Deb 26 July 2010 cc833-834](#)

<sup>31</sup> [HC Deb 6 July 2015 c149](#); [HC Deb 8 July 2015 cc417-418](#); [HC Deb 13 July 2015 c700](#)

<sup>32</sup> [HC Deb 12 September 2017 cc765-810](#)

<sup>33</sup> [HC Deb 11 September 2017 cc604-607](#)



## 6. Summary of timetables, 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019

Event	2010	2015	2017	2019
Election of Speaker	18 May	18 May	13 June	17 Dec
Queen's Speech	25 May	27 May	21 June	19 Dec
Allocation of chairs	26 May*	3 June	4 July	16 Jan 2020
Nominations closed	8 June	10 June	7 July (3pm)	27 Jan (4pm)
Election	9 June	17 Jun	12 July	29 Jan
Results announced	10 June	18 June	12 July	29 Jan <sup>\$</sup>
Nomination of Members	12-26 July	6-20 July <sup>#</sup>	11 Sept <sup>##</sup>	2 Mar <sup>^</sup>

\* The party affiliation of the Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee was decided on 7 June 2010

# Members of the Standards Committee were nominated on 9 September

## Members of the Standards Committee were nominated on 26 October

\$ The Deputy Speaker announced the names of the chairs who were elected unopposed, on 27 January 2020

^ The motion to nominate members of the Scottish Affairs Committee was being debated at the moment of interruption – the debate stands adjourned

The above table can be set out in terms of **sitting days** for each of the Parliaments:

Event	2010	2015	2017	2019
Election of Speaker	1	1	1	1
Queen's Speech	5	6	4	3
Allocation of chairs	6	10	11	11
Nominations closed	11	14	*	16
Election	12	18	16	18
Results announced	13	19	16	18
Nomination of Members	30-38	28-36	25	32

\* non-sitting day, the day after the 13th sitting day

Source: Votes and Proceedings

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