



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# The Privy Council

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## Summary

The Privy Council is an advisory body to the Monarch; its members are known as Privy Counsellors. It is one of the oldest parts of the UK's constitutional arrangements, with its origins dating back to at least the thirteenth century.

The Privy Council advises the Monarch on the carrying out of her duties, including the exercise of the Royal Prerogative and other functions assigned to the Sovereign by Acts of Parliament. Although some of the Privy Council's powers are ceremonial in nature, many relate to matters of constitutional importance. In most of these areas the advisory role of the Privy Council is a fiction, and the body is effectively a vehicle for executive decisions made by the Government which are then formally issued in the Queen's name.

The Privy Council has a number of functions. These include:

- Extending legislation to British Overseas Territories;
- Ratifying legislation from the Crown Dependencies;
- Issuing Proclamations – for example, announcing the dates of Bank Holidays;
- Granting Royal Charters, including the BBC's Royal Charter;
- Appointing lay members to certain professional bodies and approving the rules of these bodies;
- Acting, in the form of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, as the final court of appeal for the UK's overseas territories and Crown Dependencies, and for any Commonwealth country that has retained an appeal to the Queen in Council.

Decisions of the Privy Council are recorded and expressed through 'Orders', which have the force of law. Many Privy Council 'Orders' are Government decisions, drawn up by ministers and civil servants, and which are approved by the Queen in her Privy Council as a matter of course.

Privy Counsellors are appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. Membership is for life, and a Privy Counsellor is entitled to be addressed as 'Right Honourable'. There are currently around 650 members of the Privy Council. All Cabinet Ministers are, or must become, Privy Counsellors; and it is only Ministers of the Government of the day who participate in the Privy Council's policy work.

In order to become a member of the Privy Council a person is required to swear an oath, promising to "keep secret all matters...treated of in Council". This then allows the sharing of sensitive information among Privy Counsellors. Sharing information on Privy Counsellor terms is only done rarely – usually where it is important for senior members of the Opposition parties or others to have access to Government information.

# 1. What is the Privy Council?

The Privy Council is an advisory body to the Monarch; its members are known as Privy Counsellors. It is one of the oldest parts of the UK's constitutional arrangements, with its origins dating back to at least the thirteenth century.

The present Privy Council of the United Kingdom dates from 1 January 1801.<sup>1</sup> Before that date there existed a Privy Council for Great Britain and a separate Privy Council for Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Prior to 1708, there existed three distinct privy councils for England, Scotland and Ireland.<sup>3</sup> The Privy Council for Ireland continued to function until 1922,<sup>4</sup> when it became the Privy Council for Northern Ireland (PCNI).<sup>5</sup> No further appointments were made to the PCNI after 1973.<sup>6</sup>

There also exists a [Queen's Privy Council for Canada](#). This was established under Section 11 of the [British North America Act 1867](#).

The UK Privy Council advises the Monarch on the carrying out of her duties, including the exercise of the Royal Prerogative and other functions assigned to the Sovereign by Acts of Parliament. Although some of the Privy Council's powers are ceremonial in nature, many relate to matters of constitutional importance. In almost every instance, however, the advisory role of the Privy Council is a fiction, and the body is effectively a vehicle for executive decisions made by the Government which are then formally issued in the Queen's name.

The then Lord President of the Council, Baroness Royall of Blaisdon, described the work of the Privy Council in 2009:

the Privy Council is simply another way of saying "Ministers collectively". It is a thoroughly modern example of joined-up government which provides a highly effective means of dispatching a great deal of public business. The Privy Council approves amendments to the byelaws and statutes of chartered institutions. It also approves rules made by the statutory registration councils responsible for the medical and certain other professions, and it makes instruments of government for higher education corporations. In addition, it makes certain appointments to statutory bodies.<sup>7</sup>

Ministers may legislate for the remaining overseas territories through decisions of the Privy Council or use it to transfer ministerial responsibility between Government Departments. Many of the Privy Council's decisions are expressed through 'Orders'. These have the force of law.

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<sup>1</sup> See [The Edinburgh Gazette Issue 785](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Privy Council for Ireland was subordinate to the Privy Council for England, and then to the Privy Council for Great Britain.

<sup>3</sup> The [Union with Scotland \(Amendment\) Act 1707](#) replaced the privy councils of England and Scotland. The first members of the new Privy Council of Great Britain were [sworn on 10 May 1708](#).

<sup>4</sup> See [Article Eight](#) of the *Union with Ireland Act 1800*.

<sup>5</sup> See the [First Schedule](#) to the *Irish Free State (Consequential Provisions) Act 1922*.

<sup>6</sup> See [Section 32\(3\)](#) of the *Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973*.

<sup>7</sup> [HL Deb 12 May 2009 c1010](#)

## 5 The Privy Council

In addition to the Privy Council's executive and legislative functions, the Privy Council also has a judicial role. The judicial functions of the Privy Council are exercised by a committee known as the Judicial Committee (JCPC). The JCPC is the court of final appeal for the UK overseas territories and Crown Dependencies, and for those Commonwealth countries that have retained the appeal to Her Majesty in Council or, in the case of Republics, to the Judicial Committee.

The head of the Privy Council Office is the Lord President of the Council. He or she is always a Cabinet Minister and is often the Leader of the House of Commons or House of Lords. The current Lord President of the Council is the Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, the Leader of the House of Commons.

## 2. Functions and Powers of the Privy Council

The Privy Council has a broad range of functions, reflecting its long history. Much of its work is done through various standing committees, such as the Committee for the Affairs of Jersey and Guernsey or the Scottish Universities Committee. However, the business of these committees is usually conducted through ministerial correspondence, rather than actual meetings.<sup>8</sup> Approval of decisions of the Privy Council which require the Sovereign's consent occurs at the monthly meetings of the Privy Council. These meetings are largely a formality.

Decisions of the Privy Council are recorded and expressed through 'Orders'. Most 'Orders' are Government decisions, drawn up by Ministers and Civil Servants, which are then approved by the Queen in her Privy Council as a matter of course.

### 2.1 Privy Council Orders

Privy Council 'Orders' come in different forms but the main distinction is between Orders in Council and Orders of Council.

- **Orders in Council** are Orders that have been approved personally by the Queen in a meeting of the Privy Council.
- **Orders of Council** do not require the personal approval of the Queen.<sup>9</sup> They can be made by "The Lords of the Privy Council", that is, by Ministers.

'Orders' have the force of law. Some are made under the Crown's prerogative powers and, when issued, become primary legislation.<sup>10</sup> Others are statutory 'Orders', equivalent to delegated legislation, and the power to make them is specified in the parent Act of Parliament. Both types of Orders can be either statutory Orders or made under the Royal Prerogative.

Prerogative Orders are most commonly used to dispatch business that Parliament might not want to concern itself with, such as amending the charters of Chartered Bodies, or where there is no legislation allocating responsibility to a particular Minister.<sup>11</sup>

Statutory Orders are most commonly used when an ordinary Statutory Instrument is considered to be inappropriate.<sup>12</sup> An example might be when transferring responsibilities between Government Departments under the *Ministers of the Crown Act 1975*, or when approving regulations made by the General Medical Council and other regulatory bodies.

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<sup>8</sup> Privy Council Office, [Committees](#)

<sup>9</sup> Privy Council Office, [Orders](#)

<sup>10</sup> Cabinet Office, *The Cabinet Manual*, para 1.16; *Human Rights Act 1998*, section 21 (1)

<sup>11</sup> HL Deb 12 May 2009 c1010

<sup>12</sup> House of Commons Library, [Statutory Instruments](#), 18 December 2012

Rodney Brazier and Stanley De Smith have stated in *Constitutional and Administrative Law* that the reason for giving the monarch the power to make Orders on certain matters instead of vesting a Minister with the power to make regulations is “partly traditional and partly psychological”. They argue:

It is more dignified and impressive for an independence constitution, or an instrument giving effect to an extradition treaty or creating new parliamentary constituencies or altering electoral boundaries, to be made by Her Majesty in Council.<sup>13</sup>

In a 2009 report for Justice, Patrick O’Connor QC was critical of this “cosmetic” role of statutory Orders, arguing that there is no real reason why Parliament could not reallocate the power to make them to departments and have the business transacted through ordinary statutory instruments.<sup>14</sup>

In some instances, however, Orders in Council are used on matters where it might be constitutionally inappropriate for Parliament to legislate directly. A good example is when extending UK legislation to the Crown Dependencies, whose relationship with the UK is technically with the Crown. UK legislation does not normally apply to the Crown Dependencies. When they agree that it should, this is almost always done through an Order in Council issued by the Queen.

In his 2009 report for Justice, Patrick O’Connor QC also criticised Orders in Council made under the Royal Prerogative, arguing that a Prerogative Order’s protected status as a piece of primary legislation means that there is no requirement on a Minister to make a statement of compatibility under the European Convention of Human Rights.<sup>15</sup> He added that this is “surely a loophole in our constitutional safety net: a way in which hard law can be created, affecting fundamental rights, whilst by-passing Parliament and any prior accountability”.<sup>16</sup>

However, several former Lord Presidents of the Council have highlighted that Prerogative Orders are used rarely, and only under certain circumstances. Baroness Royall of Blaisdon argued in 2009 that:

The fact is that almost all the prerogative powers formerly exercised by the Privy Council have been taken over by Parliament. The vast majority of the prerogative business done by the Privy Council is not significant enough for Parliament to want to take it over—for example, the affairs of chartered bodies.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, in 2001, Robin Cook MP stated that:

[The] vast majority of Orders in Council are made under statute, and of the prerogative Orders in Council and Orders of Council that are made most relate to amendments of the charters, by-laws

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<sup>13</sup> Stanley De Smith & Rodney Brazier, *Constitutional and Administrative Law*, 1994, p161

<sup>14</sup> Patrick O’Connor, *The Constitutional Role of the Privy Council and the Prerogative*, Justice Report, 2009, p15

<sup>15</sup> When discussing the protected status, O’Connor cites sections 3 and 4 of the [Human Rights Act 1998](#).

<sup>16</sup> O’Connor, *Constitutional Role of the Privy Council*, p15

<sup>17</sup> [HL Deb 12 May 2009 c1010](#)

and statutes of chartered bodies (including universities) and the giving of Royal Assent to Channel Islands legislation.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2 Proclamations

In addition to 'Orders', the Queen also approves Proclamations through the Privy Council. These are formal notices issued to the people by the Sovereign. Proclamations are used to cover issues such as the announcement of the dates of Bank holidays or when determining the specifications of new coinage.<sup>19</sup> Although Proclamations are not 'Orders', they cannot take effect until they have been sealed with the Great Seal of the Realm. The authority for sealing a Proclamation is an Order in Council, which is approved at the same Council meeting as the Proclamation.<sup>20</sup>

### Box 1: Functions of the Privy Council

Some of the main functions of the Privy Council are discussed in further detail below, along with illustrations of the type of Order or Proclamation commonly used to dispatch them.<sup>21</sup>

#### Legislating for British Overseas Territories

The Privy Council has a role in legislating for British Overseas Territories, such as the Falkland Islands. Statutory Orders in Council are used to do this. An example is the *Russia, Crimea and Sevastopol (Sanctions) (Overseas Territories) Order 2014* (SI 2014/2710), which required certain Overseas Territories to apply sanctions set out in Council Regulation (EU) 269/2014.<sup>22</sup>

#### Extending UK legislation to Crown Dependencies

The Privy Council has a role when extending UK primary legislation to the Crown Dependencies. UK Acts of Parliament do not usually apply directly to Crown Dependencies. If the UK Government and the Crown Dependencies agree that a piece of UK legislation should be extended to them, then this is usually done via an enabling provision for an Order in Council (known as a permitted extent clause) included in the Act of Parliament to be extended. If, on very rare occasions, the UK Government and the Crown Dependencies decided that a UK Act of Parliament should apply directly to them, then the Act will be expressed to apply directly. In these rare instances, an Order in Council is still issued, this time under the Royal Prerogative, directing that the Act be registered in the Royal Courts in each Crown Dependency.<sup>23</sup>

An example is the *Antartic Act 1994 (Isle of Man) (Amendment) Order 2015*, which is a statutory Order in Council that extended the amendments made to Part 2 of the *Antartic Act 2013* to the Isle of Man.

#### Ratification of legislation from Crown Dependencies

Primary legislation passed by the legislatures of the Channel Islands, and reserved Isle of Man legislation, requires Royal Assent. The ratification of this legislation is usually done through a Prerogative Order in Council, following scrutiny by the relevant Privy Councillor (the Secretary of State for Justice).

#### Transferring responsibilities between Government Ministers

Orders in Council are often used to transfer responsibilities between Government Ministers. An example of this is the *Transfer of Functions (Information and Public Records) Order 2015*, which is a statutory Order in Council, made under the powers conferred in sections 1 and 2 of the *Ministers of the Crown Act 1975*. Amongst other things, this Order in Council transferred certain statutory functions relating to public records from the Lord Chancellor to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

#### Granting Royal Charters

<sup>18</sup> [HC Deb 2001 c599W](#)

<sup>19</sup> The British Monarchy, [Queen and Privy Council](#)

<sup>20</sup> R Allison & S Riddell, *The Royal Encyclopedia*, 1991, p366

<sup>21</sup> This is by no means a complete list of the work of the Privy Council. A further indication of the Privy Councils' diverse work can be gained by reading the Orders approved by the Queen in Council available on the Privy Council's website

<sup>22</sup> [Russia, Crimea and Sevastopol \(Sanctions\) \(Overseas Territories\) Order 2014 \(SI 2014/2710\)](#)

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Extension of UK Primary Legislation to the Crown Dependencies*



The Privy Council has the power to grant and amend Royal Charters. A Royal Charter is a way of incorporating a body, turning it from a collection of individuals into a single legal entity. There are currently over 900 Chartered Bodies.<sup>24</sup> One of the reasons for using an Order in Council to grant Royal Charters is to avoid Parliament's time being taken up with matters which are likely to be of little concern.

The BBC's Royal Charter, which is renewed every ten years or so, is granted by an Order in Council. The BBC's Royal Charter is a slight exception to most Royal Charters because it will usually be debated in both Houses of Parliament, and sometimes in select committees. However, it is not necessary for Parliament to approve the BBC's Royal Charter. This is done by the Queen on the advice of her Privy Council (i.e. Government Ministers), under an Order in Council made under the Royal Prerogative.

#### **Higher Education**

The Privy Council has a role in areas of higher education, having responsibility under both the Royal Prerogative and Statute. According to the Privy Council Office's website:

Older (pre-1992) universities operate under a Royal Charter, which sets out their overall constitution, and statutes, which give more detail as to how the university should operate in practice. The Privy Council is responsible for advising Her Majesty on universities' proposals to amend their Charter, and itself approving amendments to the statutes.

[...]

Most newer (post-1992) universities and certain other higher education institutions operate under an Instrument of Government and Articles of Government. Any amendments to these documents need the approval of the Privy Council.<sup>25</sup>

#### **Professional Bodies**

The Privy Council is responsible for some of the affairs of certain regulatory bodies, including the General Medical Council and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. This can involve such matters as the appointment of lay members to these bodies and the approval of their rules.<sup>26</sup> Statutory Orders of Council are normally used to approve regulations made by the General Medical Council and other regulatory bodies.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Summoning or Proroguing Parliament**

The Queen in her Privy Council issues Orders in Council for the prorogation and summoning of Parliament. Since the *Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011*, the Queen no longer has any power under the Royal Prerogative for the dissolution of Parliament.

## 2.3 Judicial Committee of the Privy Council

The judicial functions of the Privy Council are exercised by a committee known as the Judicial Committee (JCPC). The JCPC is the court of final appeal for the UK overseas territories and Crown Dependencies, and for those Commonwealth countries that have retained the appeal to Her Majesty in Council or, in the case of Republics, to the Judicial Committee. Decisions of the Judicial Committee are declared through Judicial Orders in Council.

Five judges normally sit to hear Commonwealth appeals, and three for other matters. These judges hearing appeals in the JCPC are usually Justices of the Supreme Court, with which the JCPC shares a building, and many administrative functions.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Privy Council Office, [Royal Charters](#)

<sup>25</sup> Privy Council Office, [Higher Education](#)

<sup>26</sup> Privy Council Office, [Professional Bodies](#)

<sup>27</sup> Cabinet Office, *Cabinet Manual*, para 1.17

<sup>28</sup> Privy Council Office, [Committees](#)

**Box 2: Where does the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council hear appeals from?**

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council hears Crown Dependency appeals from:

- Jersey
- Guernsey
- Isle of Man

It hears Commonwealth appeals from:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- The Bahamas
- Cook Islands and Niue (Associated States of New Zealand)
- Grenada
- Jamaica
- St Christopher and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Tuvalu

The Judicial Committee hears appeals from the following independent republics within the Commonwealth:

- the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
- Kiribati
- Mauritius

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council also hears appeals from the following overseas territories and sovereign bases:

- Anguilla
- Bermuda
- British Antarctic Territory
- British Indian Ocean Territory
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Falkland Islands
- Gibraltar
- Monserrat
- Pitcairn Islands
- St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- Sovereign base areas in Cyprus (Akrotiri and Dhekelia)<sup>29</sup>

Very occasionally the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council will also hear appeals from a number of ancient and ecclesiastical courts. These include the Church Commissioners, the Arches Court of Canterbury, the Chancery Court of York, prize courts and the Court of Admiralty of the Cinque Ports.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, [Role of the JCPC](#)

<sup>30</sup> Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, [Role of the JCPC](#)

### 3. Membership of the Privy Council

Privy Counsellors are appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. Membership is for life, although a request can be made to seek the Queen's agreement to the removal of an individual's name from the list of Privy Counsellors. Privy Counsellors are entitled to be addressed as 'Right Honourable'.

There are currently around 650 members of the Privy Council. Numbers have increased steadily over the last few decades, leaving some to conclude that the Privy Council is another form of Government patronage.<sup>31</sup>

However, all members of the Cabinet are, or must become, Privy Counsellors; and the Cabinet itself is effectively a sub-committee of the Privy Council. It is only Ministers of the Government of the day who participate in the Privy Council's policy work.<sup>32</sup>

Anyone joining the Privy Council is required to swear an oath or a solemn affirmation to "keep secret all matters...treated of in Council" (for the full text, see below). This allows the sharing of sensitive information relating to national security. However, according to the Privy Council Office,

it is only in very special circumstances nowadays that matters will come to a Privy Counsellor on "Privy Council terms". These will mostly concern matters of the national interest where it is important for senior members of Opposition parties to have access to Government information.<sup>33</sup>

A new Leader of the Opposition, if not already a member of the Privy Council, will therefore be made one. This is to enable him or her to be able to receive briefings on Privy Council terms.<sup>34</sup>

By convention, a number of other offices and positions qualify for membership of the Privy Council. These include the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Speaker of the House of Commons, holders of the Great Offices of State, and distinguished politicians from parts of the Commonwealth.<sup>35</sup>

A full list of the current Privy Counsellors is available on the Privy Council Office's website.

#### The Oath of a Privy Counsellor

Upon admission to the Privy Council, Privy Counsellors are required to take the following oath, which is administered to them.

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<sup>31</sup> O' Connor, *Constitutional Role of the Privy Council*, p7

<sup>32</sup> [Privy Council Office](#), Overview, Gov.uk

<sup>33</sup> [Privy Council Office](#), Privy Council members

<sup>34</sup> R Brazier, *Constitutional Practice: the Foundations of British Government*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1999, p163

<sup>35</sup> Stanley & Brazier, *Constitutional and Administrative Law*, p160

You do swear by Almighty God to be a true and faithful Servant unto The Queen's Majesty as one of Her Majesty's Privy Council. You will not know or understand of any manner of thing to be attempted, done or spoken against Her Majesty's Person, Honour, Crown or Dignity Royal, but you will lett and withstand the same to the uttermost of your power, and either cause it to be revealed to Her Majesty Herself, or to such of Her Privy Council as shall advertise Her Majesty of the same. You will in all things to be moved, treated and debated in Council, faithfully and truly declare your Mind and Opinion, according to your Heart and Conscience; and will keep secret all matters committed and revealed unto you, or that shall be treated of secretly in Council. And if any of the said Treaties or Counsels shall touch any of the Counsellors you will not reveal it unto him but will keep the same until such time as, by the consent of Her Majesty or of the Council, Publication shall be made thereof. You will to your uttermost bear Faith and Allegiance to the Queen's Majesty; and will assist and defend all civil and temporal Jurisdictions, Pre-eminences, and Authorities, granted to Her Majesty and annexed to the Crown by Acts of Parliament, or otherwise, against all Foreign Princes, Persons, Prelates, States, or Potentates. And generally in all things you will do as a faithful and true Servant ought to do to Her Majesty

SO HELP YOU GOD

While the oath is being administered, the person required to take it usually kneels on one knee on a stool before the Monarch, raising the Bible (or other religious text of their choice) in their right hand. Once the oath has been administered it is customary for the newly appointed Privy Counsellor to 'kiss' the Monarch's hand.

When giving evidence to the Public Administration Committee in April 2003, Rt Hon Tony Benn MP discussed the administration of the Privy Counsellor oath:

As a privy councillor...they read the oath to me and I said, "I have not agreed to it," and they said, "We have administered the oath." I never knew until that moment the meaning of the administration of an oath. They injected me with it, and that is...something that I do not believe in.<sup>36</sup>

If a person does not wish to take the oath then they can take a solemn affirmation instead.

### 3.1 Can a Privy Counsellor resign?

Membership of the Privy Council is for life. Technically, a Privy Counsellor cannot resign; a request to resign is construed as a request seeking the Queen's agreement to the removal of the individual's name from the list of Privy Counsellors. As with appointments to the Privy Council, removal would be a matter for the Queen, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister. Examples of Privy Counsellors who have been allowed to 'resign' from list in recent years include Jonathan Aitken in

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<sup>36</sup> Public Administration Committee, [Minutes of Evidence](#), 10 April 2003, Q4

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1997 and Chris Huhne in 2013, both of whom were convicted of criminal offences.<sup>37</sup>

Lord Prescott was also removed from the Privy Council in 2013, at his request, in protest against delays to changes in the way the press would be regulated following the phone-hacking scandal.<sup>38</sup>

The Privy Council can also remove its members. For instance, Elliot Morley was struck off the list of Privy Counsellors following convictions for fraud in relation to their Parliamentary expenses.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> 'Right honourable no more: The Privy Council quitters', [BBC News](#), 12 February 2013

<sup>38</sup> 'John Prescott quits Privy Council in press regulation protest', [BBC News](#), 6 July 2013

<sup>39</sup> Privy Council Office, Orders in Council 2011, [8 June 2011](#); Orders in Council 2013, [9 October 2013](#)

## 4. Meetings of the Privy Council

The Privy Council meets on average about once a month, and these meetings are held in the presence of the Queen. Only current Government Ministers (themselves Privy Counsellors) attend these meetings. The quorum for a meeting of the Privy Council is three Privy Counsellors, although four Ministers usually attend each meeting.<sup>40</sup> One of these is the Lord President of the Council. The other Ministers in attendance may or may not have something to do with the nature of the business at hand, as those attending are usually summoned well in advance.<sup>41</sup>

By convention, Ministers remain standing during the meeting, which lasts about 30 minutes. Most of the business conducted in these meetings is a constitutional formality. A report by Patrick O'Connor QC on the role of the Privy Council, describes a typical meeting:

The Lord President stands to the right of the monarch and reads out the titles of any proposed OICs [Orders in Council]. The monarch assents by saying 'Approved'. She may ask the occasional question. The orders are then signed and sealed by officials.<sup>42</sup>

### 4.1 Full meetings of the Privy Council

There are currently around 650 Privy Counsellors. However, there are only a few occasions when Privy Counsellors other than those who are members of the Government are summoned to a meeting.

A full meeting of the Privy Council only occurs under two circumstances. These are on the accession of a new Sovereign, when the Council meets in St James's Palace, and when an unmarried Sovereign announces His or Her intention to marry.<sup>43</sup>

### 4.2 The Privy Council Office

The Privy Council is supported in its work by a secretariat called the Privy Council Office. Much of the day-to-day work of this secretariat is concerned with the affairs of Chartered Bodies - the 900 or so institutions, charities and companies who are incorporated by Royal Charter.<sup>44</sup>

The drafting of Proclamations and the various Orders that are approved by the Queen in Council is undertaken by the relevant Government Department. They are then sent to the Privy Council Office for checking and formatting.

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<sup>40</sup> Privy Council Office, [FAQs](#)

<sup>41</sup> O' Connor, *Constitutional Role of the Privy Council*, p8

<sup>42</sup> O' Connor, *Constitutional Role of the Privy Council*, p8

<sup>43</sup> R Allison and S Riddell, *The Royal Encyclopedia*, 1991, p412

<sup>44</sup> Privy Council Office, [Work of the Privy Council Office](#)

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