

Research Briefing

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House of Commons Commission (External Members)

Summary

The [House of Commons Commission](#) is the statutory authority responsible for the administration of the House of Commons.

It is responsible for setting the strategic priorities and objectives of the House departments, for employing the staff of the House; setting the House's budget; and determining the functions of the departments of the House.

The Commission is chaired by the Speaker and, in addition to the Speaker, six MPs, two House officials and two external members serve on the Commission. [Its members are listed on its website.](#)

External members have to be appointed by resolution of the House of Commons, after being recruited on merit on the basis of fair and open competition and the appointment being agreed to by the Commission.

The current external members of the House of Commons Commission are

- Shrinivas Honap, from 1 October 2021, for three years
- Catherine Ward, from 28 June 2023, for 18 months

The Commission described the process followed in recruiting Catherine Ward in its report:

- House of Commons Commission, [External members of the House of Commons Commission: nomination of candidate](#) (PDF), 25 May 2023, HC 1377 2022-23

1 Introduction

The [House of Commons \(Administration\) Act 1978](#) established the [House of Commons Commission](#) as the statutory authority responsible for the administration of the House of Commons. The remit was amended by the [House of Commons Commission Act 2015](#). Originally its functions included employing the staff of the House; setting the House's budget; and determining the functions of the departments of the House. The 2015 Act gave the Commission the responsibility for setting strategic priorities and objectives in connection with services provided by the House departments.

The membership of the Commission is set out in the legislation. It has 11 members, including two external members.

Under the 1978 Act all six members of the Commission were MPs. The 2015 Act increased the membership and included non-MPs. It added one additional MP, two external members and two official members (the Clerk and the Director General of the House of Commons¹). The legislation provides that the Commission is chaired by the Speaker of the House.

External members are not voting members of the House of Commons Commission.

In a previous report on the nomination of external members, the Commission said it was its practice to appoint external members for an initial period of three years, with the option of extension for a further two years.²

2 Current external members of the Commission

The two current external members of the House of Commons Commission are:

¹ Now the Director General (Operations)

² House of Commons Commission, [External members of the House of Commons Commission: nomination of candidates](#) (PDF), 18 May 2021, HC 223 2021-22, para 2

- Shrinivas Honap appointed from 1 October 2021, for three years; agreed by the House on 8 June 2021.³
- Catherine Ward appointed from 28 June 2023, for 18 months; agreed by the House on 28 June 2023.⁴

A list of previous external members of the House of Commons Commission can be found in the Appendix.

Role

The external members were appointed following recommendations from the House of Commons Governance Committee in 2015, which led to the passing of the House of Commons Commission Act 2015. At second reading of that bill, the then Leader of the House, William Hague, explained the reasons for adding external and official members to the House of Commons Commission:

The appointment of these additional members is designed to provide a wider perspective to support the Commission's work and to embed the closer integration between setting the strategic direction and the implementation of resulting policy decisions that the Committee called for. The evidence to the Governance Committee suggested that the link between the current Management Board, which is to become the Executive Committee, and the Commission needed to be strengthened. This amendment will provide for that to happen.⁵

Usually both external members serve on the Administration Estimate Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. One of the external members chairs the Committee. This Committee supports the Accounting Officer in discharging his responsibilities under the Administration Estimate, particularly with regard to the maintenance of an effective system of internal control.⁶

Remuneration

In 2021-22, the full year equivalent salary of the external members of the Commission was in the range £15,000–£25,000.⁷

3

Appointment process

The House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978, as amended, provides that external members have to be appointed by resolution of the House of

³ [HC Deb 8 June 2021 cc921-926](#)

⁴ [HC Deb 28 June 2023 cc385-386](#)

⁵ [HC Deb 24 February 2015 c223](#)

⁶ Administration Estimate Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, [Role of the Committee](#)

⁷ House of Commons, [Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22](#) (PDF), 11 October 2022, HC 707 2022-23, p92

Commons. A motion for a resolution to appoint an external member can be made only with the agreement of the Commission. A person who is to be appointed by resolution must have been selected by the parliamentary members of the Commission on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.⁸

A motion to appoint one external member to the House of Commons Commission was most recently considered by the House on 28 June 2023. It was tabled by the Leader of the House, Penny Mordaunt, who is a member of the House of Commons Commission.⁹

Debate on such a motion can last up to 90 minutes as the proceedings are in pursuance of section 1(4) of the House of Commons Commission Act 2015 (Standing Order No 16).

The House of Commons Commission outlined the recruitment process that was followed in a report published on 25 May 2023:

- House of Commons Commission, [External members of the House of Commons Commission: nomination of candidate](#) (PDF), 25 May 2023, HC 1377 2022-23

The Commission recommended that the House appoint Catherine Ward as an external member, for an initial period of 18 months, with the possibility to extend for a further two years.¹⁰

3.1

Recent previous recruitment exercises

In May 2021, the Commission reported on a similar recruitment exercise to fill a vacancy and to replace an external member whose term was due to finish at the end of September 2021.¹¹

⁸ [House of Commons \(Administration\) Act 1978](#) (chapter 36), as amended, section 1 (2B) and Schedule 1, para 1A

⁹ House of Commons, [Order Paper](#), 14 June 2023, Future Business Section B, Item 37

¹⁰ House of Commons Commission, [External members of the House of Commons Commission: nomination of candidate](#) (PDF), 25 May 2023, HC 1377 2022-23, para 12

¹¹ House of Commons Commission, [External members of the House of Commons Commission: nomination of candidates](#) (PDF), 18 May 2021, HC 223 2021-22, para 2

Appendix: External Members of the House of Commons: Dates of Service and Appointment

Table 1: External members of the House of Commons Commission			
Name	Start	End	Date of Resolution of House of Commons
Dame Janet Gaymer DBE QC(Hon.)*	2 Feb 2016	30 Sep 2018	2 Feb 2016
Jane McCall*	2 Feb 2016	30 Apr 2021	2 Feb 2016; 10 Jul 2018 ; 20 Jan 2021
Rima Makarem	1 Oct 2018	30 Sep 2021	10 Jul 2018
Louise Wilson	8 Jun 2021	Nov 2022	8 Jun 2021
Shrinivas Honap	1 Oct 2021	(a)	8 Jun 2021
Catherine Ward	28 Jun 2023	(b)	28 Jun 2023

* previously members of the Management Board of the House of Commons

(a) for three years

(b) for 18 months

Table 2: Records of House of Commons Commission agreement to the nominations

Name	Recommendation
Dame Janet Gaymer DBE QC(Hon.)*	Draft motion agreed by House of Commons Commission. See, Decisions – 18 January 2016 , 19 January 2016
Jane McCall*	<p>As above (original appointment)</p> <p>Draft motion agreed by House of Commons Commission. See, House of Commons Commission, Decisions – 25 June 2018, 28 June 2018 (extension to 1 Feb 2021)</p> <p>Request to the Leader of the House that he table a motion for agreement by the House to extend the appointment of Jane McCall to 30 April 2021. See House of Commons Commission, Decisions – 11 January 2021 (PDF) (extension to 30 April 2021)</p>
Rima Makarem	Draft motion agreed by House of Commons Commission. See, House of Commons Commission, Decisions – 25 June 2018 , 28 June 2018
Louise Wilson	House of Commons Commission, External members of the House of Commons Commission: nomination of candidates (PDF), 18 May 2021, HC 223 2021-22
Shrinivas Honap	As above
Catherine Ward	House of Commons Commission, External members of the House of Commons Commission: nomination of candidate (PDF), 25 May 2023, HC 1377 2022-23

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