



BRIEFING PAPER

Number 1186, 8 January 2021

Recall of Parliament

By Richard Kelly

Contents:

1. Recent recalls of the House of Commons
2. List of recalls
3. The procedure and calls for it to be changed
4. Members' expenses associated with the recall of Parliament
5. Procedure in the House of Lords
6. Procedure in the Devolved Legislatures



Contents

Summary	3
1. Recent recalls of the House of Commons	4
1.1 2019 Parliament	4
1.2 2015-17 Parliament	5
1.3 2010-15 Parliament	5
1.4 2001-05 Parliament	6
2. List of recalls	8
2.1 Calls for recalls	8
3. The procedure and calls for it to be changed	10
3.1 The procedure – the Government’s instigation	10
3.2 Speaker Bercow’s proposal (2017)	11
3.3 Calls for change – the Speaker’s instigation (2005 Parliament)	12
3.4 Government proposals for change (2007)	13
4. Members’ expenses associated with the recall of Parliament	14
5. Procedure in the House of Lords	15
6. Procedure in the Devolved Legislatures	17
6.1 Scottish Parliament	17
6.2 Northern Ireland Assembly	18
6.3 Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament	19

Summary

The House of Commons was last recalled on [6 January 2021](#) to hear statements from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education on COVID-19 and to consider related public health regulations. This was the 32nd recall during a recess since 1948.

Under Standing Orders, the Speaker of the House of Commons determines whether the House is to be recalled on the basis of representations made by Ministers.

Under the Labour Government (1997-2010), Members argued that they, rather than the Government, should be able to make representations to the Speaker to recall Parliament. The Labour Government announced proposals to allow MPs as well as the Government to request that the Speaker recall Parliament but the proposals were never implemented.

In a Hansard Society Lecture in October 2017, Speaker Bercow noted the current rules that allow only the Government to request a recall of the House of Commons. He said that the Government should have this power but he went on to ask whether another mechanism could be devised to allow other Members to request a recall.

The costs incurred by Members in attending the House when it is recalled are met by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority in accordance with rules in *The Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses*.

The Standing Orders of the House of Lords and of the devolved legislatures in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast provide for early recall if the circumstances require it.

The House of Lords has generally been recalled when the House of Commons was recalled. It was recalled on 30 December 2020 and Royal Assent to the *European Union (Future Relationship) Bill 2019-21* was reported to both Houses before they adjourned.

The House of Lords was not recalled on 6 January 2021 – it had returned from the Christmas Recess on 5 January.

1. Recent recalls of the House of Commons

1.1 2019 Parliament

The House of Commons was recalled on 6 January 2021. On 4 January 2021, it was announced that the House of Commons would be recalled and that “The Prime Minister will make a statement providing a Covid-19 update, and MPs will consider related public health regulations”.¹

Additionally, the Secretary of State for Education made a statement.²

The House of Commons was recalled on 30 December 2020, following an announcement on 24 December 2020:

Business when the House of Commons sits on 30 December 2020

Business papers for 30 December have been published on the [parliamentary website](#). The main elements of the business are as follows:

- Motion to provide for virtual participation in debate;
- Business of the House motion governing proceedings on the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill;
- Debate on Second Reading of the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill, followed by all remaining proceedings on and relating to that Bill (until 2:30pm);
- Statement by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, providing an update on COVID-19;
- Statement by the Secretary of State for Education, on education return in England;
- Debate on a series of Public Health regulations (for three hours).

The House will then be suspended to await conclusion of Lords proceedings on the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill, to be followed (if necessary) by consideration of Lords Amendments and then by notification of Royal Assent, after which the House will rise.³

In a letter published on 28 May 2020, the Speaker wrote to Members informing them that the Government had requested that the House be recalled for an earlier sitting on Tuesday 2 June 2020, to sit from 11.30am. The Speaker set out the reason for the recall:

The main purpose of the Government’s proposed recall is to bring forward a motion so that the House can take a decision on the form divisions should take - now that the temporary Standing Orders on hybrid proceedings have lapsed.⁴

¹ House of Commons news, [House of Commons recalled on 6 January 2021 at 11.30am](#), 4 January 2021

² [HC Deb 6 January 2021 cc733-876](#)

³ House of Commons news, [House of Commons recalled on 30 December](#), 24 December 2020; [HC Deb 30 December 2020 cc503-732](#)

⁴ House of Commons, [Government requests recall of Parliament](#), 28 May 2020

The House had been scheduled to meet at 2.30pm on 2 June. The early return allowed the Government to set down particular business that had not been set down before the House rose at its previous sitting.⁵ A business of the House motion provided for debate on a Government motion on proceedings during the pandemic and then on the second reading of the *Parliamentary Constituencies Bill 2019-21*, which had previously been scheduled for 2 June.

1.2 2015-17 Parliament

On 17 June 2016, it was announced that the House of Commons would be recalled on Monday 20 June to pay tribute to Jo Cox who was murdered on 16 June. The House met at 2.30pm on 20 June.⁶ At the end of the session, the Speaker invited all Members to join him in processing to St Margaret's Church for a service of prayer and remembrance for Jo Cox.⁷

1.3 2010-15 Parliament

On 24 September 2014, it was announced that the House of Commons would be recalled on Friday 26 September to debate a motion on ISIL and Iraq. The House met at 10.30am on 26 September. The Government motion which, included support for "the use of UK air strikes to support Iraqi, including Kurdish, security forces' efforts against ISIL in Iraq", was agreed to on a division by 524 votes to 43.⁸

On 27 August 2013 it was announced that the House of Commons would be recalled on 29 August to debate a motion on Syria.⁹ The House met at 2.30pm on 29 August. An Opposition amendment to the Government's motion was defeated with 220 voting for the amendment and 332 against. The Government's motion was also defeated, with 272 voting in favour of the motion and 285 against.¹⁰

On 10 April 2013, the House was recalled to pay tribute to former Prime Minister Baroness Thatcher, who died on 8 April 2013.¹¹

On 11 August 2011, the House was recalled to discuss "Public Disorder". The House also heard a statement on the "Global Economy". The Prime Minister made a statement on public disorder from 11.35am to 2.20pm.¹² After that the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his statement on the global economy.¹³ This statement was followed by a sittings of the House motion;¹⁴ and then by a general debate on public disorder, which was opened by the Home Secretary.¹⁵

⁵ See the comments of the Clerk of the House – Procedure Committee, [Procedure under Coronavirus Restrictions, Oral Evidence 1 June 2020](#), HC 300 2019-21, Q6

⁶ [HC Deb 20 June 2016 cc1883-1900](#)

⁷ [HC Deb 20 June 2016 c1900](#)

⁸ House of Commons, [Votes and Proceedings](#), 24 September 2014

⁹ See the Parliamentary website, [Recall of the House](#)

¹⁰ See House of Commons, [Votes and Proceedings](#), 29 August 2013

¹¹ [HC Deb 10 April 2013 cc1613-1720](#)

¹² [HC Deb 11 August 2011 cc1051-1105](#)

¹³ *Ibid*, [cc1106-1129](#)

¹⁴ To confirm that the Recess would continue until the House returned on the previously notified date of 5 September 2011 [*Ibid*, [c1130](#)]

¹⁵ *Ibid*, [cc1131-1205](#)

As the House was sitting on a Thursday, the moment of interruption was at 6pm. However, the Order Paper included a 6pm Business of the House motion to allow debate to continue until 7pm.¹⁶ But during the debate, Sir George Young, the Leader of the House of Commons, indicated that he intended “to move an alternative motion to enable us to continue until 8 o’clock”.¹⁷ At 6pm the House agreed to sit until 8pm, and that Standing Order No 41A (Deferred divisions) would not apply.¹⁸

Earlier in the same summer, on 20 July 2011, having risen for the Summer Recess the previous day, the House was recalled to discuss “Public Confidence in the Media and Police”. The Prime Minister made a statement, which lasted from 11.35am to 1.54pm;¹⁹ the statement was followed by a sittings of the House motion;²⁰ and then by a general debate, opened by the Prime Minister.²¹

1.4 2001-05 Parliament

The House of Commons was recalled on 24 September 2002, to discuss the subject of Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Prime Minister made a statement first;²² the statement was followed by a sittings of the House motion; and then by a debate on a motion for the adjournment.²³ Unusually, a division was called on the question that the House do adjourn, and there voted Ayes 6, Noes 64. However, because the result of the division was not announced until after 10pm (i.e. beyond the moment of interruption) the House automatically adjourned because the time allocated for the debate had passed.

Before that Parliament was recalled on 3 April 2002 to pay its respects to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, who died on Saturday 30 March 2002. The House debated a Motion for an Address, in the following terms:

That an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty expressing the deep sympathies and condolences of this House on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, whose life was given unstintingly in devoted public service to the Country and the Commonwealth; who with his late Majesty King George VI rallied the nation in the darkest days of war and who in times of peace was a unifying figure for Britain, inspiring love and affection in all she met.²⁴

The body of Her Majesty Lay in State in Westminster Hall from the afternoon of Friday 5 April until the evening of Monday 8 April.²⁵

¹⁶ House of Commons, [Order of Business](#), 11 August 2011

¹⁷ [HC Deb 11 August 2011 c1152](#)

¹⁸ [Ibid, c1170](#)

¹⁹ [HC Deb 20 July 2011 cc918-962](#)

²⁰ To confirm that the Recess would continue until the House returned on the previously notified date of 5 September 2011 [*Ibid*, [c964](#)]

²¹ [Ibid, cc965-1050](#)

²² HC Deb 24 September 2002 cc1-23

²³ [Ibid cc24-153](#)

²⁴ HC Deb 3 April 2002 cc799-828

²⁵ House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/PC/1735, [Lyings in state](#), 12 April 2002

The House was also recalled on 14 September 2001 to debate international terrorism and the attacks in the USA on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001.²⁶ It was recalled again on 4 and 8 October 2001 to debate the response to the terrorist attacks on the United States. Further information about sittings of Parliament, including recalls is available in the House of Commons Information Office Factsheet, *Sittings of the House*.²⁷

The House of Lords has its own procedures for recall and need not necessarily be recalled at the same time as the House of Commons. In practice, usually both Houses have been recalled at the same time, see section 5, below.

There were no recalls of the House of Commons in either the 2005 Parliament, or the 2017 Parliament.

²⁶ HC Deb 14 September 2001 c610

²⁷ House of Commons Information Office Factsheet P4, [Sittings of the House](#), June 2010

2. List of recalls

The House of Commons has been recalled on 30 occasions since 1948, as follows:

27-29 September 1949	Devaluation
12-19 September 1950	Korean War
04 October 1951	Prorogation – followed by dissolution
12-14 September 1956	Suez Crisis; Cyprus
18 September 1959	Prorogation – followed by dissolution
17-23 October 1961	Berlin Crisis
16 January 1968	Government expenditure Cuts
26-27 August 1968	Czechoslovakia, Nigeria
26-29 May 1970	Prorogation – followed by dissolution
22-23 September 1971	Northern Ireland
9-10 January 1974	Fuel
3-4 June 1974	Northern Ireland
3 April 1982 (Saturday)	Falkland Islands
14 April 1982	Falkland Islands
6-7 September 1990	Kuwait invasion
24-25 September 1992	Government economic policy; UN operations in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Somalia
31 May 1995	Bosnia
2-3 September 1998	Omagh Bomb: Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Bill
14 September, 4 and 8 October 2001	International terrorism and attacks in the USA
03 April 2002	Death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother
24 September 2002	Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction
20 July 2011	Public confidence in the Media and Police
11 August 2011	Public disorder (additional statement on global economy)
10 April 2013	Death of Baroness Thatcher
29 August 2013	Syria
26 September 2014	ISIL and Iraq
20 June 2016	Death of Jo Cox
02 June 2020	To reconsider the resolution on Proceedings during the pandemic agreed to by the House on 21 April 2020
30 December 2020	To consider the <i>European Union (Future Relationship) Bill 2019-21</i> ; to hear statements on Covid-19; and to agree to regulations relating to public health.
6 January 2021	To hear statements on Covid-19; and to agree to regulations relating to public health.

Source: derived from House of Commons Information Office Factsheet P4, [Sittings of the House](#), June 2010

2.1 Calls for recalls

There are often calls by Members for the House of Commons to be recalled during a recess. Often the Government does not accede to these calls.

On 30 March 2016, Jeremy Corbyn, the Leader of the Opposition, initiated an e-petition calling for “David Cameron to act to protect our steel industry & recall Parliament”.²⁸

On 18 August 2019, it was reported that “more than 100 MPs” had written to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, urging him “to recall Parliament over [the] ‘national emergency’ of Brexit”. MPs requested

²⁸ UK Government and Parliament, [Call on David Cameron to act to protect our steel industry & recall Parliament](#)

that Parliament be recalled “now in August and sit permanently until October 31”.²⁹

An e-petition calling for the recall of Parliament “immediately to urgently debate no-deal Brexit” was launched on 14 August 2019. It had received over 10,000 signatures on 19 August (the Government has undertaken to respond to e-petitions that secure 10,000 signatures).³⁰

On 19 August 2019, the Prime Minister’s spokeswoman said that there were no plans to recall Parliament.³¹

In the summer of 2020, there were calls to recall the House of Commons to debate exam results. The Hansard Society noted this call and restated its argument for changes to the way in which a recall of the House of Commons is triggered³² (see sections 3.2 and 3.3).

Before the recall on 30 December 2020 was announced, there had been calls to bring the House back to debate coronavirus.³³

²⁹ Alain Tolhurst, “[More than 100 MPs urge Boris Johnson to recall Parliament over ‘national emergency’ of Brexit](#)”, *PoliticsHome*, 18 August 2019

³⁰ UK Government and Parliament, [Recall Parliament immediately to urgently debate no-deal Brexit](#)

³¹ Rajeev Syal, “[No 10 rejects demands for parliament to be recalled over Brexit](#)”, *Guardian*, 19 August 2019

³² Hansard Society Blog, [Demands to recall the House of Commons over this summer’s exams fiasco reinforce the case for taking the process out of government hands](#), 18 August 2020

³³ For example, BBC News, [Covid: case for recalling MPs over emergency, says Sir Keir Starmer](#), 21 December 2020

3. The procedure and calls for it to be changed

3.1 The procedure – the Government's instigation

Under Standing Orders, the Speaker decides whether the House of Commons should be recalled, but only once Ministers have made representations to him that the public interest requires this. The Speaker then considers whether the public interest does require this, and if he is satisfied that it does, appoints a time for the House to meet. This is set out in Standing Order No. 13, which dates from 1948:

(1) Whenever the House stands adjourned and it is represented to the Speaker by Her Majesty's Ministers that the public interest requires that the House should meet at a time earlier than that to which the House stands adjourned, the Speaker, if he is satisfied that the public interest does so require, may give notice that, being so satisfied, he appoints a time for the House to meet, and the House shall accordingly meet at the time stated in such notice.

(2) The government business to be transacted on the day on which the House shall so meet shall, subject to the publication of notice thereof in the order paper to be circulated on the day on which the House shall so meet, be such as the government may appoint, but subject as aforesaid the House shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to the day on which it shall so meet, and any government order of the day and government notices of motions that may stand on the order book for any day shall be appointed for the day on which the House shall so meet.

(3) In the event of the Speaker being unable to act owing to illness or other cause, the Chairman of Ways and Means, or either Deputy Chairman, shall act in his stead for the purposes of this order.³⁴

The notice issued by the Speaker announcing the recall of Parliament is reported in the *Journal* or the *Votes and Proceedings* before the relevant day's sitting. The following table reports when notice of the 15 most recent recalls was given. It shows that the amount of notice given varies.

³⁴ House of Commons, [Standing Orders – Public Business, 2019](#), November 2019, HC 314 2019, Standing Order No 13

Date recalled	Date notice issued by Speaker
02 September 1998	25 August 1998
14 September 2001	12 September 2001
04 October 2001	25 September 2001
08 October 2001	07 October 2001
03 April 2002	31 March 2002
24 September 2002	16 September 2002
20 July 2011	19 July 2011
11 August 2011	09 August 2011
10 April 2013	08 April 2013
29 August 2013	27 August 2013
26 September 2014	24 September 2014
20 June 2016	17 June 2016
2 June 2020	27 May 2020
30 December 2020	24 December 2020
6 January 2021	4 January 2021

Source: House of Commons Journals – the text of the notice issued by the Speaker is recorded before the relevant day's sitting

By way of example, the notice of the recall on 30 December 2020 read:

Notice given by the Speaker pursuant to Standing Order No. 13 (earlier meeting of the House in certain circumstances)

Whereas Her Majesty's Government have represented to me, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the House of Commons, that the public interest requires the House to meet at an earlier time than 2.30 pm on the 5th day of January 2021 and I am satisfied that the public interest does so require:

Now, therefore, I hereby give notice pursuant to the Standing Order (earlier meeting of the House in certain circumstances) that the House shall meet on the 30th day of December 2020 at 9.30 am.

Given under my hand this 24th day of December 2020.³⁵

3.2 Speaker Bercow's proposal (2017)

In a Hansard Society Lecture on 11 October 2017, Speaker Bercow noted that "As matters stand, only the Government can seek a recall of Parliament". He considered that the Government should have this power and could not "conceive of circumstances in which that request would be denied".

However, he asked whether only the Government should have the right or whether the right could be extended:

The question is whether only the Government can even seek to petition for a recall or whether some other mechanism should be devised to allow Members as a whole to do so.

He acknowledged that there would be difficulties in doing so but made some suggestions on how Members could request a recall:

If such a reform were to be introduced, it would have to be thought through carefully. I can see many difficulties, for example, with a procedure that allowed, for instance, 100 or 200 MPs to

³⁵ House of Commons, [Votes and Proceedings](#), 30 December 2020

seek the Speaker's agreement to a recall as this could be exploited for partisan purposes rather than responding to a genuine urgent situation. Indeed, this could put the Speaker of the day in an extremely awkward position. It is not beyond the wit of man and woman to devise some sensible safeguards. To offer one model, a petition for a recall could be launched if it involved a relatively high number of our 650 MPs, perhaps a quarter of them, provided that at least a quarter of that quarter were drawn from those who support the Government and at least a quarter from the Opposition. This would ensure both a degree of balance and a testing threshold for a recall bid to cross.

He also explained why he thought the change should be made:

Why, I sense some of you asking, bother with an innovation that might be very rarely used? To me there is both a practical and a philosophical argument for thinking about it. The practical thesis is just as the revival of the UQ has led to ministers volunteering statements they might otherwise have sought to avoid because of the inconvenience, so the knowledge that a cross party set of MPs had a right to seek a recall might convince the Government of the day to jump before it was pushed and bring the House back even in the depths of August with all the aggravation that this may entail. The philosophical aspect is this, "Whose House is it anyway?" Government and Parliament obviously overlap but they are not two different ways of being or saying the same thing. The House at the end of the day belongs to all of its members and not the minority of it who occupy ministerial office. I think the case for at least a debate in this space is overdue and I hope that it will happen shortly.³⁶

At Business Questions on 12 October 2017, Andrea Leadsom, the Leader of the House of Commons, said that she was sure that "we will hear more about that interesting idea [that back-bench MPs could recall Parliament] and I will certainly be listening".³⁷

3.3 Calls for change – the Speaker's instigation (2005 Parliament)

The operation of Standing Order No. 13 means that the initial trigger for the consideration of a recall lies with the executive rather than the legislature. This point was noted by the Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny in its 2001 report which recommended that the Speaker should be able to recall Parliament at times of emergency:

7.43 As the petrol crisis of autumn 2000 showed, Parliament is hamstrung at times of crisis by the fact that only the Government can recall Parliament. The Commission believes that Parliament as an institution must be able to respond to issues as they arise. If Parliament is to be an effective forum at times of crisis, and retain its significance to political debate, there must be an alternative mechanism for the recall of Parliament.

7.44 **The Commission believes that the Speaker of the Commons should have the ability to recall Parliament at times of emergency.** The recall would have to be instigated by a Member of Parliament and the Speaker would adjudicate claims

³⁶ John Bercow, "[Opening up the Usual Channels: next steps for reform of the House of Commons](#)", Hansard Society Lecture, 11 October 2017

³⁷ [HC Deb 12 October 2017 c465](#)

for recall, along similar lines to those for the choice of Private Notice Questions. The Speaker would therefore consult with the leaders of the political parties before taking the decision. It is envisaged that a recall would occur only when an urgent development affecting the national interest had to be discussed by Parliament.³⁸

Before the 2010 general election, a motion to amend Standing Order No. 13 was tabled and appeared in the “Remaining Orders and Notices” section of the Order Paper. The motion called for paragraph 1 of Standing Order No. 13 to be replaced by the following text:

‘(1) If the Speaker is of the opinion that the public interest requires that the House should meet at a time earlier than that to which it stands adjourned, the House shall meet at such time as the Speaker shall appoint.’³⁹

3.4 Government proposals for change (2007)

In its 2007 Green Paper, *The Governance of Britain*, the Government (the Labour Government of Gordon Brown) described the procedure for recalling the House of Commons, and noted that Members of Parliament could “request a recall only through the Government. If the Government refuses such a request, MPs have no other course of action”. The Government noted recent recalls but then indicated that it wished to change the mechanism whereby the House of Commons was recalled:

... But the Government believes that where a majority of members of Parliament request a recall, the Speaker should consider the request, including in cases where the Government itself has not sought a recall. It would remain at the Speaker’s discretion to decide whether or not the House of Commons should be recalled based on his or her judgement or whether the public interest requires it, and to determine the date of the recall.

39. The Government will therefore suggest to the House of Commons that the Standing Orders of the House be amended to allow this to happen and will consult with the House of Commons Modernisation Committee on precisely what amendment should be made.⁴⁰

The Modernisation Committee announced an inquiry into *Dissolution and Recall* in October 2007.⁴¹ The Committee never completed its inquiry (it last met in July 2008 and was not re-established in the 2010 Parliament). Although no oral evidence sessions were held, the Committee published some of the written evidence it received in connection with the inquiry on its website.⁴²

³⁸ Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny, *The Challenge for Parliament Making Government Accountable*, 2001, p 86

³⁹ For example, see “Remaining Orders and Notices”, tabled for 10 October 2005; “Remaining Orders and Notices”, tabled for 16 July 2007; and “Remaining Orders and Notices”, tabled for 13 July 2009

⁴⁰ Ministry of Justice, *The Governance of Britain*, July 2007, Cm 7170, paras 37-39

⁴¹ Modernisation Committee press notice, *New Inquiries*, Press Notice No 10 2006-07, 24 October 2007

⁴² Modernisation Committee, [Memoranda – Contents: Recall and Dissolution](#)

4. Members' expenses associated with the recall of Parliament

An allowance was introduced, by the House of Commons in 1994, to cover the necessary expenses of Members returning to Westminster in the event of a recall of Parliament during a recess. Under the Scheme, Members were able to reclaim any "extra costs" they may have incurred due to a parliamentary recall. The resolution was debated and agreed to without a division.⁴³

Now, following the expenses scandal in 2009, the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) is responsible for determining an MPs' Expenses Scheme and paying any expenses. Following the two recalls of Parliament during the 2011 summer recess, IPSA made explicit provision for recall expenses in the 2012/13 Scheme. Provision is made in the 2020/21 Scheme:

In the event of a recall of Parliament during recess, IPSA will pay claims for any reasonable travel by MPs and their spouses, partners or dependants to Westminster or their London Area residence. This includes international travel back to the UK and, if necessary, return travel to the foreign location, from which they were recalled. MPs will be expected to claim for standard class or equivalent fares unless they have no alternative, or there is a more cost-effective option available.⁴⁴

In the summer of 2011, before provision was made in the Scheme, IPSA confirmed that Members would be able to claim for the cost of "necessary travel to enable them to return to Parliament" as a result of the recall of Parliament.⁴⁵

In 2012/13 and until 2013/14 there was a budgetary limit of £3,750 per Member but this was removed in the 2014/15 edition of the Scheme, following the November 2013 consultation.⁴⁶

⁴³ HC Deb 13 Jul 1994 Vol 246 cc1105-14. Tony Newton, the then Leader of the House, offered an explanation for the introduction of the allowance at c1110

⁴⁴ Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), [The Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses](#), 12 March 2020, HC 95 2019-21, para 10.12

⁴⁵ IPSA, "Recall of Parliament", [MP Bulletin 46](#), 9 August 2011

⁴⁶ IPSA, [Annual Review of the MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses](#), 12 March 2014, HC 1122 2013-14, "Report on the Consultation of 2013-14", paras 65-72

5. Procedure in the House of Lords

Following changes made by the *Constitutional Reform Act 2005* and the creation of a new position of Lord Speaker, the Lord Speaker can recall the House of Lords, after consultation with the Government in certain circumstances:

Lord Speaker, or, in his absence, the Senior Deputy Speaker, may, after consultation with the government, recall the House whenever it stands adjourned, if satisfied that the public interest requires it or in pursuance of section 28(3) of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.⁴⁷

Previously, the Lord Chancellor decided on these questions without the need for representations from another Minister. This reflected his multiple roles as Speaker of the Lords, member of the Cabinet and head of the judiciary, which as Donald Shell remarked, breaks “all the most sacrosanct rules regarding the separation of powers”.⁴⁸

The provisions covering recalls of the Lords are contained in Standing Order 17.⁴⁹

In practice, the Lords has usually been recalled at the same times as the Commons.⁵⁰

In 2011, the House of Lords was not recalled on 20 July as it was already scheduled to sit that day, and rise for the Summer Recess at the end of the day’s sitting. The Prime Minister’s statement on “Public Confidence in the Police and Media” was repeated in the House of Lords by Lord Strathclyde, Leader of the House of Lords.⁵¹

The House of Lords was recalled on 11 August 2011 and the two statements on public disorder and the global economy, made in the House of Commons, were repeated by Lord Strathclyde and Lord Sassoon, respectively.⁵² Notice of the recall of the House of Lords was given on 10 August, one day later than the Commons. Initially, it was reported that the Government did not intend to recall the House of Lords.⁵³

⁴⁷ House of Lords, *Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords*, 2017, para 2.21

⁴⁸ Donald Shell, *The House of Lords*, 1992, p 112

⁴⁹ The previous arrangements are set out in the Standing Orders dated 17 May 2005 (HL 3 2005-06); amendments were made on 3 May 2006, and are set out in HL 173 2005-06. House of Lords, *The Standing Orders of the House of Lords relating to Public Business, 2016*, HL 3 2016-17, Standing Order 17

⁵⁰ There have been additional recalls for the Address on the death of President Kennedy on 25 November 1963 and for the Address on the death of Sir Winston Churchill on 25 January 1965, when the Commons was still sitting. There was also a judicial recall on 1 February 1980. Source: House of Lords Information Office (Following the establishment of the Supreme Court from 1 October 2009, judicial matters are no longer an issue for the House of Lords.)

⁵¹ HL Deb 20 July 2011 cc1397-1410

⁵² HL Deb 11 August 2011 cc1502-1552

⁵³ Lord Norton of Louth, “[Debating the riots](#)”, *The Norton View [blog]*, 9 August 2011; Lord Norton of Louth, “[House of Lords is now being recalled ...](#)”, *The Norton View [blog]*, 10 August 2011

16 Recall of Parliament

The House of Lords was recalled on 10 April 2013 to pay tribute to Baroness Thatcher.⁵⁴

The House of Lords was recalled on 29 August 2013 (Syria).⁵⁵

The House of Lords was recalled on 26 September 2014 (ISIL and Iraq).⁵⁶

The House of Lords was recalled on 20 June 2016 to pay tribute to Jo Cox.⁵⁷

In 2020, the House of Lords was not recalled on 2 June 2020. The House of Commons was recalled to deal with a procedural matter that did not affect the House of Lords.

The House of Lords was recalled on 30 December 2020 to pass the *European Union (Future Relationship) Bill 2019-21* and to consider new coronavirus regulations.⁵⁸

The House of Lords was not recalled on 6 January 2021. The Lords had already resumed sitting following the Christmas Recess.

⁵⁴ [HL Deb 10 April 2013 cc1128-1206](#)

⁵⁵ Parliament website, [Recall of House of Lords](#)

⁵⁶ [HL Deb 26 September 2014 cc1675-1746](#)

⁵⁷ [HL Deb 20 June 2016 cc1333-1348](#)

⁵⁸ [HL Deb 30 December 2020 cc1771-1932](#)

6. Procedure in the Devolved Legislatures

6.1 Scottish Parliament

In the Scottish Parliament, a recall does not require representations by Ministers, but is purely a matter for the Presiding Officer (the Speaker's equivalent):

The Presiding Officer may convene the Parliament on other dates or at other times in an emergency.⁵⁹

Parliamentary business in the Scottish Parliament is organised by the Parliamentary Bureau. This is a group of representatives of the various political parties and groupings in the Parliament, chaired by the Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer would almost certainly discuss recall with the Bureau, so presumably it would be open to individual MSPs who wanted to urge a recall to apply pressure via their party business manager in the Bureau.

The Scottish Parliament has been recalled on five occasions since it was established in 1999:

- 13 Oct 2000 To mark the death of its First Minister, Donald Dewar.⁶⁰
- 3 April 2002 To mark the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother with a Motion of Condolence.⁶¹
- 24 Aug 2009 Ministerial statement on the decision to release Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi on compassionate grounds.⁶²
- 30 Dec 2020 To consider a legislative consent memorandum on the trade and co-operation agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union; and for a ministerial statement, from the First Minister, on Covid.⁶³
- 4 Jan 2021 Ministerial statement, from the First Minister, on Covid-19.⁶⁴

During the coronavirus pandemic, the Scottish Parliament met informally for party leaders' virtual question time on 9 and 16 April 2020; and on 17, 23, 24 and 30 April for Members' virtual question time.

On 3 June 2020, the Scottish Parliament agreed arrangements that would allow it to sit during the summer recess, using both hybrid and online sessions:

That the Parliament agrees, further to motion S5M-17943 and under Rule 2.3.1, that the parliamentary recess dates of 27 June to 30 August 2020 (inclusive) be replaced with 27 June to 9 August 2020 (inclusive) with the exception of 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 July

⁵⁹ Rule 2.2.10, *Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament*, 5th Edition (7th Revision), September 2019

⁶⁰ SPOR, [13 October 2000 cc1073-1083](#)

⁶¹ SPOR, [3 April 2002 cc10843-10852](#)

⁶² SPOR, [24 August 2009 cc18991-19016](#)

⁶³ SPOR, [30 December 2020 cc1-72](#)

⁶⁴ SPOR, [4 January 2021 cc1-36](#)

and 6 August 2020, on which dates business may be programmed by the Bureau.⁶⁵

6.2 Northern Ireland Assembly

The procedure for recalls of the Northern Ireland Assembly is contained in Standing Order 11(1), which provides that:

Whenever notice is given to the Speaker by the First Minister and deputy First Minister or by not less than 30 members that the Assembly should meet at an earlier date than that to which it stands adjourned for the purpose of discussing a specific matter of urgent public importance, or several such matters, the Speaker shall, as soon as may be, summon the Assembly to meet.

Standing Order 11 also provides that those making the request for a recall have to sign a statement that specifies the matter or matters to be discussed. When the business has been completed the Assembly “shall either stand adjourned to the date to which it originally stood adjourned or determine differently on a motion from a Member when it shall next meet”.⁶⁶

The Northern Ireland Assembly has been recalled on nine occasions, under the Standing Order 11 procedures:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 8 July 2013 | <p>Private Members’ Business</p> <p>Call for an Inquiry into Allegations of Wrongful Political Interference in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Potential Breaches of the Ministerial Code of Conduct and Misleading the Assembly and the Committee for Social Development.⁶⁷</p> |
| 16 July 2013 | <p>Private Members’ Business</p> <p>Determination issued by the Parades Commission on 9 July 2013.⁶⁸</p> |
| 28 Feb 2014 | <p>Private Members’ Business</p> <p>Judgement in the Case of R v Downey.⁶⁹</p> |
| 19 Dec 2016 | <p>Executive Committee Business</p> <p>Ministerial Statement: The Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme</p> <p>Assembly Business</p> <p>Motion: Exclusion of Minister from Office under Section 30 of the <i>Northern Ireland Act 1998</i>.⁷⁰</p> |

⁶⁵ SPOR, [3 June 2020](#), c88; see also cc83-84

⁶⁶ Northern Ireland Assembly, [Standing Orders](#), 4 October 2016, SO 11

⁶⁷ Northern Ireland Assembly Order Paper, [Monday 8 July 2013](#), OP 151/11-15; Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report, [Monday 8 July 2013](#); see also BBC News, [Northern Ireland Housing Association Executive motion blocked](#), 8 July 2013

⁶⁸ Northern Ireland Assembly Order Paper, [Tuesday 16 July 2013](#); Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report, [Tuesday 16 July 2013](#)

⁶⁹ Northern Ireland Assembly Order Paper, [Friday 28 February 2014](#), OP 195/11-15; Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report, [Friday 28 February 2014](#)

⁷⁰ Northern Ireland Assembly Order Paper, [Monday 19 December 2016](#); Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report, [Monday 19 December 2016](#)

- 21 Oct 2019 Election of Speaker and Deputy Speakers, filling of Ministerial Offices and debate on the Legislative Position on Abortion in Northern Ireland
- [The sitting was adjourned after no nominations for Speaker or Deputy Speaker were made.]⁷¹
- 18 Aug 2020 **Private Members' Business**
AS-level and A-level grading crisis.⁷²
- 14 Oct 2020 Ministerial statement: Executive's Decisions Relating to Measures to be Taken in Response to the Increased Incidence of the Transmission of COVID-19.⁷³
- 30 Dec 2020 **Executive Committee Business**
To debate a motion on the trade and cooperation agreement with the EU.⁷⁴
- 31 Dec 2021 **Private Members' Business**
The impact of COVID-19 on school opening.⁷⁵

6.3 Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament

The procedure for a recall of Senedd Cymru/the Welsh Parliament is contained in Standing Order 12.3:

If no plenary meeting is timetabled for a particular date or time, the Presiding Officer may, at the request of the First Minister, summon the Senedd to consider a matter of urgent public importance.⁷⁶

On 24 March 2020, because of the potential impact of Covid-19 on the business, a temporary Standing Order was agreed.⁷⁷ It allowed for recall in particular circumstances (see Box 1).

Box 1: Extracts from Standing Order 34 – Emergency Procedures

34.1 Standing Order 34 makes temporary provisions to facilitate the continuation of Senedd business during the COVID-19 outbreak. Standing Order 34 will cease to have effect on the dissolution of the Senedd, or when the Senedd so resolves, whichever is sooner. Where provisions contained in Standing Order 34 are in conflict with other Standing Order provisions, those in Standing Order 34 must have precedence.

[...]

Recall of the Senedd by the Presiding Officer

34.9 The Presiding Officer may, with the agreement of the Business Committee, summon the Senedd to consider a matter of urgent public importance related to public health matters.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Northern Ireland Assembly, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 21 October 2019

⁷² Northern Ireland Assembly Order Paper, [Tuesday 18 August 2020](#); Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report, [Tuesday 18 August 2020](#)

⁷³ Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report, [Wednesday 14 October 2020](#)

⁷⁴ Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report, [Wednesday 30 December 2020](#)

⁷⁵ Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report, [Thursday 31 December 2020](#)

⁷⁶ Welsh Parliament, [Standing Orders of the Welsh Parliament](#), May 2020

⁷⁷ Welsh Parliament, [Plenary](#), 24 March 2020, Item 18; see also Business Committee, [Amending Standing Orders: Assembly Business and Emergency Procedures](#), March 2020

⁷⁸ Welsh Parliament, [Standing Orders of the Welsh Parliament](#), May 2020, Standing Order 34(1) and 34(9)

The Welsh Parliament has been recalled on eight occasions:

- 19 July 2000 To consider the Spending Review.⁷⁹
- 4 April 2002 Tributes to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.⁸⁰
- 19 Dec 2012 To consider the council tax regulations.⁸¹
- 4 April 2016 To consider the ongoing situation in the Welsh steel industry.⁸²
- 5 Sept 2019 To consider Brexit and the prorogation of the UK Parliament.⁸³
- 5 Aug 2020 (under Standing Order 34.9) to hear a statement on coronavirus, to appoint members to committees and to approve a number of coronavirus-related regulations.⁸⁴
- 26 Aug 2020 (under Standing Order 34.9) to hear a statement on coronavirus and to approve a number of coronavirus-related regulations.⁸⁵
- 30 Dec 2020 (under Standing Order 12.3) to debate the end of the European Union transition period and for the Minister for Health and Social Services to make a statement on the latest information on coronavirus.⁸⁶

(Until May 2020, Senedd Cymru/the Welsh Parliament was known as the National Assembly for Wales.)

⁷⁹ National Assembly for Wales, [Votes and Proceedings for Wednesday 19 July 2000](#)

⁸⁰ National Assembly for Wales, [The Record of Proceedings](#), 4 April 2002. The [Agenda](#) for the previous sitting (21 March 2002) noted that the Assembly would next sit on 16 April 2002, as did the [Agenda](#) for 4 April 2002

⁸¹ National Assembly for Wales, [The Record of Proceedings](#), 19 December 2012

⁸² National Assembly for Wales, [The Record of Proceedings](#), 4 April 2016. Notice of the recall on 4 April 2016 was given on 30 March 2016 [National Assembly for Wales News, [National Assembly recalled to consider Welsh steel industry](#), 30 March 2016]. The NAW had risen on 16 March 2016 ahead of elections on 5 May 2016. However, the Assembly was not dissolved (under section 3 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*) until 6 April 2016

⁸³ National Assembly for Wales, [The Record of Proceedings](#), 5 September 2019

⁸⁴ Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament, [Plenary](#), 5 August 2020

⁸⁵ Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament, [Plenary](#), 26 August 2020

⁸⁶ Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament, [Plenary](#), 30 December 2020

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcenquiries@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).