



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# Select Committees - core tasks

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## Summary

On 20 June 2002, the members of the Liaison Committee [agreed a set of ten core tasks](#) for Select Committees to guide their work.

In November 2012, the Liaison Committee proposed changes to the core tasks following a [review of the effectiveness, resources and powers of select committees](#). The House [endorsed](#) the revised core tasks on when it debated the Liaison Committee's report on 31 January 2013.

In 2019, the Liaison Committee undertook an [inquiry into the effectiveness and influence of the select committee system](#), coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the creation of departmental select committees. In its [report](#), the Committee concluded that "The core tasks had a positive effect on the ability of select committees to plan and be held to account for their work". But it considered that it was time to "restructure them" and it proposed "a shorter set of core tasks which include the "how" as well as the "what" of committee work". It proposed the following core tasks:

**Overall aim:** To hold Ministers and Departments to account, and to investigate matters of public concern where there is a need for accountability to the public through Parliament.

**To deliver this aim our core tasks are:**

- **Policy:** To examine the policy of the department, including areas of emerging policy or where existing policy is deficient, and make recommendations.  
This may include legislative scrutiny, post-legislative scrutiny, and scrutiny of delegated legislation where relevant.
- **Implementation:** To hold departments and arm's-length bodies to account for implementation of committee recommendations. Too often inquiries come up with important recommendations, widely welcomed but left to gather dust on the shelf.
- **Administration:** To examine the administration of departments and their associated public bodies, including scrutiny of their strategy and their performance and management information.  
This includes holding pre-appointment hearings where appropriate.
- **Expenditure:** To inform and support the House's control of public expenditure by examining the expenditure plans, outturn and performance of the department and its public bodies, and the relationships between spending and delivery of outcomes, including effectiveness and value for money.
- **Matters of public concern:** To consider matters of public concern where there is a need for accountability to the public through Parliament, including the actions of organisations or individuals with significant power over the lives of citizens or with wide-reaching public responsibilities.

It then set out how committees would deliver the tasks through evidence taking; collaborative work; clear communication and follow-up work.

This briefing paper sets out the 2002, 2012 and 2019 versions of the core tasks. It also notes a number of earlier proposals and provides a background to the introduction of the first set of core tasks in 2002.

# 1. Core Tasks for Select Committees agreed in 2002

On 20 June 2002, the members of the Liaison Committee agreed a set of *Core Tasks for Select Committees*.<sup>1</sup> Those core tasks are set out in the table below. They were agreed in the wake of the debate on the Modernisation Committee's report on Select Committees, which took place on 14 May 2002, when the House invited the Liaison Committee "to establish common objectives for select committees".<sup>2</sup> The Modernisation Committee had provided the Liaison Committee with its own illustrative objectives, which are reported in Section 4.

**Table 1 – Core Tasks for Select Committees (2002)**

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**OBJECTIVE A: TO EXAMINE AND COMMENT ON THE POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT**

- Task 1 To examine policy proposals from the UK Government and the European Commission in Green Papers, White Papers, draft Guidance etc, and to inquire further where the Committee considers it appropriate.
- Task 2 To identify and examine areas of emerging policy, or where existing policy is deficient, and make proposals.
- Task 3 To conduct scrutiny of any published draft bill within the Committee's responsibilities.
- Task 4 To examine specific output from the department expressed in documents or other decisions.

**OBJECTIVE B: TO EXAMINE THE EXPENDITURE OF THE DEPARTMENT**

- Task 5 To examine the expenditure plans and out-turn of the department, its agencies and principal NDPBs.

**OBJECTIVE C: TO EXAMINE THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEPARTMENT**

- Task 6 To examine the department's Public Service Agreements, the associated targets and the statistical measurements employed, and report if appropriate.
- Task 7 To monitor the work of the department's Executive Agencies, NDPBs, regulators and other associated public bodies.
- Task 8 To scrutinise major appointments made by the department.
- Task 9 To examine the implementation of legislation and major policy initiatives.

**OBJECTIVE D: TO ASSIST THE HOUSE IN DEBATE AND DECISION**

- Task 10 To produce reports which are suitable for debate in the House, including Westminster Hall, or debating committees.
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<sup>1</sup> Liaison Committee, [Annual Report 2002](#), 1 April 2003, HC 558 2002-03, para 13

<sup>2</sup> HC Deb 14 May 2002 c648

In addition to the core tasks reported in the table above, the Liaison Committee provided each Committee with guidance on the core tasks. This guidance was circulated to select committees on 26 June 2002. The guidance was published in the Committee's *Annual Report 2002*.<sup>3</sup>

The Liaison Committee also reported that it had asked individual committees to prepare their annual reports, "using the indicative core tasks as a template for their review of their work".<sup>4</sup>

## 1.1 Initial assessment of the benefits of core tasks

In its *Annual Report 2003*, which covered the first full year since the committee chairmen agreed the core tasks, the Liaison Committee commented that:

The discipline of assessing their work against core tasks has encouraged committees to ensure that they monitor the widest possible range of departmental activity; it also allows the public and the media to appreciate more easily the comprehensive examination of Government which committees undertake. Below we give examples relating to certain core tasks and flag up areas of best practice, or concern.<sup>5</sup>

In *The Times*, Peter Riddell suggested that the introduction of core tasks had had a beneficial effect on the work of select committees:

... select committees are adopting a more methodical and less ad hoc approach via a series of core tasks: examining policy, draft bills, expenditure, targets, major appointments and implementation of legislation. This shift marks what Alan Williams, chairman of the Liaison Committee, has called a move from "spotlight to searchlight".

Activity is not the same as power or influence. The executive still dominates the legislature, not least because most MPs put party loyalties and frontbench ambitions ahead of scrutiny.

But it is no longer a one-way process. The Government continues to get its way, but only after allowing the Commons to have its say.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Liaison Committee, *Annual Report 2002*, 1 April 2003, HC 558 2002-03, para 13

<sup>4</sup> Liaison Committee, *Annual Report 2002*, 1 April 2003, HC 558 2002-03, para 16

<sup>5</sup> Liaison Committee, *Annual report 2003*, 22 March 2004, HC 446 2003-04, para 10

<sup>6</sup> Peter Riddell, "Government still has its way, but only when MPs have had their say", *The Times*, 2 April 2003

## 2. Revised core tasks and recommendations for select committees (2012)

### 2.1 The Core tasks

Over time, the workload and the expectations of the select committees changed and some core tasks formulated in 2002 could no longer be applied in the same form.

In 2009 the Select Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons recommended that the Liaison Committee should:

re-examine the current role of select committees, their resources and their tasks, and in particular how to deal with the increasing demands of time made of Members as their role grows.<sup>7</sup>

In 2011 the Hansard Society published an article on select committees' tasks and modes of operation in which they suggested the main issues that should be covered by the review. They underlined that

Any review of core tasks must balance the case for a more prescriptive approach with the clear predisposition of committees to retain their ability to set their own agenda.<sup>8</sup>

The Hansard Society called again for a review of select committees core tasks in their article, "Building on success – why we need to review the select committees system". They agreed with both the Reform Committee and the Liaison Committee that the review of the core tasks was essential and needed. They reiterated:

Greater definition of the core tasks is ... essential for committees to plan their work more effectively over the course of a parliament, ensuring that they are making the best choices possible about what policy areas and bodies to scrutinise, and providing some form of accountability and transparency for those choices.<sup>9</sup>

In December 2011, the Liaison Committee announced an inquiry into select committee powers and effectiveness and called for evidence and views on, among other issues, "whether the core tasks set by the House for select committees in 2002 are still realistic given the limitations on Members' time".<sup>10</sup>

In its November 2012 report, *Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers*, the Liaison Committee acknowledged the continuing value of the core tasks but accepted that not all the core tasks would be relevant to every committee. Before setting out a list of revised core tasks (see Table 2), the Liaison Committee stated that it believed it

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<sup>7</sup> Select Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons, [Rebuilding the House](#), HC 1117, para 93

<sup>8</sup> Alex Brazier and Ruth Fox, "[Reviewing Select Committee Tasks and Modes of Operation](#)", *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.64 No. 2, 2011, p.361

<sup>9</sup> Matt Korris, [Building on success – why we need to review the select committee system](#), Hansard Society

<sup>10</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, Introduction, p. 6

continued “to be useful to define core tasks for committees, to guide committees in deciding their programme, but not to constrain their freedom to decide their own priorities”.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 2 – Revised Select Committee Core Tasks for Departmental Select Committees (2012)**

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**Overall aim:** To hold Ministers and Departments to account for their policy and decision-making and to support the House in its control of the supply of public money and scrutiny of legislation

**STRATEGY**

Task 1 To examine the strategy of the department, how it has identified its key objectives and priorities and whether it has the means to achieve them, in terms of plans, resources, skills, capabilities and management information

**POLICY**

Task 2 To examine policy proposals by the department, and areas of emerging policy, or where existing policy is deficient, and make proposals

**EXPENDITURE AND PERFORMANCE**

Task 3 To examine the expenditure plans, outturn and performance of the department and its arm’s length bodies, and the relationships between spending and delivery of outcomes

**DRAFT BILLS**

Task 4 To conduct scrutiny of draft bills within the committee's responsibilities

**BILLS AND DELEGATED LEGISLATION**

Task 5 To assist the House in its consideration of bills and statutory instruments, including draft orders under the Public Bodies Act

**POST-LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY**

Task 6 To examine the implementation of legislation and scrutinise the department’s post-legislative assessments

**EUROPEAN SCRUTINY**

Task 7 To scrutinise policy developments at the European level and EU legislative proposals

**APPOINTMENTS**

Task 8 To scrutinise major appointments made by the department and to hold pre-appointment hearings where appropriate

**SUPPORT FOR THE HOUSE**

Task 9 To produce timely reports to inform debate in the House, including Westminster Hall, or debating committees, and to examine petitions tabled

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Task 10 To assist the House of Commons in better engaging with the public by ensuring that the work of the committee is accessible to the public<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, para 16

<sup>12</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, para 20

## 2.2 Core tasks endorsed by the House

The House debated the Liaison Committee's report on 31 January 2013. The motion that was agreed by the House explicitly endorsed "the Committee's recommendations for committee best practice and the revised core tasks for departmental select committees".<sup>13</sup>

## 2.3 Recommended model of "best practice" for committees

The Liaison Committee also encouraged select committees to have a clear set of objectives before launching each inquiry. They stated:

It is important that committees should have a clear understanding amongst themselves about what they are seeking to achieve, and that they consider their objectives for the whole Parliament, rather than focusing only on the inquiry immediately ahead.<sup>14</sup>

The Committee concluded that it was not its role to impose on other committees how they should interpret their role, but as a model of "best practice", it recommended that committees:

have a candid discussion amongst themselves about how they see their purpose, and what they wish to achieve over the length of the Parliament;

identify what are the most important functions of their department's responsibilities and design a programme of scrutiny to assess whether the department's objectives have been fulfilled;

clearly record their conclusions and remind themselves of them when considering proposals for inquiry and programme planning;

review this at least annually, with an "awayday" or at least a longer, less formal discussion than is possible at a regular deliberative meeting; and

canvass opinion among the key players in their subject area about their performance.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.4 The role of committees: objectives for the Liaison Committee

In its report, *Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers*, the Liaison Committee presented their recommendations for the best practice for select committees. The Committee acknowledged that having done so, it needed to define its own objectives as a Liaison Committee. It set out "Draft Liaison Committee objectives for the 2010–2015 Parliament", with an overall aim:

Overall aim: To increase the effectiveness of select committees in scrutinising Government and the public awareness of this work.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> [HC Deb 31 January 2013 cc1125-1147](#)

<sup>14</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, para 64

<sup>15</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, para 65

<sup>16</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, Annex A, p.49

## 2.5 Guidelines for Committees Chairs

The Liaison Committee also acknowledged the importance of committee chairs and the role they play in leading a committee. It stated that it did not “wish to go so far as to prescribe a generic job description for chairs, as each committee is different”,<sup>17</sup> but it set out a list of broad expectations for committee chairs to guide them in their work. These included ensuring that the committee “works within its order of reference and is mindful of the core tasks”.<sup>18</sup>

The Liaison Committee concluded:

We recommend that chairs discuss with their committee how they see their role, and seek their endorsement for it. At this stage in the Parliament, there may be benefit in chairs asking their committees for individual feedback on their chairmanship, as an aid to the chair's professional development and to encourage committee engagement.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, para 99

<sup>18</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, para 100, see para 99 for the list of broad expectations

<sup>19</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, para 100

### 3. New core tasks (2019)

On 18 January 2019, the Liaison Committee launched an inquiry into the effectiveness and influence of the select committee system.<sup>20</sup>

The Committee's report, *The effectiveness and influence of the select committee system*, was published on 10 September 2019.<sup>21</sup> The Committee commented on the full range of select committee work as well as its role. It reviewed the Core Tasks that were published in 2012. It commented on the purpose of the Core Tasks:

We believe that, as resources devoted to select committees have grown further since 2012, it is important that we reaffirm the need for standards against which committees are judged and could be held accountable. [Core Tasks] are not intended to be restrictive but could help committees as they set their priorities and plan their future programmes and subsequently reflect on their performance. We believe that if committees planned more, and worked in a more focused way, their influence and effectiveness could be even greater.<sup>22</sup>

The Committee heard from people who argued for additional core tasks and from others who argued that some of the 2012 core tasks were redundant, in part because committees did not engage in particular activities. For example, the Hansard Society highlighted post-legislative scrutiny and delegated legislation. The Liaison Committee decided "Rather than add tasks to our list, we have sought to group them together, making it clear that, while there should be a guiding strategy, the way in which a particular task is undertaken by a committee will depend on the circumstances of each committee".<sup>23</sup>

The Committee argued that the focus of public engagement had switched from one of broadcast and considered it more fully later in its report.

It concluded that:

The core tasks had a positive effect on the ability of select committees to plan and be held to account for their work, but the time has come to restructure them. We propose a shorter set of core tasks which include the "how" as well as the "what" of committee work. We believe this approach can help foreground the need for forward planning, public engagement, and innovation.<sup>24</sup>

It set out revised core tasks in the context of a set of revised aims and objectives for select committees (see Table 3).

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<sup>20</sup> Liaison Committee, *The effectiveness and influence of the select committee system inquiry*

<sup>21</sup> Liaison Committee, *The effectiveness and influence of the select committee system*, 10 September 2019, HC 1860 2017-19

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, para 9

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, paras 12-14

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, para 22

**Table 3: Revised aims and objectives (2019)**

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**Overall aim:** To hold Ministers and Departments to account, and to investigate matters of public concern where there is a need for accountability to the public through Parliament.

**To deliver this aim our core tasks are:**

- **Policy:** To examine the policy of the department, including areas of emerging policy or where existing policy is deficient, and make recommendations.  
This may include legislative scrutiny, post-legislative scrutiny, and scrutiny of delegated legislation where relevant.
- **Implementation:** To hold departments and arm's-length bodies to account for implementation of committee recommendations. Too often inquiries come up with important recommendations, widely welcomed but left to gather dust on the shelf.
- **Administration:** To examine the administration of departments and their associated public bodies, including scrutiny of their strategy and their performance and management information.  
This includes holding pre-appointment hearings where appropriate.
- **Expenditure:** To inform and support the House's control of public expenditure by examining the expenditure plans, outturn and performance of the department and its public bodies, and the relationships between spending and delivery of outcomes, including effectiveness and value for money.
- **Matters of public concern:** To consider matters of public concern where there is a need for accountability to the public through Parliament, including the actions of organisations or individuals with significant power over the lives of citizens or with wide-reaching public responsibilities.

**To deliver these tasks we will:**

- Hear from those with relevant responsibilities, expertise, knowledge and lived experience, using methods which maximise our ability to engage with a diverse range of people.
  - Work in collaboration when appropriate with research communities in the public and charitable sectors to make sure we are well informed, including using reliable and accurate data, and to ensure we use the best research evidence to support our findings.
  - Communicate our work in the most transparent and immediate ways which are appropriate through reports, findings, summaries and other means, and by a range of different media, to inform Parliament, to influence Government and hold Ministers and others to account, and to contribute to public understanding and public engagement in democratic debate.
  - Follow-up on our findings and recommendations to maximise their impact; returning to subjects where necessary and repeatedly calling Ministers and others to account where responses are insufficient and actions are lacking.
  - Make ourselves accountable to the House of Commons and the electorate for how we deliver on these commitments.<sup>25</sup>
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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, pp30-31

### 3.1 The wider remit of select committees

The Committee also noted that committees had a wider role than the remit of scrutinising government departments, set out in Standing Order No 152. Committees now frequently questioned the decisions and actions of private companies. The Liaison Committee recommended that the remit for committees set out in Standing Order No 152 should be amended to read:

Select committees shall be appointed to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the principal government departments and their associated public bodies as set out in paragraph (2) of this order; together with matters of public concern falling within the area of competence of those departments and bodies.<sup>26</sup>

The remit, set out in paragraph 1 of Standing Order No 152, is currently:

Select committees shall be appointed to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the principal government departments as set out in paragraph (2) of this order and associated public bodies

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, para 18

## 4. Pre-June 2002 proposals for core tasks for select committees

### 4.1 Modernisation Committee

In its 2002 report on select committees, the Modernisation Committee recommended “an illustration of what we would regard as the principal objectives of departmental select committees”:

It shall be the duty, where appropriate, of each select committee:

- to consider major policy initiatives
- to consider the Government's response to major emerging issues
- to propose changes where evidence persuades the Committee that present policy requires amendment
- to conduct pre-legislative scrutiny of draft bills
- to examine and report on main Estimates, annual expenditure plans and annual resource accounts
- to monitor performance against targets in the public service agreements
- to take evidence from each Minister at least annually
- to take evidence from independent regulators and inspectorates
- to consider the reports of Executive Agencies
- to consider, and if appropriate report on, major appointments by a Secretary of State or other senior ministers
- to examine treaties within their subject areas.<sup>27</sup>

These proposals for core tasks were debated by the House on 14 May 2002. At the end of the debate on the Modernisation Committee's report, the House referred the task of drawing up core objectives to the Liaison Committee.<sup>28</sup>

### 4.2 Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny

In its report, the Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny argued that:

... in order to make scrutiny more systematic the select committees should be given a set of core duties. The committees should retain the freedom to initiate inquiries according to the interests of the committee or to respond to emerging issues.<sup>29</sup>

Whilst the Commission did not believe that it should “detail the activities of a select committee”, as objectives would vary between

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<sup>27</sup> Select Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons, *Select Committees*, 12 February 2002, HC 224 2201-02, para 34

<sup>28</sup> HC Deb 14 May 2002 cc648-715

<sup>29</sup> Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny, *The Challenge for Parliament – Making Government Accountable*, June 2001, para 3.25

committees, it did recommend that each committee should agree specific objectives with the Liaison Committee, and suggested a “model concordat between the Liaison Committee and the relevant select committee” to last for a full parliamentary session (see Appendix A). The Commission then outlined the purpose of such objectives and made suggestions as to what they might be:

... The purpose of the core tasks would be to make scrutiny more systematic, as such these objectives might include: balancing inquiries between administration, finance and policy of their department; monitoring all departmental reports, business plans and performance indicators; conducting a regular cycle of work on activities of the regulators, executive agencies, quangos and other associated bodies within their department’s purview; and review the progress of the department following the committee’s previous reports.<sup>30</sup>

### 4.3 The Commission to Strengthen Parliament

In July 1999, the then Conservative Party leader, William Hague, appointed a Commission to Strengthen Parliament, chaired by Lord Norton of Louth. The Commission was given the following terms of reference:

To examine the cause of the decline in the effectiveness of Parliament in holding the executive to account, and to make proposals for strengthening democratic control over the Government.<sup>31</sup>

The Commission described committees as “vital adjuncts to the work of the House”.<sup>32</sup> And although it did not specify detailed core tasks for select committees, it endorsed early proposals from the Liaison Committee:

We also want to see an extension of the work of the committees and a strengthening of their output. We endorse the recommendation of the Liaison Committee that the committees should be encouraged to focus on resource estimates, departmental plans and output and performance analyses. The creation of a central unit will be especially helpful to the committees in undertaking this task. We also see a role for the committees in prelegislative scrutiny. The Liaison Committee has recommended that draft bills be referred by the House to the appropriate committee, after consultation with the Chairman of Committees and the relevant committee chairman. It will be up to a committee to decide whether to examine the bill; if not, an ad hoc committee may be established. We warmly endorse the recommendation for draft bills to be considered by select committees. For the committees to undertake that task, they need adequate time. This, we believe, can be provided through less emphasis on producing multiple reports each year. We believe a committee should normally think in terms of three or four reports a year (of the type currently undertaken), with the remainder of its time given over to individual evidence taking sessions with the

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<sup>30</sup> Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny, *The Challenge for Parliament – Making Government Accountable*, June 2001, para 3.26

<sup>31</sup> Commission to Strengthen Parliament, *Strengthening Parliament*, July 2000, p2,

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p29

minister, scrutiny of draft bills, and sessions to review progress on previous reports. We also believe that the time will be available if the government adopts a rolling programme, allowing it to publish a white paper and subsequent draft bill in one session and then introduce the bill in the next session. The result, we believe, will almost certainly be better legislation. What government loses in the short term (speed of passage) will be off-set by what it will gain (better quality legislation) in the long term.<sup>33</sup>

## 4.4 Liaison Committee

In its review of the operation of select committees after their first twenty years – *Shifting the Balance: Select Committees and the Executive*, the Liaison Committee highlighted a number of examples of “best practice” that had been adopted by select committees, and commented that:

When select committees have been prepared to experiment and innovate, this has often increased their effectiveness.

[...]

Clerks and their staffs are increasingly developing best practice by sharing experience.<sup>34</sup>

The Liaison Committee did not spell out specific objectives for each committee at that stage. Although it did highlight the role that committees should play in the scrutiny of government expenditure and legislation (it concentrated on pre-legislative scrutiny), and the reviewing of previous committee recommendations.<sup>35</sup> The idea of common objectives became more explicit in its exchanges with Government following the publication of *Shifting the Balance*.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, pp31-32

<sup>34</sup> Liaison Committee, *Shifting the Balance: Select Committee and Executive*, 3 March 2000, HC 300 1999-2000, paras 24-25

<sup>35</sup> Liaison Committee, *Shifting the Balance: Select Committee and Executive*, 3 March 2000, HC 300 1999-2000 paras 59-63 and paras 51-55

<sup>36</sup> Liaison Committee, *Independence or Control? The Government's Reply to the Committee's First Report of Session 1999-2000 – Shifting the Balance: Select Committee and Executive*, 25 July 2000, HC 748 1999-2000; and Liaison Committee, *Shifting the Balance: Unfinished Business*, 15 March 2001, HC 321 2000-01

## Appendix A: The Hansard Commission's model concordat of select committee duties

The Liaison committee has agreed the following concordat with the [example] Committee That it will publish, within six weeks of the end of each session (except where a dissolution occurs), a report setting out its achievements against the following targets.

### Expenditure

- To examine and report on the main Estimates and annual expenditure plans of its department by 30 June each year.
- To examine and report on the resource accounts of its department by 31 March each year.
- To consider each supplementary estimate presented by its department, and report to the House whether it requires further consideration, within 8 days of the presentation of the supplementary Estimate.
- To report annually on its department's performance against its service level agreements.
- To report, at least once in each Parliament, on the impact of efficiency savings on the running costs of the department and their impact on the effectiveness with which it delivers services to the public.

### Administration

- To consider the reports and accounts of each executive agency within the department, and report at least annually on whether any raise matters of particular concern.
- To take evidence and report on, over the cycle of a Parliament, each agency within the department of which the budget exceeds 4% of the overall departmental budget.
- To take evidence and report on, over the cycle of a Parliament, not fewer than one in four of the remaining agencies within the department.
- To take evidence and report on, over the cycle of a Parliament, each NDPB sponsored by the department which has an annual budget in excess of £10 million.
- To consider, and if appropriate take evidence and report on, each major appointment made by the relevant Secretary of State.

### Policy

- To examine and report on any major policy initiative announced by the Department.
- To examine each Minister in the department, at least annually, on their discharge of their particular policy responsibilities.
- To keep under consideration the department's compliance with Freedom of Information legislation, and the quality of its provision of information to Parliament by whatever means.
- To consider each item of delegated legislation made by the department, and draw the attention of the House to those which raise particular questions of policy which require debate or other consideration.
- To consider each treaty signed by HMG falling within the area of responsibility of the department, and draw the attention of the House to those which raise particular questions of policy which require debate or other consideration.
- To consider and report on any draft legislation proposed by the government and referred to it by the House.

The annual report of the Committee will also itemise its expenditure in the relevant period on research, specialist advice, travel and entertainment.

At the beginning of each Parliament, within three months of its appointment (allowing for periods when the House is adjourned), the Committee will publish a report setting out its strategic plan for achieving the above targets, and any other matters relating to the discharge of its responsibilities that it thinks fit.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny, *The Challenge for Parliament – Making Government Accountable*, June 2001

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