



Re-election of the Speaker after a general election

Standard Note: SN/PC/7150

Last updated: 26 March 2015

Author: Richard Kelly

Section Parliament and Constitution Centre

This note summarises the current process for electing the Speaker after a general election, the motion before the House on 26 March 2015 to change the process, and the recent Procedure Committee reports on the election of the Speaker.

For more detailed information about the election of the Speaker, please see the Library Standard Note, SN/PC/5074, [The Election of a Speaker](#).

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1 Motion before the House on 26 March 2015

At present if the Member who was Speaker at the Dissolution of the previous Parliament is returned to the House; that Member is willing to be chosen as Speaker; and having submitted him or herself to the House, another Member moves that he or she takes the Chair and the question is put forthwith (Standing Order No 1A).

The House is being asked to alter the current procedure and use a secret ballot to determine the question, if it is challenged. The motion before the House for decision today (26 March) states:

That this House notes the recommendation of the Procedure Committee in its Fifth Report of Session 2010-12, 2010 Elections for positions in the House, that the House should be invited to decide between a secret ballot or open division where the question at the start of a new Parliament that a former Speaker take the Chair is challenged, and accordingly makes the following change to Standing Orders, with effect from the beginning of the new Parliament:

Standing Order 1A (Re-election of former Speaker) Line 11, at end insert–

“(1A) If that question is contested, it shall be determined by secret ballot, to take place on the same day under arrangements made by the Member presiding, who shall announce the result of the ballot to the House as soon as is practicable.”

2 Procedure Committee reports

The process was considered by the Procedure Committee in the 2005 Parliament, when it reviewed the process of electing the Speaker in 2009, and by the Procedure Committee in the current Parliament, when it reviewed the 2010 elections for positions in the House.

In its review of the 2009 elections, the Committee considered three options:

- the current procedure as set out in Standing Order No. 1A;
- a similar procedure but with the decision on the Question made by secret ballot rather than an open division; or,
- an open election under provisions similar to those in Standing Order No. 1B

After reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of the three options, it drew the following conclusions:

77. We recognise that the circumstances at the start of the forthcoming Parliament, with the current Speaker having been elected less than a year earlier, make it inadvisable to suggest radical change at this time. We also believe that the role of Speaker has changed and will change even more in the future, as acknowledged by the development of manifestos from candidates in the last election. These factors together lead us to recommend that a review be carried out in the next Parliament of all these issues with a view to establishing whether radical change is needed for implementation at the opening of the Parliament after that.

78. For now, we recommend that this House be given an opportunity to decide between the options of retaining the current procedure for re-electing a former Speaker

at the start of a new Parliament or of adopting a secret ballot for deciding this question, rather than a division.¹

A motion to give effect to this was tabled at the end of the 2005 Parliament but never put before the House for decision. Similarly, a separate motion, proposing the retention of the existing arrangements was not put to the House for decision (see House of Commons Library Standard Note, [The Election of a Speaker](#), SN/PC/5074, 11 March 2010).

In 2012, the Procedure Committee recommended that “the House be invited to decide whether on the first day of a new Parliament, where the Presiding Member's decision on the question that a former Speaker take the Chair is challenged, the question should be decided by secret ballot or by open division”.²

In its response to the Procedure Committee's 2012 report, to this recommendation and other proposals for change to Standing Orders relating the election of the Speaker, the Government stated that:

It would be for the Backbench Business Committee to provide time for the House to debate and reach decisions on these matters.³

¹ Procedure Committee, [Election of the Speaker and of the Deputy Speakers](#), 3 February 2010, HC341 2009-10

² Procedure Committee, [2010 elections for positions in the House](#), 31 October 2011, HC 1573, para 19

³ Procedure Committee, [2010 elections for positions in the House: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2010-12](#), 16 February 2012, HC 1824, p7