

EXPLANATORY NOTE FOR THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (SECTION 13(1)(b) OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (WITHDRAWAL) ACT 2018) MOTION

This note provides an explanation of the provisions of the Business of the House (Section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018) motion. In general terms, the motion governs the arrangements for the debate and decision on what is commonly referred to in Parliament as the “meaningful vote” as provided for by section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

Sitting arrangements

Paragraphs 1-4 of the motion make provision about the sitting arrangements. Under these provisions, the House will debate the section 13(1)(b) motion for five days: Tuesday 4 December, Wednesday 5 December, Thursday 6 December, Monday 10 December and Tuesday 11 December.

The Business of the House motion itself will be debated on Tuesday 4 December, before the section 13(1)(b) motion (to approve the withdrawal agreement and framework for the future relationship) is moved and debated. On Tuesday 4 December a total of eight hours of protected time will be provided for the Business of the House motion and the debate on the section 13(1)(b) motion.

On Wednesday 5 December, Thursday 6 December and Monday 10 December eight hours of protected time will be provided each day for the debate to continue. On Tuesday 11 December the House will continue the debate and conclude at the normal hour under Standing Orders (7.00pm).

Decisions on any amendments

Paragraphs 5-8 of the motion make provision about the decisions on any amendments that may be tabled to the section 13(1)(b) motion.

While amendments can be tabled, appear on the Order Paper and be the subject of debate earlier, they may not be selected for decision until the final day of debate (Tuesday 11 December). Paragraph 6 provides for the the Speaker to select up to six amendments of which notice has been given. Decisions on these amendments will take place at the conclusion of the debate and before any decision on the main section 13(1)(b) motion (as amended, if the case may be). If the moment of interruption (7.00pm) is reached the Business of the House motion ensures that all of the amendments selected by the Speaker (up to six in

total) can be pressed to a division if the House so wishes. Deferred divisions will not apply.

General

Paragraph 9 of the motion is a provision that allows any future motion to vary or supplement this Business of the House motion to be moved only by a Minister, and for any decision on that to be taken without debate.

Paragraph 10(a) prevents any emergency debates under Standing Order No. 24 taking place on a day on which the House is debating the section 13(1)(b) motion.

Paragraphs 10(b)-(d) prevent or restrict the moving of certain procedural motions during the course of the debate on the section 13(1)(b) motion. Specifically, (1) dilatory motions (for example motions to adjourn the debate) may only be moved by a Minister, and the question on such a motion would be put to the House without debate; (2) closure motions to curtail debate may only be moved by a Minister; and (3) the previous question procedure (for the House to agree that the question under consideration should not be put to a decision) may not be moved.