



HOUSE OF LORDS

Procedure Committee

10th Report of Session 2010–12

Questions for Short Debate
Standing Order 37

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The Procedure Committee

The Select Committee on Procedure of the House is appointed each session to consider any proposals for alterations in the procedure of the House that may arise from time to time, and whether the standing orders require to be amended.

Current Membership

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Contacts for the Procedure Committee

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk to the Procedure Committee, House of Lords, London, SW1A 0PW.

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TENTH REPORT FROM THE PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Questions for Short Debate

1. We have considered a proposal from the Clerk of the Parliaments to change the arrangements for the tabling of Questions for Short Debate (QSDs) on State Opening Day. This is against the background of difficulties encountered on State Opening day in 2010, as well as the changes in practice relating to QSDs agreed by the House on 8 November 2011.¹
2. The Clerk of the Parliaments' proposal echoes recommendation 35 of the Leader's Group on Working Practices:

186. We recommend that a ballot, on the day of State Opening, should be conducted to determine the order of priority of those Questions for Short Debate tabled at the start of the session.
3. We support this change, and accordingly **recommend that a ballot should be conducted to determine the order in which QSDs tabled on the day of State Opening are entered in *House of Lords Business*.**
4. The Clerk of the Parliaments also informed us that the Table Office will separately be reviewing the practical arrangements for tabling business on the day of State Opening, with a view to improving seating and reducing the amount of time Members have to spend queuing.

Standing Order 37

5. On 8 November the House agreed that the practice of debating 'motions for papers' be discontinued, and that in future all general debates not inviting the House to reach a positive decision should take place on 'take note' motions.² This requires a technical change to Standing Order 37, which currently presupposes that any motion for debate which is time-limited will be withdrawn at the end of the debate, whereas take note motions are always agreed to.
6. **We therefore recommend the following amendment to Standing Order 37 (new text bold and text to be deleted struck through):**

37—(1) If a balloted debate or a time-limited debate is continuing at the end of the time allotted to it, the Clerk at the Table shall rise and thereupon the Lord Speaker shall **either put the Question forthwith or ask the mover of the Motion** whether or not he wishes to withdraw ~~his Motion~~ **it**. If the mover does not ask leave to withdraw, or if leave to withdraw is refused, the Lord Speaker shall put the Question forthwith.

(2) If an amendment is moved to a Motion which is the subject of a ~~balloted debate or~~ a time-limited debate, paragraph (1) shall have effect in relation to the amendment in like manner as it has in relation to the original Motion.

¹ See HL Deb., 8 November 2011, col. 159.

² *Ibid.*, col. 160.