



HOUSE OF LORDS

Procedure and Privileges Committee

1st Report of Session 2021–22

**Procedural adaptations arising
from the hybrid House
Interim option of voting using
PeerHub
Ongoing virtual participation
by disabled members**

Ordered to be printed 6 July 2021

Published by the Authority of the House of Lords

Procedure and Privileges Committee

The Select Committee on Procedure and Privileges 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.

Membership

The members of the Procedure and Privileges Committee are:

[Lord Ashton of Hyde](#)

[Lord Bew](#)

[Lord Eames](#)

[Baroness Evans of Bowes Park](#)

[Lord Faulkner of Worcester](#)

[Lord Gardiner of Kimble](#) (Chair)

[Lord Geddes](#)

[Baroness Harris of Richmond](#)

[Lord Judge](#)

[Lord Mancroft](#)

[Lord McAvoy](#)

[Lord McFall of Alcluith](#) (Lord Speaker)

[Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall](#)

[Lord Newby](#)

[Baroness Quin](#)

[Baroness Smith of Basildon](#)

[Lord Stoneham of Droxford](#)

[Baroness Thomas of Winchester](#)

[Viscount Ullswater](#)

Alternate members:

[Baroness Browning](#) (for backbench Conservative members)

[Baroness Finaly of Llandaff](#) (for Crossbench members, other than the Convenor)

[Baroness Goudie](#) (for backbench Labour members)

[Lord Alderdice](#) (for backbench Liberal Democrat members)

[Lord Turnbull](#) (for the Convenor)

Declaration of interests

A full list of Members' interests can be found in the Register of Lords' Interests:

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

Publications

All publications of the Committee are available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/191/procedure-and-privileges-committee/publications/>

Parliament Live

Live coverage of debates and public sessions of the Committee's meetings are available at: <http://www.parliamentlive.tv/>

Further information

Further information about the House of Lords and its Committees, including guidance to witnesses, details of current inquiries and forthcoming meetings is available at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/lords/>

Contact details

All correspondence should be addressed to the clerk of the Procedure and Privileges Committee, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW. Telephone 020 7219 8796/1624. Email sagard@parliament.uk

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Chapter 1: Procedural adaptations arising from the hybrid House	3
Recall	3
Procedural adaptations which we propose should remain	3
Oral question ballots	3
Deadline for changing the wording of an Oral Question	4
Speakers' lists for oral questions and 'Secretary of State' questions	4
Speakers' lists deadlines	4
Tabling deadlines	5
Time allocated to oral questions and private notice questions	5
Balloted questions for short debate	5
De-grouping of amendments after the groupings have been published	6
Reasons committees	6
Chapter 2: Interim option of voting using PeerHub	8
Proposed interim solution: PeerHub voting	8
Chapter 3: Ongoing virtual participation for eligible disabled members who cannot attend the House	9
Appendix 1: Proposed changes to the Companion	11
Appendix 2: How the interim voting model will work using PeerHub	15
Appendix 3: Proposed Standing Order to enable virtual participation by disabled members	17

First Report

CHAPTER 1: PROCEDURAL ADAPTATIONS ARISING FROM THE HYBRID HOUSE

1. This report makes a series of proposals to return from hybrid proceedings to something close to the House's normal procedures while retaining a few changes for the benefit of the House. We propose the changes take effect on 6 September which is the anticipated date of return of the House from its summer adjournment. The first set of proposals are adaptations from the hybrid House which we recommend should remain in place; the second set relate to the use of PeerHub as an interim voting system; and the third set is concerned with continuing to enable virtual contributions by a small group of disabled members, should they so wish. This report forms part of a package of proposals for the House to consider and to assist it in coming back to physical proceedings from 6 September 2021. The Committee will keep these changes under close review, and we continue to welcome any representations from members as how to improve their operation.

Recall

2. The motions which will be tabled to give effect to the recommendations in this report will be framed as taking effect from 6 September. Any earlier recall would operate under the existing hybrid House guidance.

Procedural adaptations which we propose should remain

3. The recommended changes below will require alterations to the *Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to Proceedings*. These proposed alterations are set out in Appendix 1. Where no change to the *Companion* is proposed, the House's procedures will simply revert to the pre-pandemic arrangements, for example the sitting times of the House.

Oral question ballots

4. Previously, priority for tabling oral questions was given to any members queuing outside the Table Office. During the pandemic oral questions have been selected via a ballot system. A random ballot is drawn from all questions submitted to the Table Office by email or phone prior to a 1 p.m. deadline four weeks before the question will be asked. Any remaining slots can then be filled on a first-come-first-served basis by members contacting the Table Office. Members are subject to the usual rules governing the number of questions they can ask.
5. The ballot procedure has been largely well-received. It removes the need for members to queue, sometimes for hours, and addresses the relative disadvantage to members who have other commitments inside or outside the House, such as select committee meetings.
6. **We recommend that normal oral questions should be allocated by ballot.**

Deadline for changing the wording of an Oral Question

7. Prior to the pandemic the wording of an oral question could not be altered less than 24 hours before it was due to be asked. This rule was altered during the pandemic to 48 hours to ensure that those signing up to speak would be aware of the altered wording of the question.
8. Significant changes to wording within one or two working days of a question being asked have always been exceptionally rare. The benefits of an earlier deadline include that members will have more notice of changes to questions should they be considering participating. Should speakers' lists be retained (see paragraph 12 below), the earlier deadline will be essential.
9. **We recommend the deadline for changing the wording of oral questions should be 48 hours in advance of any question being asked.**

Speakers' lists for oral questions and 'Secretary of State' questions

10. To enable virtual contributions, speakers' lists were introduced for contributions to most types of business. In the course of the debate on 20 May it became clear that there was a range of views across the House as to the desirability of retaining speakers' lists for normal and topical oral questions, and questions to Lords ministers who are full members of the Cabinet ('Secretary of State' questions)¹.

Consultation

11. Given the divergent views, the House was consulted on 5 July. 551 members participated in this consultation, with 324 voting in favour of speakers' lists and 227 voting against. As such there is a majority, 59% to 41%, for having speakers' lists for normal and topical questions, and questions to Lords Ministers who are full members of the Cabinet from 6 September. Representations had been made following the announcement of the consultation for alternatives, including a mixture of lists and members seeking to intervene spontaneously. The Committee will keep the operation of speakers' lists for these questions under active review.
12. **We recommend that there should be speakers' lists for normal and topical oral questions, and questions to Lords ministers who are full members of the Cabinet.**

Speakers' lists deadlines

13. During the pandemic the deadline for signing up to speak to business which has always attracted a speakers' list (debates, including second reading debates) was altered from 6 p.m.² the working day before the business was to be taken to 6 p.m. two working days before.
14. The longer deadlines have allowed more notice of the amount of speaking time available in time-limited debates, and more notice of when a member can expect to speak. We propose that the deadlines used for the hybrid House be retained (with one alteration). That alteration would be for any deadline which is on a Friday to be 4 p.m., rather than 6 p.m.

1 Further to the Committee's 7th Report of Session 2019-21, the scope of Secretary of State questions was expanded to include questions to departmental ministers sitting in the House of Lords who are full members of the Cabinet.

2 4 p.m. if that day was a Friday.

15. **We recommend that the deadline for signing up to participate in business which attracts a speakers' list be amended to 6 p.m. two working days before the item of business is taken, and 4 p.m. on a Friday.**

Tabling deadlines

16. During the course of the pandemic, the Table Office brought forward the deadline for the tabling of business to 5 p.m. instead of 6 p.m. The majority of the business tabled on a day-to-day basis is questions for written answer (QWA). An earlier deadline enables staff to process the questions earlier and to the standard expected of the House, reducing the rate of errors and the need for overtime payments.
17. The temporary deadline change has not reduced the number of questions tabled. Between 21 April 2020 and 26 March 2021, 14,361 questions were tabled (an average of 66 QWAs per sitting day). Between 21 April 2019 and 20 April 2020, 6,143 questions were tabled (an average of 51 QWAs per sitting day).
18. **We recommend that the deadline for tabling business with the Table Office be 5 p.m.**
19. The Committee moved the deadline for tabling amendments to bills for next-day publication from 5 p.m. on Mondays to Thursdays to 4 p.m. Again, experience suggests that the earlier deadline has been helpful in managing workloads and late working, for both the Public Bill Office and those tabling amendments, while not diminishing the service to members. It has also enabled amendments to be made available to interested parties earlier.
20. **We recommend that the deadline for tabling amendments to bills for next-day publication be 4 p.m.**

Time allocated to oral questions and private notice questions

21. Prior to the pandemic, Question Time lasted for 30 minutes (with approximately 7½ minutes per question), and proceedings on private notice questions (PNQs) were 10 minutes. During the pandemic, oral questions were allocated 10 minutes each and PNQs 15 minutes. Proceedings on questions to Lords ministers who are full members of Cabinet were extended to 30 minutes from 20 minutes.
22. **We recommend that the total question time for normal and topical oral questions be 40 minutes; that the time allocated for questions to Lords ministers who are full members of Cabinet be 30 minutes; and that Private Notice Questions be allocated 15 minutes.**³

Balloted questions for short debate

23. During the pandemic, a ballot, open to backbench members only, for up to four questions for short debate to be taken in Grand Committee every

³ In the course of the Committee's discussions, we divided on the question "that after 6 September Private Notice Questions should be for 15 minutes rather than 10 minutes." 12 members voted in favour, and five members against.

five weeks has been in operation.⁴ This new procedure had no effect on the balloted topical QSDs or balloted debates, which remain unchanged (though neither of those procedures have been operated during the pandemic).

24. During the pandemic the House has not taken QSDs as lunch, dinner break business or last business. From 6 September a way to enable such business is needed. The balloted QSD process could be adapted to produce a balloted list of QSDs for debate in Grand Committee and an ordered list of those not successful in the ballot for Grand Committee could be produced. The Government Whips' Office could use the list to select QSDs to be taken as lunch or dinner break business, when a break is available, or as last business. Slots would be offered in the order that they appear on the list. Frontbench members could enter this ballot process, with their entries only eligible to appear on the running list for lunch or dinner break business and not the slots in Grand Committee (their entry would be marked in the list to indicate it was a frontbench entry).
25. **We recommend that the ballot for questions for short debate in Grand Committee be retained.**
26. **We recommend that the Table Office draw an additional list of questions for short debate from the ballot for use by the Government Whips' Office to arrange lunch and dinner break business. Frontbench members should be eligible to ask questions for short debate earmarked for lunch and dinner break business, or as last business.**

De-grouping of amendments after the groupings have been published

27. During the pandemic groupings of amendments have been binding. This was to give sufficient predictability to virtual participants, and the teams facilitating their contributions, and to ensure parity between participants. We understand it has been convenient for members participating in the Bill from all sides of the House.
28. In order to retain some of the benefit of having more certainty over groups we suggest that the Companion be amended to discourage de-grouping once each day's groupings have been agreed with those with amendments and published.
29. It will be for the Government Whip in the Chamber to draw members' attention to this guidance where appropriate. The process of agreement of groupings in advance will continue as now and will be unaffected.
30. **We recommend that the de-grouping of amendments after each day's groupings have been published be discouraged.**

Reasons committees

31. During "ping pong" each House considers the propositions made by the other House to settle the final text of a bill. When the House is disagreeing to a Commons proposition but not proposing an alternative, a Reason must be sent. Reasons are agreed by a reasons committee. Meetings of reasons

⁴ The ballot closes at 5 p.m. on a Tuesday and is drawn on Wednesday, with the debates taking place on the Thursday of the following week. No more than two QSDs can be selected for any one government department; nor can any QSDs be selected for a department that has the main business in the Chamber on the day of the QSDs.

committees are short and informal. Reasons normally consist of a single sentence.⁵

32. During the pandemic, the requirement for a committee was formally maintained but the requirement for it to meet was suspended and a standard reason offered.
33. Reasons committees are relatively rare.⁶ Nonetheless preparatory work was required every time a proposition was tabled which would have required a Reason if agreed to.
34. We are advised that the content of Lords Reasons has no procedural impact on how the House of Commons considers a Lords message and there is no procedural bar as far as the Commons is concerned to the continued use of standard Reasons.⁷
35. Reasons are necessary, to signal that the House is standing its ground. But meetings of a reasons committee are an unnecessary process, causing delay and burdening the Minister, other key members and officials at a critical moment but adding no value. They involve preparatory work on many more occasions than they are actually required.
36. **We recommend that the requirement to convene a reasons committee should cease; and that a standard Reason should be given when the Lords disagree with a Commons proposition without proposing an alternative, “because the Lords wish the Commons to consider the matter again.”**
37. At the meeting on 29 June the Committee also discussed two further specific points. The first was the issue of extending the sitting times for Grand Committee from four to five hours. The second was the scope for streamlining the process of time-limiting general debates. We are working with the House authorities to achieve both these points and will return to the House with proposals on both points.

5 For example, Commons Reasons on last Session’s Trade Bill included “Because it is unnecessary in light of existing international obligations” and “Because Parliamentary scrutiny of trade agreements is ensured by existing measures”. A 2019 report by the Constitution Committee concluded that “Reasons committees serve no practical purpose and should be abolished.” The Government response to that report noted that this was a matter for the respective Houses and their Procedure Committees to consider. Constitution Committee, *The legislative process: the passage of bills through Parliament* (24th Report, Session 2019–21, HL Paper 393).

6 Prior to the pandemic, only seven reasons committees were appointed in the Lords since 2010. During the pandemic, there has been one occasion where a reasons committee would have been required to meet.

7 The reverse is not true. When the Commons reject a Lords amendment which engages their financial privilege they send back a “privilege reason” which prevents the Lords from insisting on that amendment.

CHAPTER 2: INTERIM OPTION OF VOTING USING PEERHUB

38. The House of Lords Commission agreed on 15 June that a pass-reader system for voting should be developed alongside similar work underway in the Commons, and asked the Committee to consider how that work should be developed. We anticipate putting proposals to the House in the autumn to take decisions over implementing any new system. Because that system will not be in place from 6 September, the Commission also agreed that an interim piece of development to the PeerHub system should be undertaken to require voting to take place on the Parliamentary Estate. The following recommendations focus on the procedural changes required to give effect to that interim solution.

Proposed interim solution: PeerHub voting

39. For the interim, from 6 September, all divisions in the House will be conducted using the voting system on PeerHub which the House has used since 15 June 2020. Members will, however, only be eligible to participate in the vote if they are doing so from a place of work on the Parliamentary Estate (unless the member is exempted from doing so through their eligibility for ongoing virtual participation; see paragraph 51 below). We discussed a more concrete definition and deliberately proceeded with this one, acknowledging that members may be working in a number of locations, including their offices, select committee meeting rooms, and other areas of the Estate.
40. Members will be asked to confirm when voting via PeerHub that they are in a place of work on the Parliamentary Estate. The Conduct Committee is considering amending the Code of Conduct to make it a breach of the Code to vote when not in a place of work on the Parliamentary Estate (unless exempted from having to do so).
41. We propose that this version of PeerHub voting operates in a similar fashion to remote voting during the hybrid House. In particular, we consider that the ability to defer a division, or to use an e-mail contingency system, in the event of technical failure should remain in place.⁸ A full note of the procedure which will be followed is in appendix 2. **Standing Orders 52 to 54 will require to be partially suspended to enable the interim voting solution.**
42. **We recommend the use of PeerHub to determine divisions in the House from 6 September 2021 as an interim solution before the rollout of pass-reader voting, and that members may only participate in divisions if present in a place of work on the Estate (unless personally exempted). We recommend that divisions should operate as set out in appendix 2 of this report.**

8 Votes been deferred on three occasions, and the e-mail contingency has not been required.

CHAPTER 3: ONGOING VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION FOR ELIGIBLE DISABLED MEMBERS WHO CANNOT ATTEND THE HOUSE

43. On 15 June the House of Lords Commission agreed to ask this Committee to explore a model by which a small number of members who may be unable physically to access the Chamber on grounds of long-term disability would be able to continue to participate virtually. The Commission will decide how and by whom decisions over eligibility for this provision would be taken, but its expectation is that this would be a facility for a small number of members and therefore potentially be deliverable without adding high additional support costs and having little impact on other business returning to physical-only. The Commission is making separate proposals for how allowances interact with participation for disabled members eligible for virtual participation (hereafter “eligible members”) who decide to take part virtually. This Committee’s role is to take decisions over what procedure for virtual participation for eligible members should be proposed to the House.
44. Recognising the importance of enabling all members to participate in the work of the House, we seek to maintain the maximum degree of ongoing virtual participation possible for eligible members without imposing any significant constraints on the Chamber’s otherwise physical-only operation. The approach we recommend in this report represents the maximum degree of ongoing virtual participation without the full teams currently required to provide additional support to hybrid sittings. These constraints mean that whatever procedure the House agrees to, it will not be possible to maintain the degree of parity between physical participation and virtual participation which has been a feature of the hybrid House during the pandemic. It is also the case that with a return to the operation of Grand Committee in the Moses Room from 6 September, virtual participation will not immediately be available in Grand Committee.
45. The contribution disabled members make to the House’s debates and decisions is integral to the work of the House. In our view eligible members should be able to participate in all business of which there is sufficient notice, including business without speakers’ lists. For items with speakers’ lists, eligible members could participate with the same deadlines for signing up as all other members. In order to avoid re-imposing effectively the same constraints on the Chamber as hybrid proceedings, eligible members would continue to need to give notice the previous working day for debates without speakers’ lists (including amending stages of bills), and to be called to speak by the Chair at fixed points. There would also need to be limitations on a member contributing virtually being able to intervene, speak more than once, and put in a “voice” (Content or Not Content), and limitations on participation in Third Reading, consideration of Commons amendments or fast-track bills when proceedings move too fast for notice the previous day to be feasible. In considering such restrictions on virtual participation it is important to note that eligible members would always remain free to choose to participate physically. From the discussions members of the Committee have had with disabled members in framing this proposal we understand the importance of ensuring that the physical Chamber is as accessible as possible as this will always be the preferred way of participating. We will work with the House authorities to improve accessibility for members where

this is possible. The model for ongoing virtual participation is there for the occasions where this is not possible.

46. On groups of amendments to bills, it would be open to an eligible member who was the lead signatory to an amendment to move and wind up on a group where the amendment is the lead amendment. Where the amendment is not the lead amendment in a group, or the eligible member is not the mover, the member could be called by the Chair after the question is put for the first time. In the event that more than one eligible member has signed up to contribute virtually, it would be most straightforward to take all virtual contributions in the same place. At this stage, and on the assumption that the number of members taking part in this way will be low, we hope that the House could operate such an approach without having to consider a cap on virtual participants where business is time-limited. It would be possible to allow an eligible member providing appropriate notice to participate virtually, where there is sufficient notice, in brief business after questions and consideration of Commons amendments, unlike in hybrid House proceedings.
47. In the short term, all members will continue to use the PeerHub platform to vote, as is described in paragraphs 39 to 42 above. Eligible members would be exempted from any obligation to vote on the Estate when they are participating virtually. After the point at which the House is anticipated to move across to a new pass-reader based system, eligible members will be able to continue to use PeerHub or call the Table Office to vote. If they are present on the Parliamentary Estate they would be able to participate in a division by using the pass-reader system, or by voting in their place.
48. **We recommend that, subject to being deemed eligible according to the procedure agreed by the Commission, members who are unable physically to attend the House on grounds of disability should be able to continue to participate virtually in the Chamber when they choose to.**
49. **We recommend that eligible members should be able to participate virtually in all business in the Chamber where there is sufficient notice. In order to support this participation in business without speakers' lists, eligible members will need to indicate their wish to take part by a given time the previous working day. In all such business, there will be a fixed point at which eligible members participating remotely are called by the Chair.**
50. **We recommend that eligible members should be able to continue to vote remotely when not present on the Parliamentary Estate, whether using PeerHub or by telephone, in a method agreed in advance with the Table Office, as well as retaining the option to vote "in their place" in the Chamber under SO 53 should they choose.**
51. **To give effect these recommendations, we recommend that the House agree to new Standing Order 24A, as set out in Appendix 3 of this report.**
52. The recommendations on ongoing virtual participation will be kept under review to ensure that disabled members are able actively to participate in the work of the House in an effective and sustainable way.

APPENDIX 1: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COMPANION

This appendix sets out what the new text required in the Companion would look like should the House agree to the Committee's recommendations in Chapter 1. New text is in **bold**.

Oral question ballots and deadline for changing wording to an oral question

Tabling oral questions

6.26 Oral questions, marked * in *House of Lords Business*, are asked for information only, and not with a view to stating an opinion, making a speech or raising a debate. The arrangements for tabling such questions are as follows:

- oral questions may be tabled up to four weeks in advance of the date on which they are to be asked (e.g. a question to be asked on Monday 31 March may not be tabled before Monday 3 March);
- **oral questions are accepted by the Table Office in person, by telephone, by email, or by a person authorised on a member's behalf, at any time after the previous ballot is closed (or, if applicable at the start of a recess, when the previous deadline for tabling oral questions has passed). The deadline for submissions is 1 p.m. on the day four weeks before the question is to be asked;**
- **immediately after the 1 p.m. deadline has passed, a ballot is drawn by the Table Office. If more questions have been submitted than there are slots available, the ballot determines which questions are tabled and their order. If fewer questions are submitted than there are slots available, the ballot determines only the order in which they are tabled;**
- **a member may submit only one question for inclusion in each oral questions ballot;**
- **if the oral questions ballot falls on the same day as the separate ballot for topical questions, a member may enter a question in both ballots but the questions should be on different subjects;**
- **no more than one question on the same subject will be drawn from a single oral questions ballot;**
- **members cannot "roll over" submitted questions from one day to the next: questions must be re-submitted for each ballot;**
- **in the event of the day four weeks before a sitting day being a public holiday in England, the ballot will take place on the next working day; and**
- **if, by the time the ballot is drawn, fewer questions have been submitted than there are slots available, the remaining slots will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis once the ballot has been drawn;**
- no oral question may be tabled less than 48 hours before the start of the sitting at which it is due to be asked;
- the number of oral questions **per day** is limited to four;

- no member of the House may have more than one oral question on the order paper at any one time, but topical questions and Secretary of State's questions are excluded from this rule; **and**
- no member of the House may table more than seven oral questions in each calendar year.

Paragraph 6.27 of the Companion can be deleted in its entirety.

Speakers' lists deadlines

4.25 For most debates a list of speakers is issued by the Government Whips' Office and is available from that Office, and also from the Printed Paper Office, the Prince's Chamber and Peers' Lobby as well as online and via the HousePapers app. This list is drawn up after consultation through the usual channels. Members wishing to speak should put their names on the speakers' list at any time by 6 p.m. (4 p.m. if that day is a Friday). two working days before the business is taken. If a speakers' list has been open for less than a sitting day the list closes at 12 noon on the day of the debate.

Tabling deadlines

3.31 Motions or questions may be handed in or sent to the House of Lords Table Office on sitting days between 10 a.m. and House Up; the Table Office may also be contacted during these hours (020 7219 3036, holtableoffice@parliament.uk). Motions or questions will appear in the following day's House of Lords Business if submitted by 5 p.m. or the rise of the House (whichever is the earlier). At other times (e.g. non-sitting Fridays or recesses) business may be handed in between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., either to the Table Office or to the Duty Clerk, using the same contact details.

8.54. Amendments which are intended to be published the next working day should be tabled between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. **on any working day**. Amendments may be tabled with the duty Clerk during recesses, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Time allocated to oral questions and private notice questions

6.24 Question time in the House of Lords takes place at the start of business on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Question time may not exceed 40 minutes.

6.25 In December 2009 the House agreed, on a trial basis, that Secretaries of State sitting in the House of Lords should each, on one Thursday each month, answer three oral questions addressed to them in their ministerial capacity. Although no Secretaries of State sat in the House of Lords in the 2010 Parliament, the procedure itself was made permanent in November 2011, with a view to its revival as appropriate. Questions to Secretaries of State take place immediately after oral questions, and last for up to 30 minutes. Arrangements for selecting such questions, by ballot, are described below (paragraph 6.35). Except where indicated in the following paragraphs, the procedure for Secretary of State's questions is identical to that for normal oral questions.

6.39 PNQs are taken immediately after oral questions, or on Friday at a time agreed by the Lord Speaker, the Lord asking the question and the usual channels. They should not be made the occasion for immediate debate. Proceedings on PNQs follow the rules for oral questions. In particular, supplementary questions should be short and confined to not more than two points. Proceedings on a PNQ are limited to 15 minutes. For these reasons it may at times be more convenient

for the House if the PNQ procedure is not used but instead the government makes a statement on the matter which the PNQ is intended to raise. Circumstances in which statements may be more appropriate than PNQs include: when a long answer is required; when the responsible minister is a member of the House of Lords; when the House of Commons is not sitting.

Balloted questions for short debate

6.45 A question for short debate is distinguishable from a motion in that there is no right of reply. Such a question may be tabled for any day on which the House is sitting. Members should **enter the ballot for questions for short debate, as described in paragraphs 6.45A–6.45D**. A member may not table in House of Lords Business a question for short debate on a subject on which the member has a motion for balloted debate.

6.45A One Thursday every five sitting weeks is set aside for four balloted questions for short debate (QSD) to be asked in Grand Committee. Balloted QSDs are time limited to one hour each, and their subjects should be narrow. Only backbench and Crossbench members may initiate a balloted QSD (but frontbench members may enter the ballot for the purposes of paragraph 6.45D), subject to a limit of one per session.

6.45B The ballot is carried out by the Table Office on a Wednesday for debate on the Thursday of the following week. The deadline for tabling is 5.00 p.m. on the Tuesday preceding the ballot. A question which is the same, or substantially the same, as a question that is already entered for the ballot will not be accepted. Members should table questions anew for each ballot; undrawn questions will not be entered into the next ballot automatically.

6.45C It is assumed, unless notice to the contrary is given to the Table Office, that any member who has a QSD down for the ballot is willing and able to ask their question on the day appointed. When a QSD has been set down for a particular day, it may be amended in form but not in substance. No QSD may be entered into a ballot for a day on which the Department responsible also has business tabled in the Chamber (except for oral questions) at the time the ballot is drawn. No more than two questions which may be answered by the same department would be drawn. The Department responsible for answering is listed alongside the entry to the ballot.

6.45D The unsuccessful entries to the ballot will be further balloted by the Table Office to provide a list of entries for use by the Government Whips' Office to arrange lunch and dinner break business. Frontbench members are eligible to ask questions for short debate used as lunch and dinner break business and may enter the ballot for this purpose.

De-grouping of amendments after the groupings have been published

8.70 In order to avoid repetition, related amendments are often grouped and debated together. Lists of such groupings are prepared by agreement between the members tabling the amendments and the Government Whips' Office **before each day's proceedings commence on a bill. Groupings are informal but helpful to the House and de-grouping is discouraged once each day's groupings have been published**. A single debate is then usually conducted on the whole group of amendments ... But each amendment in the group must be

called, moved (if desired) and disposed of separately at its place in the marshalled list. Proceedings on later amendments in a group are often formal but further debate may take place and an amendment previously debated with others in a group may be moved at its place in the bill

Reasons committees

Disagreement to Commons amendment with a reason

8.173 If the Lords disagree to a Commons amendment (**or insist on a Lords amendment**) without proposing an alternative they have to give a reason for their disagreement. A **notional** “reasons committee” is appointed to do this; **members are not named and the committee does not meet. The reason is given as “because the Lords wish the Commons to consider the matter again” and entered into the Minutes of Proceedings accordingly.**

APPENDIX 2: HOW THE INTERIM VOTING MODEL WILL WORK USING PEERHUB

1. If a decision is not reached by collecting the voices, the Chair will instruct the Clerk to start an electronic division. Members have 10 minutes to record their votes electronically using the PeerHub voting system. The division bells will be sounded on the Estate and on the electronic voting site. No tellers are appointed for an electronic division.
2. The Clerk at the Table will be able to record the vote of any member in the Chamber who is temporarily unable to vote because of technical issues with their electronic device and cannot leave the Chamber to rectify the problem in the time available. Members not in the Chamber experiencing technical issues may cast their votes in the Table Office. As with the existing system, not being equipped with a device to vote will not be accepted as a reason to vote via the Clerk at the Table or Table Office.
3. Members who have accessibility needs which mean they cannot use the electronic voting system must have confirmed arrangements in advance, and at least 24 hours in advance of when they are seeking to use it for the first time, with the Clerk of the Table Office for their vote to be recorded. Alternatively, they may cast their votes with the Clerk at the Table.
4. With the exception of the members mentioned in paragraphs 2 and 3, all members must vote using the electronic voting system. A vote, once submitted, may not be rescinded or altered.
5. The Chair may extend, interrupt or suspend an electronic division if notified of a technical problem. They will notify the House of this by making an announcement from the Woolsack.
6. When the time allowed for electronic voting has elapsed, no further members may vote. The result of a division will be announced from the Woolsack as soon as it is available.
7. Members may not misuse the electronic voting system or the contingency email voting process by having any other person vote on their behalf. The House has agreed a change to the Code of Conduct to make it a breach of the Code for another member or person to cast a vote on their behalf.
8. Members may not participate in a division when not in a place of work on the Parliamentary Estate, unless they are eligible to vote remotely under Standing Order 24A (3).
9. If, after the result of an electronic division has been announced, it is reported to the Chair that problems in the conduct of the division occurred which might have affected the result, the Chair may declare the division to be void and may make arrangements for the division to be re-run. If the correction involves the reversal of a decision of the House and the House has taken further action on the basis of the mistaken announcement, any proceedings taken on the basis of that announcement should be voided unless irreversible.

(The provision in the paragraph above does not apply if members have participated in a vote and are found to have done so when not in a place of work on the Parliamentary Estate. In such circumstances, the result of the division will not be retroactively changed. To do so would risk voiding

proceedings and introducing legal uncertainty, and we believe such instances are best addressed by the enforcement of the Code of Conduct, should the House agree to any related proposals forthcoming from the Conduct Committee.)

Deferred or contingency voting

10. In the event that the electronic voting system fails, the House will usually adjourn and return to the item of business later the same day when it is able to. If that is not possible, either the division and any further votes that day until the issue is resolved will be deferred or the contingency email voting process will be used. Where possible, an email will be sent to all members to inform them of this decision.
11. Divisions can be deferred to a later day where the result of a division does not affect continuing the business of the day. Such deferred divisions should take place at the earliest convenience once the system has been repaired and tested. Such divisions can only take place during a sitting of the House. The timing of such divisions will be indicated on the Order Paper.
12. At the agreed time for a deferred division, the Chair will announce the division from the Woolsack and the procedure will be exactly the same as that for a standard electronic division.
13. If however the deferral of a division is not appropriate (for example where there are consequential amendments or when it is desired to conclude the business on that day), the contingency email voting process will be used.
14. An email will be sent to the parliamentary address of each member inviting members to cast their vote. The time allowed will be agreed by the Usual Channels. Once submitted, a vote may not be rescinded or altered.
15. The result of a division conducted using the contingency process will be announced in the Chamber in the usual way.

APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED STANDING ORDER TO ENABLE VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION BY DISABLED MEMBERS

24A Arrangements for virtual participation by disabled members [13 July 2021]

(1) Members who may be physically unable to attend the House on grounds of long-term disability and may be eligible under the procedure agreed by the Commission can apply for eligible member status and if granted they may choose to participate virtually in proceedings in the Chamber.

(2) Eligible members may choose to participate virtually in all business of which there is sufficient notice:

(i) in business with a speakers' list, eligible members should indicate that they wish to take part remotely when signing-up to speak;

(ii) in business without a speakers' list, eligible members should indicate their wish to take part remotely by a given time the previous working day. In such business there will be a fixed point at which eligible members participating remotely are called to speak by the Chair.

(3) Eligible members may vote electronically or by telephone whether on or off the Parliamentary Estate.