



House of Commons Commission

Recruitment of an External Commissioner

Candidate information pack

February 2021

1. The House of Commons Commission

This is an exciting opportunity to contribute to the work of the UK Parliament at the highest level. The role of the House of Commons Commission is to give strategic leadership to the House Service - the official service which supports the House of Commons, its Committees, Members and the public. The House Service, of just over 3,000 people, provides a politically impartial service to all Members of Parliament to support them in their duties. It supports the legislative and scrutiny processes of the House and helps to make the House and its work more accessible to the public to increase awareness and understanding.

In recent years, the Commission's work has included preparation for the restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster; the implementation of processes to deal with bullying and harassment; and Parliament's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is more information about the membership and responsibilities of the Commission available through [this link](#).

Once a year the Commission presents to the House for its approval the 'Estimate for House of Commons: Administration', covering spending on the administration and services of the House for the financial year. The Commission usually meets once a month in Speaker's House, although it holds additional meetings when it has urgent business.

The Commission provides the non-executive governance of the House by Members, but it does not manage day to day operations. This responsibility is delegated to the senior officials who make up the House of Commons Executive Board. The Commons Executive Board's main delegated responsibilities are delivery of the strategy as agreed by the Commission and ensuring that the terms and conditions of staff are consistent with the Commission's statutory duties. See [Commons Executive Board membership](#) for details of current members.

The Commission is not responsible for expenditure on Members' salaries, pensions and allowances, which are the responsibility of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA).

The current membership of the House of Commons Commission is:

Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle (Chair), Speaker
Sir Charles Walker, Conservative
Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg (Leader of the House), Conservative
Rt Hon Valerie Vaz, Labour
Rt Hon Dame Rosie Winterton, Deputy Speaker
Pete Wishart, Scottish National Party
Dr John Benger, Clerk of the House
Ian Ailles, Director General, House of Commons
Dr Rima Makarem, External
Jane McCall, External

2. The role

Since 2015, the membership of the Commission has included two External Commissioners. The current postholders are Jane McCall and Dr Rima Makarem. This recruitment is to replace Jane McCall, whose appointment is due to expire at the end of April 2021.

Key internal relationships

- Other members of the Commission
- Commission secretariat
- Other Members of the House of Commons
- House of Commons Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Managing Directors and senior staff of House teams
- Speaker's Counsel (when the Commission is need of legal advice)

External relationships

The Commission collectively has relationships with:

- IPSA (the Commission is a statutory consultee on the scheme of MPs' business costs and expenses)
- The media

3. Person specification

Knowledge and Experience

Please give examples in your application as to how you have demonstrated these qualities in your current or previous roles.

Essential

- Senior executive leadership experience within a complex organisation in either the private, public or not-for-profit sectors.
- Experience of non-executive work on public or private sector boards, including participation in ancillary non-executive duties such as senior appointment processes.
- Excellent analytical skills combined with strong decision-making skills that have been tested and proven on complex and sensitive issues.
- Extensive experience of successfully managing relationships with a range of senior stakeholders, which demonstrates the ability to work in a complex political environment.
- Excellent communication and presentation skills, with the ability to inspire confidence and respect.
- A commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Desirable

- Experience of assurance and/or audit processes.
- A combination of commercial and public sector experience.
- Familiarity with the workings of Parliament.
- Experience of leading and managing major programmes of organisational change, OR experience of the delivery of digital or estates projects.

Candidates should also not be active members of a political party and will be subject to restrictions on political activity once appointed.

4. Eligibility

Political activity

External Commissioners have to demonstrate complete impartiality during their time on the Commission and should not during their term of office undertake any party political activity (as defined below) or belong or donate to a political party. See also the section on registration of interests.

Individuals are ineligible for this role if they are Members or staff of either House or have been involved in party political activity (as defined below) or have been a member of or donated to a political party during the 12 months before their application was submitted.

Party political activity includes:

- holding office in a party political organisation.
- speaking in public on matters of national or local political controversy.
- expressing views on political matters in the media, or in books, articles or leaflets or on social media site such as Twitter or Facebook.
- being a candidate for election to the Westminster Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly or local authority.
- canvassing on behalf of a candidate for election to the Westminster Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly, local authority or a political party.
- attending, in a member or delegate capacity, conferences or functions arranged by party political organisations.
- being involved in campaigning in a national referendum campaign.

Political activity does **not** include:

- voting in national or local elections
- being involved in campaigning which is not party political in nature and does not involve matters of national or local political controversy.

Some candidates may well have undertaken party political activity in earlier periods. This may have given you relevant skills, including experience gained from committee work, collective decision-making and resolving conflict. However, it might also affect the perception of your political impartiality if you were to be appointed to the post. For this reason, you are asked to fill in a declaration of past political activity. This will be taken into account in assessing your application. If you are called for interview, the Panel may at that stage explore with you any potential for conflict of interests.

Valuing diversity, equality & fairness

The House of Commons Service recognises and values the diversity of its staff and is committed to developing working practices which will allow everyone to contribute his or her best, regardless of race, sex, marital status, religion or belief, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or any other irrelevant factor.

You will also be required to comply with the [Behaviour Code for Parliament](#) and will be subject to the [Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme](#).

In order to help the House, monitor the success of its commitment to diversity and inclusion, all applicants are requested to complete the online Diversity Monitoring Form. This form is used for monitoring purposes only and will not be made available to the selection panel.

The House reserves the right to disclose details of the successful applicant to meet legal, regulatory and public policy requirements, and also any other duty it may have, to provide information to Parliament.

Security

The successful candidate will be required to complete pre-employment checks. This includes security vetting to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) level unless otherwise specified. All successful candidates are required to pass these checks before an offer can be confirmed.

Applicants should be aware that if they have resided outside of the UK for a total of more than two of the last five years, they are not eligible for vetting.

Please visit: <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/PSD-Security-Vetting-booklet.pdf> for further information

5. Terms of appointment

Remuneration/benefits

The contract for services would be £15,000 per year for an estimated 25 days' work. This includes 17 days for the House of Commons Commission, and a further 8 days to attend the House of Commons Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, including preparation time. All reasonable out-of-pocket expenses wholly, exclusively and properly incurred will be reimbursed (subject to providing vouchers, receipts or other evidence of actual payment of such expenses and subject to the arrangement being specifically agreed in advance).

To ensure an appropriate level of independence the post holder will be an office holder engaged on a contract for services, using the House's standard terms and conditions. This means that they are not employees of the House of Commons but their fees are paid through the payroll. This also ensures that we meet our HRMC and other tax obligations.

Length of appointment and expected commitment

A period of three years with the possibility of up to another two years.

The Commission usually meets once a month when Parliament is sitting, although it often hold additional meetings when it has urgent business. It is usually possible to schedule meeting dates some time in advance, but the Commission may need to meet at short notice and may sometimes delegate work to one or more sub-committees which would hold separate meetings. Meetings are currently held on the second Monday of the month at 10 am. In total, candidates should be willing to dedicate around 2 days a month when Parliament is sitting. As a guide, Parliament sits in every month except August, with breaks for half term (February and May), Easter, the party conferences (three weeks in September/October) and Christmas. (N.B. During the current coronavirus pandemic, all meetings of the Committee have been held remotely.)

The successful candidate will also be expected to attend meetings of the House of Commons Administration Estimate Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. This Committee meets approximately five time per year, and a further two times jointly with their counterparts in the House of Lords. The date and times of meetings vary but meetings last on average for two hours.

Successful candidates should be available to take up post as soon as possible.

Standards in public life

Although the appointment does not come within the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, it is being made using a process which reflects the Commissioner's Code of Practice. The Seven Principles of Public Life, the 'Nolan' Principles to be upheld by all those taking up Public Appointments, are included at Annex A for convenience.

Registration of interests

The purpose of these provisions is to avoid any danger of External Commissioners being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their public duties.

These appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable, or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for this appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

There is a requirement to declare any actual or potential conflict of interest you may have in being appointed in a separate form. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be fully explored by the Panel at interview stage.

6. How to apply

The External Commissioner will be selected on the basis of a combination of a written application and interview.

All applicants are required to provide the following:

- A **CV** (maximum three sides of A4) including any unpaid or community achievements.
- A **supporting statement** (maximum three sides of A4) giving evidence of the strength and depth of your ability to meet the criteria for the role. Please provide specific examples to demonstrate how you meet each of the essential experience criteria as well as showing how you meet the qualities and skills listed and any of the desirable criteria.
- The names and contact details for **two referees**. These must be people who know you well enough to comment on your suitability for the post and will be expected to have authoritative and personal knowledge of your achievements. References will be taken once a job offer is made. Referees should be advised accordingly. Please include the details in your CV.

As part of the online application process, you will also be asked to complete:

- A **conflicts of interest form**. Please give details of any business or other interests or any personal connections which, if you are appointed, could be misconstrued or cause embarrassment. Any particular conflicts of interest detailed here will not prevent you going forward to interview but may, if appropriate, be explored with you during your interview to establish how you would address the issue(s) should you be successful in your application.
- **The political activity declaration**. For background on this, see above under 'Eligibility'.
- A **diversity monitoring form**. This is an onscreen form to support the House in monitoring diversity – it will not be made available to the recruiting panel or considered as part of your application. It is **NOT** a separate attachment.

A key stage of the recruitment process is that the successful candidate's appointment will be debated in the House of Commons, a public event where their CV may be discussed. Candidates should be aware of this.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

- The Administration is a committed Disability Confident employer and as such, operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for candidates with a disability. We are committed to interviewing all applicants with a disability who provide evidence of meeting the minimum requirements necessary for the post, as set out in this applicant pack.
- To be eligible, your disability must be within the definition laid down in the Equality Act 2010. A disabled person is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities. For the purposes of this policy, these words have the following meanings:
 - 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial.
 - 'long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted, or is likely to last, 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
 - 'Normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.
- Should you consider yourself eligible to apply for this post under the GIS, please complete the form on our website when you submit your application.

The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as disabled if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term (i.e. has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months) adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Adverse effects may arise from external barriers experienced by people with impairments. If you required any reasonable adjustments in order to support you in submitting your application please contact recruitment@parliament.uk (please note, however, that applications will not be accepted via e-mail).

7. Timetable and additional information

Role advertised	21st February
Closing date	7 th March (could be extended to 14 th March)
Sift of applications	8 th March – 17 th March
Longlist decisions	19th March
Shortlist meeting	w/c 22 nd March
Panel Interviews	Late April
Decision, Commission to agree report to the House, onboarding, referencing and security clearance to commence	ASAP after the House agrees motion for appointment

Interview expenses

Expenses incurred by candidates during the recruitment process will not be reimbursed except in exceptional circumstances and only when agreed in advance.

Further Information

If you have any questions about the role please see Annex B, which contains a list of Frequently Asked Questions (or, 'FAQs') and their answers. If your query is not listed, please contact recruitment@parliament.uk briefly summarising your question(s).

How we will deal with your application

We will process your application as quickly as possible and will keep you informed at key stages.

Your application will be assessed against the essential criteria and your experience for the post. Please ensure that you provide written evidence in your supporting statement to demonstrate how you meet the criteria. **Submitting a CV alone will not be sufficient.**

Interviews will be held at the House of Commons. The interview panel is likely to be as follows:

- Mr Speaker
- up to two current Commissioners
- Clerk of the House (or his delegate)
- possibly a member from an external organisation
- HR advice will be provided to the panel by the Managing Director of HR and Diversity.

The panel will make recommendations for appointment to the House of Commons Commission which in turn will recommend candidates to the House by means of a published report. **The appointments will be confirmed by the agreement of the House to a formal and public resolution in which the candidates are named. The motion is debatable.**

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE**SELFLESSNESS**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

INTEGRITY

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

OBJECTIVITY

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

OPENNESS

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

HONESTY

Holders of public office should be truthful.

LEADERSHIP

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

These principles apply to all aspects of public life. The Committee on Standards in Public Life has set them out for the benefit of all who serve the public in any way.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Outlined below are questions we are most frequently asked about External Commissioner appointments, and corresponding answers.

1. **Can I apply if I am a registered member of a political party?** Individuals are ineligible for this role if they are Members or staff of either House or have been involved in party political activity (as defined above) or have been a member of or donated to a political party during the 12 months before their application was submitted.
2. **What interests should I declare?** The purpose of these provisions is to avoid any danger of external commissioners being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their public duties. There is a requirement to declare any actual or potential conflict of interest you may have in being appointed in a separate form. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be fully explored by the Panel at interview stage.
3. **Can I apply for this role if I do not live in the UK?** Applicants should be aware that if they have resided outside of the UK for a total of more than two of the last five years, they are not eligible for security vetting.
4. **Is the role paid, and are expenses reimbursed?** This is a remunerated non-executive position currently paying £600 per 8-hour day (proportionate to actual hours worked, including preparation time). All reasonable out-of-pocket expenses wholly, exclusively, and properly incurred will be reimbursed (subject to providing vouchers, receipts, or other evidence of actual payment of such expenses and subject to the arrangement being specifically agreed in advance). Expenses incurred by candidates during the recruitment process will not be reimbursed except in exceptional circumstances and only when agreed in advance.
5. **What are the House of Commons Recess dates?** Please follow this link <https://www.parliament.uk/about/faqs/house-of-commons-faqs/business-faq-page/recess-dates/>
6. **What is the time commitment?** Approx 1-2 days a month on average when Parliament is sitting, dependent on workload.
7. **When are meetings held, and will I need to be available at short notice?** It is usually possible to schedule meeting dates some time in advance, but the Commission may need to meet at short notice and may sometimes delegate work to one or more sub-committees which would hold separate meetings. Meetings are currently held on the second Monday of the month at 10.00 am. In total, candidates should be willing to dedicate around 1-2 days a month when Parliament is sitting. As a guide, Parliament sits in every month except August, with breaks for half term (February and May), Easter, the party conferences (three weeks in September/October) and Christmas.
8. **When would I be expected to start if successful?** Successful candidates should be available to take up post as soon as possible.
9. **Has COVID-19 impacted the work of the Committee?** During the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, all meetings of the Committee have been held remotely, via Microsoft Teams.