Cabinet Office

The Government's response to the Report of the Retirement and Participation Committee

November 2026

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Government of the United Kingdom
Cabinet Office

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Presented to Parliament by the Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords by Command of His Majesty

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Introduction

The Government is grateful to the Retirement and Participation Committee for its thoughtful consideration of how to implement the 2024 manifesto commitments on introducing a retirement age and participation requirement for members of the House of Lords. Putting forward proposals that are both workable and able to command support across the House is no easy feat. The Government commends the Committee for its work. We are also grateful to all members who have contributed to this work, either through providing views to the Committee or participating in September's debate on this topic.

The Government's overall position is to ensure that we have an active upper chamber with certainty on when members can expect to depart from the House. This will also allow parties to refresh the expertise of the House through new appointments. We believe that the Committee's report gives the House a sensible way forward which will not prove detrimental to the workings of the House, or the important scrutinising role it plays. The Government therefore endorses the Committee's recommendations. Having taken note of the report, comments made during passage of the House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Act and in the initial debate on the Committee's report, the Government is also content to provide an opportunity for the House to take the lead on resolving the approach to implementing it, and the detailed questions it presents.

We recognise that further work will be required before these changes can be put into practice. To enable that work, the Leader of the House of Lords will continue work across the House, and bring forward a resolution for the House to approve the Committee's recommendations, and further steps we propose are taken with the House Authorities, Usual Channels and the House Committees on their implementation.

Our responses to individual recommendations are set out below. It will be for the House to accept these proposals.

Responses to the Committee's recommendations

Chapter 3: Retirement

The application of a retirement age to all members

Recommendation: In the interests of fairness, we recommend that any requirement to retire should be applied to all existing members equitably, without exemptions, irrespective of expertise or position. For existing members, we recommend transitional measures as outlined later in this chapter. (Paragraph 60)

The Government agrees with this recommendation.

We will work alongside the House Authorities and relevant stakeholders during the implementation phase to consider how to ensure that the House maintains the skills and expertise required to carry out its proceedings, including the work currently undertaken by former judges in the House.

The Government also recognises the strength of feeling in the House around the potential impact that the retirement age could have on the Crossbenches in particular, and notes the position previously set out by the Lord Speaker's committee on the size of the House that the proportion of Crossbenches in the House should be maintained at around 20%. The Government's view is that nothing in these proposals should affect the proportions of any of the political parties in the House of Lords, and we continue to be mindful of any disproportionate impact on a particular group.

Our option for a retirement age and transitional measures

Recommendations: Noting the Government's commitment to introduce a retirement age of 80, we recommend phasing in the requirement to retire for existing members over a period of five years. Members over the age of 85 would retire first, with the maximum threshold for retirement successively lowering each year until it reaches 80. (Paragraph 77)

Given the need for certainty - both for the House and for individual members - we recommend that the phasing in should begin on 8 July 2029 irrespective of the date of the next general election. It is impossible to predict when this Parliament will end, and we believe that the House, and its members, should be secure in the knowledge of when this change will begin. (Paragraph 78)

Members would be expected to retire no later than their relevant birthday. During the period of transition, both in July 2029 and in the subsequent years when the threshold for retirement would be lowered annually in July, some members would meet the threshold as soon as it was lowered, and would be expected to retire no later than that point. (Paragraph 79)

The Government acknowledges that a retirement age risks creating a cliff edge where a significant number of peers depart the House at the same time. We therefore agree with the Committee that transitional measures are appropriate and agree with its recommendations.

Implementation

Recommendation: We recommend that the House is invited to agree a resolution setting out its opinion that members should retire from the House no later than the age of 80, with transitional arrangements in place for existing members for the first five years. (Paragraph 87)

The Government agrees, and will bring forward a resolution inviting the House to agree that by 2034, members should retire no later than the age of 80 and commencing from 8 July 2029 from the age of 85, with further transitional arrangements for five years as set out in the report.

As the Committee notes, this approach will be reliant on the cooperation of individual members and party groups and we are committed to continuing to work with groups across the House and the Usual Channels to implement the recommendation.

Recommendations: We recommend that all those nominated for peerages should be required to sign a written undertaking, prior to conferral of a peerage, that they will retire no later than their 80th birthday. (Paragraph 91)

We recommend that any member of the House who has given such an undertaking and who fails to abide by it, should be subject to sanction under the House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015. (Paragraph 92)

The Government welcomes the Committee's conclusion that it is possible to create a mechanism by which peers appointed in future can be subject to expulsion for failure to retire that does not involve bringing forward new legislation. We will work with the House to look at ways to implement this.

Arrangements for retired members

Recommendation: In recognition of the service provided by retiring members of the House of Lords, we recommend that an emeritus association for past members be established. (Paragraph 97)

The Government would support this initiative but it is ultimately for the House to undertake. Establishing such an organisation would provide former members with a formal mechanism to maintain their connections to the work of Parliament and the relationships built during their tenure. We will work with the Usual Channels and the House Authorities to establish how this could best be taken forward. We would also welcome continued collaboration with members on their vision for this association.

Chapter 5: Participation

An increased attendance threshold

Recommendation: We recommend the minimum attendance threshold is set at 20% of sitting days, averaged over two sessions. Members who fail to meet this requirement should cease to be members of the House of Lords. (Paragraph 121)

The Government agrees with this recommendation. Establishing a 20% attendance threshold will ensure that all members are required to contribute actively to the scrutiny and legislative work of Parliament. This is a fair and reasonable expectation that recognises members do not need to attend every sitting day, whilst ensuring a required level of commitment which will reinforce public confidence in the second chamber.

We note that the Committee did not make any recommendations on when the participation requirement should be implemented. Whilst the Government will work with the House to determine a sensible timetable, we would welcome the participation requirement starting as soon as possible, noting that sanctions for non-compliant members would not take effect until after two sessions had elapsed. We will work across the House to consider ways in which the participation requirement could take effect from the same time as the first retirements in 2029.

Recommendations: There may be exceptional circumstances where an exemption to the threshold can be agreed. We recommend that a process is established by the House for assessing the merits of such cases, as there is for Leave of Absence. (Paragraph 122)

Where there are concerns about the level of engagement in the work of the House, we encourage party whips and group leaders to continue and strengthen their current practice of addressing such concerns with members directly. (Paragraph 123)

The Government agrees. Establishing a robust and transparent exemptions process will ensure that members facing unexpected short-term personal circumstances that prevent them participating are not unfairly penalised. We will work with the House Authorities and Usual Channels to examine how such a framework can be developed.

In developing these arrangements, our view is that any new exemptions regime must be designed to complement the existing leave of absence regime. It will be necessary for the House to articulate clearly to members in which circumstances each path is appropriate.

Setting expectations for prospective members

As a matter of routine, prospective members should have expectations regarding contribution to the work of the House outlined to them in advance, before their appointment is finalised. Doing so would reinforce the principle that membership of the House entails an active commitment to its work, and would support a culture of sustained contribution from the outset.

The Government agrees with the Committee that expectations regarding contributions to the work of the House should be set clearly for nominees during the appointments process. It is important that all peers make an active contribution to the House and that this is clear from the outset. Party leaders and the House of Lords Appointments Commission, as appropriate, are already responsible for establishing whether their nominees are willing to contribute to the work of the House before their appointment is finalised; the Government expects this to continue.

Implementation of an increased attendance threshold

Recommendation: We recommend that the House implements a requirement for members to attend 20% of sitting days, averaged over two sessions, through use of its standing orders, drawing on the sanctioning powers set out in the House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015. The new requirement should not apply to members on leave of absence. (Paragraph 130)

The Government agrees that the House's Standing Orders can provide an effective and transparent route to enforcing minimum participation requirements. Members of the House will have an opportunity to scrutinise proposals before implementation, and the Government looks forward to engaging constructively with the House Authorities and relevant committees as they consider the mechanics for translating this recommendation into procedural reality.

Recommendation: We recommend that attendance at meetings of Select Committees, within or outside Westminster, and at meetings of analogous bodies, should be counted towards our proposed new threshold of attendance on 20% of sitting days. (Paragraph 131)

The Government agrees with this position. Formal committee work represents a fundamental element of a peer's parliamentary duties and role in scrutinising government policy. Counting attendance at select committees, whether sitting at Westminster or taking evidence elsewhere, ensures that the full breadth of a member's active contribution to Parliament is fairly captured under the participation threshold. This is also aligned with the existing statutory provisions on minimum attendance in the House of Lords Reform Act 2014, which explicitly includes select committees. This is of course, though, ultimately something for the House to agree.

We believe that the definition of "analogous bodies" should encompass any bodies performing equivalent parliamentary scrutiny functions or contributing to the work of the House through its administrative committees or boards. We think clarity over which committees and bodies would fall within this definition will be vital.

Recording attendance

Recommendation: We recommend that consideration be given to using members' parliamentary passes to record attendance to ensure maximum accuracy. We invite the House of Lords Commission to consider how best to implement such a system, and how best to keep members updated on their attendance record. (Paragraph 133)

This is a matter for the House of Lords Commission but we will continue to discuss this with the House Authorities and Usual Channels. Automated methods for recording attendance, such as via pass readers, offer a sensible approach to ensure accuracy while keeping administrative friction to a minimum. We would welcome the Commission's assessment of the technical, security and privacy implications of implementing such a system. In parallel, we would support the development of accessible means by which members can view their attendance record in real time and manage their participation proactively.

Chapter 6: Leave of Absence

Recommendation: We recommend the new rules of the scheme are publicised to members via internal communication channels. (Paragraph 143)

The Government agrees that it is essential for members to be made aware of the new rules of the scheme.

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