



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

SPICe

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

SPICe Briefing

Pàipear-ullachaidh SPICe

Revisions to the Standing Orders during Session 6 of the Scottish Parliament

Courtney Aitken

This briefing summarises the amendments to the Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament agreed during Session 6. It explores how the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and reviews of the Parliament's proceedings, including the Gender Sensitive Audit, prompted the consideration of changes to Standing Orders during Session 6.



8 June 2026
SB 26-29

Contents

Summary	4
The Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament	7
The Standing Orders and the Scotland Act 1998	7
Amending Standing Orders	7
Suspension and variation of Standing Orders	8
Transition to Session 6 of the Scottish Parliament	9
End of Covid-19 pandemic-related temporary standing orders	9
The remit of the Europe and External Relations Committee	10
Further extension of Temporary Rule 4	11
Deletion of EU-related Standing Orders	12
The Scottish Parliament Proxy Voting Scheme	14
Pilot scheme and temporary rule changes	14
Permanent scheme and rule changes	15
Procedures on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills	17
Legislative consent memorandums and motions on legislative consent	17
Changes to the procedure on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills during Session 6	18
Scottish Parliament Gender Sensitive Audit	22
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee consideration of rule changes	23
Rule changes related to the Scottish Parliament Gender Sensitive Audit	25
Gender balance on committees	25
Parliamentary Bureau membership	27
Election of the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers	27
Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body	29
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee inquiry into committee effectiveness	31
Introduction of elected conveners	31
Consideration of elected conveners during Session 6	32
Recommendation for elected conveners in Strengthening committees' effectiveness	33
Rule changes for elected conveners at the Scottish Parliament	33
Framework for electing committee conveners	34
Election procedure	35
Technical and consequential amendments	35

Committee size and workload _____	36
Reduction of maximum committee size _____	36
Introduction of Members' Bills _____	37
Committees meeting in private at the same time as the Chamber _____	38
Outreach and engagement work of committees _____	39
Novel ways of working _____	39
Joint committee meeting quorum _____	40
Visiting committee members _____	41
Evaluating committee performance _____	41
Miscellaneous changes _____	42
Financial Memorandums and Hybrid Bill procedures _____	42
References to Her Majesty _____	42
Deadlines for lodging amendments to public Bills _____	43
Election of Presiding Officer _____	43
Scottish Parliament Corporate Body supported bodies _____	44
Forms of address _____	45
Referral of Bills at Stage 2 _____	46
Appointment of Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Members _____	46
Location of committee meetings _____	47
Decision and voting _____	48
Bibliography _____	49

Summary

The [Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament 7th Edition](#) came into effect on 11 May 2026. The Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament provide the formal rules and procedures governing how the Parliament conducts its business, including the organisation of meetings, the roles and responsibilities of the Presiding Officer and members, the passage of legislation, the operation of committees, and other parliamentary proceedings.

The Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament 7th Edition take account of revisions to the Standing Orders during Session 6 of the Scottish Parliament.

These changes were driven by three forces:

- the implications of the UK's exit from the European Union,
- the operational and procedural legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, and
- institutional reviews of parliamentary practice, including the Gender Sensitive Audit and the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee's committee effectiveness inquiry.

Summary of the changes to Standing Orders during Session 6 of the Scottish Parliament

This table summarises amendments to the Standing Orders, indicating the Edition and Revision in which each change took effect, and identifying the parliamentary inquiry or review that originally proposed the change. Where a change was not linked to an inquiry, the table explains the reason for the amendment.

Standing Orders	Summary of Changes	Associated Inquiry or Reason for Change
6th Edition, 1st Revision	Temporary remit of the mandatory Europe and External Relations committee	United Kingdom's exit from the European Union
6th Edition, 2nd Revision	Deletion of temporary provisions permitting oaths of allegiance to be taken remotely and for social-distancing of secret ballot elections for the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers.	Covid-19 pandemic-related temporary standing orders
	Extension of the suspension of public gallery access	Covid-19 pandemic-related temporary standing orders
6th Edition, 3rd Revision	Extension of the suspension of public gallery access	Covid-19 pandemic-related temporary standing orders
6th Edition, 4th Revision	Extension of the suspension of public gallery access	Covid-19 pandemic-related temporary standing orders
	Extension of temporary remit of the mandatory Europe and External Relations committee	United Kingdom's exit from the European Union
6th Edition, 5th Revision	Extension of the suspension of public gallery access	Covid-19 pandemic-related temporary standing orders
	Extension of temporary remit of the mandatory Europe and External Relations committee	United Kingdom's exit from the European Union
	Changes to Financial Memorandum and Hybrid Bill procedures	Changes identified following the updates to parliamentary guidance
6th Edition, 6th Revision	Lapsing of the suspension of public gallery access	Covid-19 pandemic-related temporary standing orders
6th Edition, 7th Revision	Temporary rule providing for a pilot Proxy Voting Scheme	Session 6 SPPA Committee inquiry into future parliamentary procedures and practices
6th Edition, 8th Revision	References to Her Majesty in the Standing Orders replaced with His Majesty	Changes identified following the death of Her Majesty The Queen and prior to the coronation of His Majesty The King
6th Edition, 9th Revision	Lapsing of temporary rule providing for a pilot Proxy Voting Scheme	Session 6 SPPA Committee inquiry into future parliamentary procedures and practices
	Permanent rule changes providing for proxy voting in the Parliament	Session 6 SPPA Committee inquiry into future parliamentary procedures and practices and Scottish Parliament Gender Sensitive Audit
6th Edition, 10th Revision	Changes to the procedure on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills	Session 6 Conveners Group request to the SPPA Committee to consider the lack of reference in the Standing Orders to motions refusing legislative consent
6th Edition, 11th Revision	Temporary changes to deadlines for lodging amendments to public Bills	Proposal from the Presiding Officer on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau for a temporary amendment to the Standing Orders on deadlines for amendments to public Bills.
6th	Extension of temporary remit of the mandatory Europe	United Kingdom's exit from the European

Standing Orders	Summary of Changes	Associated Inquiry or Reason for Change
Edition, 12th Revision	and External Relations committee	Union
7th Edition	Deletion of EU-related Standing Orders	United Kingdom's exit from the European Union
	Changes setting out the Presiding Officer and the two deputy Presiding Officers cannot all come from the same political party or be the same gender	Scottish Parliament Gender Sensitive Audit
	Changes setting out that party leaders must ensure due regard is given to achieving gender balance on the Parliamentary Bureau	
	Changes to ensure Members give due regard to gender balance when making nominations for membership of SPCB	
	Changes requiring the Parliamentary Bureau ensure there are no single-sex committees and give due regard to the gender balance of the whole Parliament when proposing committee membership	
	Introduction of elected committee conveners	Session 6 SPPA Committee inquiry into committee effectiveness
	Implementation of a reduction in maximum committee size, an earlier date in the Session by which Members Bills must be introduced, and allowing committees to meet in private at the same time as Chamber	
	Changes to allow for an additional dedicated Committee debate slot following a People's Panel	
	Changes to the quorum requirements for joint committee meetings	
	New rule for hosting members from another committee	
Changes to the requirements for committees' annual reports		
Changes to allow Stage 2 to be taken by the lead committee and one or more additional committees	Requests to the Session 6 SPPA Committee to consider minor and miscellaneous rule changes	
Changes to the procedures by which a decision to hold an election or appoint an SPCB member is made if a SPCB vacancy remains unfilled		
Changes to clarify the procedure for electing a new Presiding Officer mid-Session		
Deletion of rules about re-appointment of SPCB-supported officeholders and a new definition of SPCB-supported bodies		
Changes to how certain parliamentary and government officeholders can be addressed during parliamentary proceedings		
Changes to clarify where committees can meet without requiring Parliamentary Bureau permission		
Changes to clarify that the question on a motion to approve a Bill need only be put once		

The Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament

The Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament are the rules of procedure. They govern how the Parliament conducts its business, including the organisation of meetings, the roles and responsibilities of the Presiding Officer and members, the passage of legislation, the operation of committees, and other parliamentary proceedings.¹

The Standing Orders and the Scotland Act 1998

The Standing Orders are made in accordance with section 22 of, and Schedule 3 to, the Scotland Act 1998. Section 22 of the Scotland Act 1998 requires that the Parliament regulates its procedure by standing orders.² Schedule 3 of the Scotland Act 1998 makes provision as to how certain matters are to be dealt with by Standing Orders. These matters are:²

- maintaining order during parliamentary proceedings, including preventing conduct that could amount to a criminal offence, contempt of court, or breach a sub judice rule (which restricts discussion of ongoing court cases).
- Withdrawing the rights and privileges of a Member in certain circumstances.
- Holding meetings of the Parliament in public and providing for certain circumstances in which proceedings may be held in private.
- The reporting and publication of parliamentary proceedings.
- Ensuring that the Presiding Officer and their deputies do not all belong to the same political party.
- The power to establish committees, and providing for committee membership to reflect the overall political balance of the Parliament.
- Securing the consent of His Majesty or HRH The Prince of Wales where a Bill before the Parliament affects Crown interests.

Other legislation, including other provisions of the Scotland Act 1998, may require that specific procedural details be set out in the Standing Orders.

Amending Standing Orders

Each Session of the Scottish Parliament has its own edition of the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders for Session 6 are referred to as The Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament 6th Edition.¹ A Revision is issued when amendments are made to an edition of the Standing Orders.¹ These Revisions are numbered sequentially as they are issued (i.e., 1st Revision, 2nd Revision, and so on). Each Revision includes the complete text of every Chapter of the Standing Orders and is published on the [Scottish Parliament website](#).

The Standing Orders may be amended by the Parliament either on a permanent or temporary basis, following procedures set out in Rules 17.1 and 17.1A.¹ Permanent amendments can only be made with the agreement of the Parliament on a motion of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee (referred to in Standing Orders as "the committee mentioned in Rule 6.4"), whose remit includes considering and reporting on the Parliament's practice and procedures.¹ Any such amendment must be consistent with the requirements of the Scotland Act 1998 and, if decided by division, must secure an absolute majority of votes from Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs).¹

Temporary amendments follow a similar process. The SPPA Committee may lodge a motion proposing a temporary amendment to the Standing Orders and specify the intended duration of those amendments.¹ The same voting requirements apply to temporary amendments as to permanent ones. However, any temporary amendment is subject to review by the SPPA Committee.¹ Revisions to the temporary amendments may be made on a motion of the SPPA Committee that is agreed to by the Parliament.¹

The Parliamentary Bureau may also on a motion recommend temporary amendments, or revisions to existing temporary provisions, in emergency circumstances.¹ Before moving such a motion, the Parliamentary Bureau must notify the SPPA Committee, and the Member moving the motion on the Parliamentary Bureau's behalf (usually the Minister for Parliamentary Business) is required to explain the necessity for the proposed changes.¹ All temporary amendments agreed to are added to an annex of the Standing Orders for the period the rules are in effect.¹

Suspension and variation of Standing Orders

Rule 17.2 of the Standing Orders allows the Parliament to temporarily suspend or vary its Standing Orders without formally revising them. When such a motion is agreed to, it stands as agreed for the specified purpose only — it does not constitute a permanent amendment to the Standing Orders or result in a revision to the Standing Orders.

Any member or the Parliamentary Bureau may on a motion move to suspend a Rule (or part of a Rule, including a single word or number) for the purpose of a specified meeting of the Parliament, a committee, or a sub-committee. Alternatively, the Parliamentary Bureau alone may move a suspension for the purpose of a specific item of business, and may also make alternative provision in place of the suspended Rule or part.

In either case, the Parliament may only suspend a Rule or make alternative provision where doing so would be consistent with the requirements of the Scotland Act 1998.

Transition to Session 6 of the Scottish Parliament

The Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament 6th Edition came into effect on 12 May 2021 and contained the first permanent provisions for hybrid Parliament and committee proceedings.³ This meant that the Parliament would be continuing to meet in a hybrid format with either all or some MSPs participating by means of a virtual platform, a reality that had been the case since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the agreement of temporary standing orders on 21 April 2020.¹

End of Covid-19 pandemic-related temporary standing orders

There were also temporary provisions in place to ensure that the Parliament could conduct its first items of business of Session 6 while remaining in compliance with public health measures.³

- Temporary Rule 1 permitted the secret-ballot election of the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers with social-distancing adjustments and allowed the clerk to cast a vote on behalf of any Member unable to attend in person.³
- Temporary Rule 2 enabled Members (who could not be physically present) to take their oath of allegiance or make an affirmation remotely.³
- Temporary Rule 3 continued the suspension of public gallery access, a measure first imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic.³

Temporary Rules 1 and 2 were deleted from the Standing Orders on 30 June 2021 following agreement of the Parliament to [Motion S6M-00474](#) on 23 June 2021. Motion S6M-00474 also extended the suspension of public gallery access to 9 October 2021. These changes were subsequently issued in the Standing Orders (6th Edition, 2nd Revision).⁴

Temporary Rule 3 was extended on three occasions, following the approval of Motions [S6M-01601](#), [S6M-02653](#), and [S6M-03155](#), through successive updates to the Standing Orders (6th Edition, 3rd, 4th and 5th Revisions), before lapsing on 1 April 2022 under the 6th Edition 6th Revision.^{5 6 7 8}

ⁱ SPICe published a [briefing](#) on the changes to the Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The remit of the Europe and External Relations Committee

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union also set the context for anticipated temporary Revisions to Standing Orders at the beginning of Session 6.

Under Standing Orders, certain committees (designated as “mandatory committees”) can only have their remits changed by amendments to Standing Orders.³ The Europe and External Relations Committee, provided for by Rule 6.8, is one such committee.³ Its remit, as set out in Rule 6.8, is:

“ 1. There shall be a committee, the remit of which is to consider and report on the following (and any additional matter added under Rule 6.1.5A)— (a) proposals for European Union legislation; (b) the implementation of European Communities and European Union legislation; (c) any European Communities or European Union issue; (d) the development and implementation of the Scottish Administration's links with countries and territories outside Scotland, the European Union (and its institutions) and other international organisations; and (e) co-ordination of the international activities of the Scottish Administration.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2021³

By the start of Session 6, the UK's exit from the EU had rendered parts of the mandatory Europe and External Relations Committee's remit (Rule 6.8) obsolete.⁹ To address this, the then Minister for Parliamentary Business, George Adam MSP, moved [Motion S6M-00392](#) on 15 June 2021 to temporarily amend Rule 6.8. At that meeting of the Parliament, George Adam MSP stated:

“ Motion S6M-00392 sets out a temporary change to standing orders in respect of the remit of the mandatory Europe and External Relations Committee. The remit set out in rule 6.8 of standing orders for that committee refers to matters that are no longer accurate following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union. The motion before the Parliament today sets out an alternative remit and name for that committee: the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee. Once committees are established, it will be a matter for the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee to consider and make a recommendation to the Parliament on a permanent change to the remit of that committee. The temporary rule will therefore apply until either 31 December 2021, or until the Parliament takes a decision on a permanent amendment, whichever is earlier.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2021⁹

Temporary Rule 4, which provides for the alternative name and remit, came into effect with the 1st Revision of the Standing Orders (6th Edition) on 15 June 2021.¹⁰ The temporary rule provides for the Session 6 Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, whose remit was to consider and report on:

“ (a) the Scottish Government’s EU and external affairs policy; (b) policy in relation to the UK’s exit from the EU; (c) the international activities of the Scottish Administration, including international development; and (d) any other matter falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture and any matter relating to inter-governmental relations within the responsibility of the Deputy First Minister”

The Scottish Parliament, 2021¹⁰

Under Rule 17.1A.2 of Standing Orders, it is for the SPPA Committee to review temporary rules and make recommendations for changes to those rules.³ Accordingly, the Convener of the Session 6 Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, Clare Adamson MSP, wrote to the Session 6 SPPA Committee to request that Temporary Rule 4 be extended until the end of Session 6.¹¹ In the letter, appended to an SPPA Committee report and received by the SPPA Committee during November 2021, Clare Adamson MSP explained that the extension would:

“ allow the [Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture] Committee time to consider the impact of the UK leaving the EU on a number of scrutiny procedures outlined in the Standing Orders and the remit of the mandatory Europe and External Relations Committee as set out in Rule 6.8.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2022¹¹

The Session 6 SPPA Committee subsequently consulted the Parliamentary Bureau on the proposed extension (as Rule 6.1.2 of the Standing Orders gives the Parliamentary Bureau the authority to "propose the establishment, membership, remit and duration of a committee").^{11 3} Following correspondence between the Parliamentary Bureau and the Session 6 Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, the Parliamentary Bureau agreed to extend the duration of Temporary Rule 4 until 11 February 2022.¹¹ This change took effect in the 4th Revision of the Standing Orders on 21 December 2021 after Parliamentary Bureau [Motion S6M-02651](#) was agreed to.⁶

The SPPA Committee then published a proposal to extend the application of Temporary Rule 4 until dissolution (or earlier, if the Parliament were to reach a decision on the issue before dissolution) in its report published 1 February 2022.¹¹ The Parliament agreed to the temporary rule change as set out in [Motion S6M-03030](#) and the change took effect in the Standing Orders 6th Edition 5th Revision on 11 February 2022.⁷

Further extension of Temporary Rule 4

The consideration of change of remit for the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee remained ongoing from the extension of Temporary Rule 4 in February 2022.

As part of its review of EU-related Standing Orders, the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee had also recommended that further consideration be given by Parliament to Rule 6.8 which provides for the mandatory Europe and External Relations Committee remit. The SPPA Committee indicated it would engage in further consultation with the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee on 2 October 2025.¹² It concluded in its report on Strengthening committees' effectiveness (published on 2 October 2025):

“ The policy issues and areas of focus for matters related to European issues are dependent on the composition of both the Parliament and the Government. Therefore, future inclusion of European matters in Standing Orders will need to reflect this requirement. We propose to consult further with the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee on whether any elements of the remit in Temporary Rule 4, or in relation to other aspect of the post-Brexit landscape should be included as part of a mandatory committee remit for the next Parliamentary session.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

The SPPA Committee published the outcomes of its consideration and a proposal to extend the operation of Temporary Rule 4 to 2 October 2026. ¹³ In its report on the proposed Standing Orders changes, the SPPA Committee stated:

“ In our correspondence to the CEEAC Committee we noted that its current inquiry on the Transparency of Intergovernmental activity and its implications for parliamentary scrutiny meant that that the remit of the CEEAC Committee remained a live issue. Taking these points into account we proposed to the CEEAC Committee an approach in which the temporary rules would be continued for a limited period of time to end of September 2026. This would allow the opportunity for a committee to be established at the start of Session 7 but provide impetus for a permanent change to be made in relation to the remit set out in Rule 6.8 of Standing Orders. The Clerks to the CEEAC Committee have confirmed that the members of that Committee would be content with the extension of Temporary Rule 4.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹³

The Parliament agreed to the proposed rule changes as set out in [Motion S6M-21048](#) and the change took effect in the Standing Orders 6th Edition 12th Revision on 1 April 2026. ¹⁴

Temporary Rule 4 was due to remain in force until 2 October 2026, or until a decision to amend Rule 6.8 on the mandatory Europe and External Affairs Committee was made, whichever occurred first. ¹⁴ However, the Session 7 Parliament agreed to [Motion S7M-00268](#) on 3 June 2026, which set out a further amendment to Temporary Rule 4. The amendments to Temporary Rule 4 provide that the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee is renamed as the Europe, External Affairs and Culture committee. The Committee's remit is now to consider and report on the Scottish Government's EU and external affairs policy; policy in relation to the UK's relationship with the EU; the international activities of the Scottish Administration, including international development; any other matter falling within the responsibility of the Scottish Administration relating to devolution, intra-UK and intergovernmental relations; and matters relating to culture within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic. Temporary Rule 4 is now due to remain in force until 31 January 2027.

Deletion of EU-related Standing Orders

During June 2024, the Session 6 Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee wrote to the Session 6 SPPA Committee with the outcome of a review of the EU-related rules in Standing Orders. ¹⁵ The Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and

Culture Committee recommended that all references to the EU should be deleted from the Standing Orders.¹⁵

The SPPA Committee published its proposals to give effect to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee's recommendation on 27 February 2025.¹⁵ This included changes to Rule 6.2 on the functions of all committees and the deletion of Chapter 10A of the Standing Orders (which sets out the procedures for consideration of proposals for European Union legislation at the Parliament).¹⁵ Specifically, the SPPA Committee proposed changing Rule 6.2.2 of the Standing Orders which provides for committees to consider any legislation originating from the EU or any international conventions or agreements which relate to or affect any competent matter within their respective remits.¹⁵ The SPPA Committee proposed that reference to "any European Union legislation" should be deleted from this rule.¹⁵

The Parliament agreed to the proposed rule changes as set out in [Motion S6M-21050](#) and the change took effect in the Standing Orders 7th Edition on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

The Scottish Parliament Proxy Voting Scheme

A proxy vote is a vote cast on the behalf of one person by another individual.¹⁷ Proxy voting was implemented in other legislatures in the UK (and internationally) to ensure the continuity of parliamentary and legislative business through periods of public health restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.ⁱⁱ Although the Scottish Parliament did not implement proxy voting during the pandemic, both the Session 5 and Session 6 SPPA Committees took an interest in proxy voting during this period.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Session 6 SPPA Committee first considered proxy voting as part of its inquiry into future parliamentary procedures and practices.¹⁸ The report from the inquiry, published on 28 June 2022, included a proposal that a 12-month trial of proxy voting should be held before considering permanent rule changes.¹⁹ The SPPA Committee indicated in its report that it recognised the importance of providing alternative voting methods for MSPs unable to attend the Parliament for reasons such as parental leave and illness.¹⁹

Pilot scheme and temporary rule changes

The SPPA Committee subsequently published a report on a pilot proxy voting scheme with [proposals for a temporary rule change to the Standing Orders](#).¹⁷ On 6 December 2022, the Parliament agreed to [Motion S6M-07078](#) which provided for a temporary change to Standing Orders to allow for a pilot of proxy voting.^{iv}²⁰

Temporary Rule 5 of the 6th Edition of Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament (7th and 8th Revisions) provided for the pilot proxy voting scheme.²¹ It allowed a Member to arrange for their vote to be cast by another Member acting as a proxy in any vote of a meeting of the Parliament or a Committee of the whole Parliament.²¹ The pilot proxy voting scheme was in effect from 4 January 2023 until 31 December 2023.²¹

The eligibility criteria for the pilot scheme were issued by the Presiding Officer rather than written into the temporary Standing Orders.²² In the pilot scheme first issued by the Presiding Officer, a Member could designate another Member as their proxy to vote in a meeting of the Parliament or of a Committee of the Whole Parliament in any of the following circumstances:²²

- illness, severe illness requiring medical intervention, or illness which prevents the Member from attending the Parliament for a sustained period
 - leave related to the birth, adoption, fostering or kinship of a child, or complications
-

ii The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee published a [SPICe paper](#) with background on proxy voting schemes in UK legislatures on 1 November 2023.

iii SPICe published a [blog](#) on the Parliament's consideration of a pilot proxy voting scheme on 6 December 2022. This blog provides some further information on the Session 5 Standards, Procedures, and Public Appointments Committee consideration of proxy voting schemes.

iv SPICe published a [blog](#) on the Parliament's consideration of a pilot proxy voting scheme on 6 December 2022.

arising from pregnancy

- bereavement.

The pilot scheme could be varied at any time by the Presiding Officer (in consultation with the [Parliamentary Bureau](#) and SPPA Committee).²² This happened on one occasion during the operation of the pilot.²² The pilot scheme was modified, with effect from 20 February 2023, to add attendance to a person at the end of life as a circumstance under which a Member could designate a proxy.²²

The use of a proxy under the pilot scheme was recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the Scottish Parliament.²² Five Members made requests for a proxy vote that were allowable under the terms of the scheme.²² Two further Members made requests that were not allowable under the terms of the scheme at the time of request.^v Only two Members (out of the five approved requests) proceeded to cast their votes by proxy.²² Proxy votes were used during the operation of the temporary scheme on:²²

- 10, 11, 12 January 2023
- 17, 18, 19 January 2023
- 24, 25, 26 January 2023
- 2 February 2023.

A proxy vote was used during one set of Stage 3 proceedings.²² This was for the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill (now Act) on 24 January 2023.²² Proxy votes were used twice for votes on [business motions](#) (i.e., motions giving an outline of proposed business in the Chamber or suggesting time frames for stages of Bills). All other proxy votes were used during [Decision Time](#) (i.e., the period at the end of Chamber proceedings where Members vote on amendments and motions).²²

Permanent scheme and rule changes

The Session 6 SPPA Committee conducted an evaluation of the pilot scheme and published its report on proposed Standing Order rule changes on 7 December 2023.²³ The report indicated that most respondents to the SPPA Committee's call for views were supportive of the temporary provisions for a pilot proxy voting scheme.²³ The Parliamentary Bureau and the Presiding Officer also indicated their support for the scheme to the Committee.²³

On 20 December 2023, the Parliament agreed to [Motion S6M-11616](#) which provided for a permanent change to Standing Orders to allow for proxy voting.^{vi} The permanent proxy

^v These requests related to attending to someone near the end of life.²² As noted in this briefing, the pilot scheme was amended during the course of its operation to include such a circumstance as a qualifying reason for seeking a proxy vote.

^{vi} SPICe published an [update blog](#) on proxy voting in the Scottish Parliament on 19 December 2023 ahead of the

voting scheme is provided for by Rule 11.5A (first published in the 6th Edition, 9th Revision).²⁴

Rule 11.5A allows Members to vote by proxy in a meeting of the Parliament or a meeting of a Committee of the whole Parliament (i.e., a meeting at which the whole Parliament considers legislation at Stage 2), but not in secret ballots (e.g., ballots for the election of the Presiding Officer and Deputies).²⁴ Members are eligible to vote by proxy for any of the following reasons:²⁴

- maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, adoption leave, or shared parental leave
- complications arising from pregnancy
- serious long-term illness or injury
- bereavement, or
- attending to a person who is near the end of their life.

The permanent proxy voting provisions are similar to the provisions of the pilot scheme. However, one key difference is that the eligibility criteria for proxy voting is now set out in Standing Orders, as opposed to the scheme issued by the Presiding Officer. The Session 6 SPPA Committee indicated in its report on the proposed rule changes that setting eligibility criteria out in Standing Orders “will give the criteria a more permanent status”.²³ The SPPA Committee stated:

“ When considering the detail of proxy voting we wish the permanent system to broadly mirror the current temporary arrangements, namely that the Standing Orders sets out the principle that a Member may arrange for their vote to be cast as a proxy, but the details of how such a vote may be exercised, are set out in a separate scheme administered by the Presiding Officer.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2023²³

The Presiding Officer issued the [Proxy Voting Scheme](#) under Rule 11.5A of the Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament on 4 January 2024.²⁵ Again, the provisions of the scheme remain similar to the provisions of the former temporary scheme with the Presiding Officer retaining the authority to vary the scheme at any time in consultation with the Parliamentary Bureau and the SPPA Committee.²⁵

Procedures on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills

The Sewel Convention is a constitutional convention whereby the UK Parliament will not normally legislate on devolved matters without the consent of the Scottish Parliament.²⁶ It is recognised in the Scotland Act 1998, as amended by the Scotland Act 2016, but it is not legally enforceable.²⁶ The UK Parliament is still able to legislate on devolved matters for which the Scottish Parliament does not give its consent.^{vii 26}

Legislative consent memorandums and motions on legislative consent

The procedure by which the Scottish Parliament gives its consent (or lack thereof) to a UK Parliament Bill (or part(s) of it) is set out in Chapter 9B of the Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament.^{viii} Rule 9B.1 of the Standing Orders provides that the procedures on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills apply where a UK Parliament Bill makes "relevant provision".³ For the purposes of Chapter 9B of the Standing Orders, a relevant provision is one that seeks to do any of the following:³

- Change the law in an area of devolved competence
- Alter the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament
- Alter the executive competence of Scottish Ministers.

If a UK Parliament Bill makes "relevant provision", a member of the Scottish Government is required under Rule 9B.3 to lodge a legislative consent memorandum at the Scottish Parliament setting out the Scottish Government's view on whether the Parliament should grant legislative consent.³ The Sewel Convention, and therefore the legislative consent process at the Scottish Parliament, can be engaged on introduction of and on amendment to a UK Parliament Bill.³ For example, a Bill as introduced may not make changes to devolved matters but on amendment agreed to by the UK Parliament (or on tabling of UK Government amendments), Standing Orders require that a member of the Scottish Government lodge a legislative consent memorandum.

This legislative consent memorandum is then referred to a "lead" Committee in the Scottish Parliament to report on the legislative consent memorandum.³ This Committee is usually the one within whose remit the subject matter of the relevant provision falls.³ In circumstances where the subject matter of a legislative consent memorandum falls within the remit of more than one committee, then one of those committees is designated as the lead committee on a motion of the Parliamentary Bureau.³ The other committees are still

vii SPICe published a briefing on [How Devolution Works](#) which covers the relationship between the Scottish Parliament and the UK Parliament.

viii SPICe updated its [factsheet](#) on legislative consent processes in the Scottish Parliament on 5 November 2024. SPICe also updates [two trackers](#) compiling information on UK Parliament Bills undergoing the legislative consent process at the Scottish Parliament.

entitled under Standing Orders to consider the legislative consent memorandum and report to the lead committee.³ The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee may also consider the legislative consent memorandum and report to the lead committee if the UK Parliament Bill contains provisions conferring powers on Scottish Ministers to make subordinate legislation.³

Following the lead committee's report on the legislative consent memorandum, a member of the Scottish Parliament may lodge a motion on legislative consent and MSPs may vote on such a motion (formerly known as Sewel motions or legislative consent motions) to grant or withhold consent for the Bill.³

Changes to the procedure on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills during Session 6

The Scottish Parliament had only withheld consent on one occasion before the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union on 23 June 2016.²⁷ During the legislative process to leave the EU and the period following however, this changed.²⁷ The Scottish Parliament did not provide consent for 19 UK Parliament Bills between the beginning of Session 5 and end of Session 6.^{ix} This increase in the frequency of the Parliament withholding consent was also noted by the Session 6 Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee which later remarked in its inquiry report on The Impact of Brexit on Devolution (published in September 2022) that the operation of the Sewel Convention was "under strain".²⁸

The Conveners Group wrote to the SPPA Committee on 27 April 2022 about the lack of reference in the Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament to motions refusing legislative consent.²⁹ The Standing Orders at this time (6th Edition, 6th Revision) only provided for motions that seek the consent of the Parliament (then known as legislative consent motions). Liam McArthur MSP, Chair of the Conveners Group, explained the issue in a letter to the SPPA Committee on 27 April 2022.²⁹ The letter states:

ix This data is obtained from the [SPICe Legislative Consent Trackers](#).

“ Where a Bill makes relevant provision (or is amended to do so), the Scottish Government must lodge an LCM, regardless of whether it recommends consent. However, Standing Orders only provide for a motion to be lodged where that motion seeks the Parliament’s consent. While committees will still scrutinise the LCM, where the Scottish Government is not seeking consent there is no provision in Chapter 9B which requires a debate or vote on the issue. There have been a number of cases in Session 6 so far and in these circumstances the Scottish Government has lodged a standard motion to allow for a debate and vote on the issue. However, such motions and debates sit outwith the legislative consent process set out in Chapter 9B. Another issue that has arisen in this context is circumstances where the original LCM did not recommend consent and therefore no consent motion has been lodged. It is unclear whether a supplementary LCM would be required where the Bill is amended to include relevant provision, but the Scottish Government still does not intend to recommend consent. Rule 9B.3.1(c) provides that an LCM should be lodged where amendments make relevant provision for the first time or beyond the limits of any consent previously given by the Parliament. On a strict reading of this rule, a supplementary LCM is not required because the Bill already made relevant provision (the amendments did not do so for the first time) and the amendments did not go beyond the limits of any consent as no consent had previously been granted. In these cases, while the amendments are not beyond the scope of consent granted (as no consent has been granted) they are beyond the scope of what the Parliament has previously considered. The spirit of the rules is to ensure that the Parliament is informed of new developments as this may impact on its view on consent. However, the exact drafting of the rules does not explicitly cater for this situation.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2022²⁹

The Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee later wrote to the SPPA Committee on 15 February 2023 regarding a related issue that arose during its consideration of the legislative consent memorandum for the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.³⁰ In this case, the Scottish Government lodged an ordinary motion on the Bill before the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee and the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee had reported on the legislative consent memorandum lodged by the Scottish Government. The letter from the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee states:

“ The issue we wish to highlight relates to sequencing and specifically with regard to LCMs [legislative consent memoranda]; in that our work and that of the DPLR Committee would usually be expected to have been completed before a Chamber debate, thereby allowing that work to frame and inform that debate. Rule 9B.2 of the Standing Orders sets out that “a legislative consent motion shall not normally be lodged until after the publication of the lead committee’s report” and “the Parliament shall not normally take such a motion earlier than the fifth sitting day after the day on which the lead committee’s report... is published.” However, as you will be aware, a legislative consent motion seeks the Parliament’s consent, not its refusal of consent. As the Scottish Government recommended in its LCM that the Parliament not give its consent to the Bill, there was no requirement to lodge a legislative consent motion, and Rule 9B.2 of the Standing Orders did not apply in relation to this Bill. The Standing Orders are silent regarding the scenario of consent not being sought. We suggest that this could be considered an anomaly, particularly in the post-EU landscape in which the consent of the devolved administrations to LCMs has been withheld with far more frequency than was the case pre-Brexit. There have been six Brexit-related Bills passed at Westminster without the consent of the Scottish Parliament since 2018, with the number of such instances before 2018 being just one. ”

The Scottish Parliament, 2023³⁰

Following the letters from the Conveners Group and the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, the SPPA Committee agreed to consider rule changes to the procedures on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills at its meeting on 29 June 2023.³¹ As part of its consideration of rule changes, the Committee invited views from the Parliamentary Bureau, the Minister for Parliamentary Business, the committees of the Scottish Parliament and the Business Managers of political parties.³¹ Correspondence received by the Committee on the issue was published.³¹

The SPPA Committee subsequently published its report on the procedures on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills on 20 June 2024.³² The report proposed rule changes to Standing Orders that renamed legislative consent motions to "motions on legislative consent" and made it clear that a motion on legislative consent can seek consent or refusal of consent in relation to one or more relevant provisions in a relevant Bill.³² The conclusion of the report states:

“

- The Committee believes the proposed draft rule change will provide more clarity to the Parliament’s procedures for considering legislative consent motions. The Committee believes it will provide greater protection to the important scrutiny function performed by committees of legislative consent memorandums. It will also ensure the work of committees on these matters is always able to inform the Parliament’s decision taking on legislative consent motions.”
- The revised draft rule change (Annexe B) proposed following discussions with the Scottish Government ensures that the same processes and stages are required regardless of whether consent is being sought or refusal of consent.”
- The revised draft rules make it clear that that the motion can seek consent or refusal of consent in relation to one or more relevant provisions in a relevant Bill. It also makes it clear that the motion does not need to list every relevant provision.”
- The revised draft rules also incorporates the preference expressed in the consultation responses for the Scottish Government to try to lodge a motion on legislative consent. The draft rules use the term ‘normally’ and do not specify any time limits: “A member of the Scottish Government shall normally lodge with the Clerk a motion on legislative consent in relation to any Bill to which Rule 9B.3.1. applies.””
- The Committee considers this approach provides a degree of flexibility on timing for the Scottish Government, in line with the majority view in the consultation responses.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2024³²

The Parliament agreed to [Motion S6M-13746](#) on 27 June 2024. The motion provided for the rule changes to Standing Orders proposed by the SPPA Committee in relation to procedures on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills to be made. The rule changes came into effect on 2 July 2024 (Standing Orders 6th Edition, 10th Revision).³³

Scottish Parliament Gender Sensitive Audit

The Presiding Officer of the Session 6 Scottish Parliament, Alison Johnstone MSP, announced a "Gender Sensitive Audit" of the Parliament's procedures and proceedings in February 2022.³⁴ The Audit set out to review the representation, participation, and influence of women in the Parliament.³⁴ It was carried out by Dr Fiona Mackay (Robert Gordon University and University of Strathclyde).³⁴

Following the publication of the Audit in March 2023, the Presiding Officer established the cross-party Gender Sensitive Parliament Advisory Group to oversee the delivery on the recommendations of the Audit.³⁴ Several recommendations from the Audit asked the SPPA Committee to consider rule changes to Standing Orders to guarantee the participation of female MSPs in certain parliamentary roles or business.³⁵ For example, the Audit recommended that the proxy voting scheme (which at the time of the report's publication was running as a pilot) be made permanent through changes to Standing Orders.³⁵ As discussed [elsewhere in this briefing](#), the Parliament agreed to changes to Standing Orders on 20 December 2023 to make provision for proxy voting on a permanent basis.

Recommendations 18 to 21 of the Audit called for the SPPA Committee to consider rules changes to guarantee the participation of female MSPs on parliamentary bodies — the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and the Parliamentary Bureau — as well as committees of the Parliament.³⁵ The recommendations state:

“ **Recommendation 18** The SPPA Committee to propose amendments to Standing Orders to specify there should be a minimum of 40% women, for”

- SPCB”
- Parliamentary Bureau”
- Committee Convenerships.”

McKay, 2023³⁵

“ **Recommendation 19** The SPPA Committee to propose the introduction of a rule that there should be no single sex committees and to consider and agree, when ruling out such parliamentary committees, whether the rule should refer to: (i) a 40% minimum for women; (ii) a minimum % based on the numbers of women ‘available’ for committees (i.e., excluding Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers, party leaders and Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers or (iii) the overall number of women in the Scottish Parliament.”

McKay, 2023³⁵

“ **Recommendation 20** Following agreement of recommendation 19, the SPPA Committee to propose the introduction of a rule that where parties either elect or appoint more than one member to a committee the party’s membership must be mixed.”

McKay, 2023³⁵

“ **Recommendation 21** The SPPA Committee to propose the introduction of a formal quota for Presiding Officer/DPOs [Deputy Presiding Officers] - at least one man and one woman. This recognises existing experience, and by formalising an existing Scottish Parliament norm, protects and further legitimises this for the future.”

McKay, 2023³⁵

Recommendation 24 additionally asked the SPPA Committee to consider rule changes to allow for an acting member of the SPCB where that member is taking parental leave.³⁵ Recommendation 24 states:

“ **Recommendation 24** The SPCB/SPPA Committee/Bureau as appropriate in consultation, with party leaders, to agree that MSPs taking parental leave will, on their return to Parliament, be expected to be able to continue in their pre-leave Committee and party leadership posts and that there should be no expectation that MSPs taking parental leave will resign from bodies such as the SPCB. In relation to the SPCB, Standing Orders should be changed to allow for an ‘acting’ SPCB member along similar lines to the rule change that allowed for acting Conveners.”

McKay, 2023³⁵

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee consideration of rule changes

The SPPA Committee began its consideration of the findings of the Gender Sensitive Audit on 9 March 2023.³⁶ It subsequently held an evidence session with Professor Sarah Childs and Professor Meryl Kenny (both of the University of Edinburgh) and Susan Duffy (then Group Head of Engagement and Communications at the Scottish Parliament) on 26 October 2023.³⁷ Thereafter, the SPPA Committee undertook private consideration of the recommendations at 3 committee meetings and in an informal meeting with the Presiding Officer.³⁸

The SPPA Committee subsequently published correspondence to the Presiding Officer (dated 12 November 2024) on its consideration of the recommendations of the Gender Sensitive Audit.³⁹ In its correspondence, Convener of the SPPA Committee, Martin Whitfield MSP, indicated that recommendations relating to gender quotas on committees or committee roles would be considered further as part of the [Committee's inquiry into committee effectiveness](#).³⁹ Specifically, this decision to refer recommendations for consideration as part of the Committee effectiveness inquiry would include Recommendation 18 (on gender quotas for committee convener roles), and Recommendations 19 and 20 (which advocated for gender quotas on committees and mixed gender representation for parties with more than one member on a committee).³⁹ The correspondence indicated that it was the Committee's intention for any rule changes to the gender composition of committees resulting from the inquiry into committee effectiveness to be in place for the next parliamentary session.³⁹ In addition, the

Convener stated in the correspondence on behalf of the Committee:

“ We do consider that, as a minimum, there should be no single sex committees, and this will be the position underpinning our deliberations on committee membership during our inquiry.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2024³⁹

In addition to advocating for gender quotas for committee convener roles, Recommendation 18 advocated for a gender quota for membership of the Parliamentary Bureau and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB).³⁵ On membership of the Parliamentary Bureau, the Session 6 SPPA Committee Convener, Martin Whitfield MSP, stated in the correspondence to the Presiding Officer:

“ In relation to a gender quota for Parliamentary Bureau membership Standing Orders currently requires party leaders to consult each other and to have regard to gender balance in making nominations. The Committee has agreed to propose changes to the rules to strengthen the current requirements to increase the prospect of gender balance on the Bureau. The Committee will consider proposals for the specific wording in due course and once agreed publish its report recommending these changes to the Parliament for approval. The change will be recommended to take effect from the start of the next parliamentary session.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2024³⁹

The Convener of the SPPA Committee also indicated that it was considering the gender quota for membership of the SPCB alongside Recommendation 24 (which advocated for changes to Standing Orders to allow for "acting" members of the SPCB if and when a member was to take parental leave from their parliamentary duties).³⁹ The correspondence indicated that the Committee would publish its conclusions following its further consideration of the recommendation:

“ We have considered the proposal for an acting SPCB member alongside the proposals in recommendation 18 for a quota for membership of SPCB. It is important to ensure any rule changes in relation to the SPCB do not impact on ensuring the SPCB’s statutory purpose in overseeing the administration of the Parliament and representing it in legal matters. The Scotland Act 1998 provides that the SPCB must be comprised of the Presiding Officer and at least four other Members appointed in accordance with Standing Orders. There is no requirement in Standing Orders for party representation to be taken into account in the nomination or election of members of the SPCB. In practice, the membership of the SPCB has normally come from each of the largest parties in the Parliament. Any changes to the rules regarding membership of the SPCB need to be consistent with the Scotland Act. The Committee will be considering further the terms of the Scotland Act as they relate to membership of the SPCB to inform its position on these relevant Audit recommendations. Once we have completed our consideration we will publish our conclusions.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2024³⁹

The Convener confirmed in the correspondence that the SPPA Committee would propose a rule change to give effect to Recommendation 21, stating:

“ The Committee will be recommending to the Parliament a Standing Order rule change to give effect to the proposal for a quota for there to be at least one man and one woman in the combination of Presiding Officer and deputy Presiding Officers from the start of the next parliamentary session. The Committee has explored how this potential rule change would operate in practice, it has discussed the specific issue that if the outcome of the election resulted in the Presiding Officer and first deputy Presiding Officer being both men or both women it would represent a restriction on the choice available to the Parliament for election of the second deputy Presiding Officer. Standing Orders currently provide a restriction on which members may be eligible for election as the second deputy Presiding Officer if both the Presiding Officer and first deputy Presiding Officer are drawn from the same political party. In such a circumstance any other candidates for the second deputy Presiding Officer who are members of the same political party as the Presiding Officer and first deputy Presiding Officer are not eligible to be candidates in the election. The Committee’s recommended rule changes will use the rules currently in place in relation to party balance as a model for a rule change in relation to gender balance.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2024³⁹

Rule changes related to the Scottish Parliament Gender Sensitive Audit

The SPPA Committee brought forward proposals for Standing Orders changes related to Gender Sensitive Audit recommendations on gender balance in committees (Recommendations 18, 19 and 20), Parliamentary Bureau membership (Recommendation 18), the election of Presiding Officers (Recommendation 21) and SPCB membership (Recommendation 18 and 24). This included proposals to fulfil the Committee's commitment that Standing Orders should preclude single-sex committees. The following sections explain the rule changes agreed to by the Parliament:

- [Gender balance on committees](#)
- [Parliamentary Bureau membership](#)
- [Election of the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers](#)
- [Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.](#)

Gender balance on committees

Recommendations 18, 19 and 20 of the Gender Sensitive Audit related to guaranteeing the participation of women on committees, gender quotas to guarantee proportionate participation of women in committees, and ensuring mixed-gender representation within parties on committees.³⁵ The SPPA Committee predominantly considered how it would approach guaranteeing the participation of women on committees as part of its Committee effectiveness inquiry. In its report on Strengthening committees' effectiveness, published 2 October 2025, the SPPA Committee indicated that it would not be bringing forward proposals for gender quotas on committees but, as previously committed to, would be proposing rule changes to ensure that there are no single-sex committees in the next parliamentary session.¹² The report states:

“ On the question of whether to go further, we recognise a balance needs to be struck between proposals which are aspirational and ambitious but also practically deliverable. We do not want to place a disproportionate burden of work on women if proportionality in parties and across the Parliament is not in place. We do not know what the gender balance of the next or future parliaments will be and we need to ensure that any changes to Standing Orders can be delivered and be supported by parties in future sessions. We therefore support the suggestion made by some witnesses that the right approach to quotas is to analyse the gender make-up of party representation in the Parliament post-election and, in light of that make-up, consider what an achievable but ambitious target would be. To this end, we recommend that when committees are established a requirement is placed on the Parliamentary Bureau for their proposals for members of each committee to normally reflect the gender balance of the whole Parliament. We consider the use of the word “normally” means this approach is a realistic proposition which allows the Bureau to reflect the gender composition of the parliament that has been elected, therefore taking into account the practical context for delivery. Where this proposal cannot be achieved, it is important that this is acknowledged by the Bureau. We therefore recommend that alongside any proposal by the Bureau for the establishment of a new committee where committee membership does not achieve gender balance, the Bureau include a statement explaining the reason for this. This approach will place responsibility on the Bureau, and ultimately the Parliament, when agreeing committee membership that takes gender representation into account.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

The SPPA Committee brought forward its proposals in its report on Standing Order Rule changes arising from the Committee's report Strengthening committee's effectiveness.⁴⁰ In line with its report on Strengthening committees' effectiveness, the SPPA Committee proposed inserting two new rules into Rule 6.3 (which governs membership of committees). It proposed inserting a new Rule 6.3.4A to guarantee that there will be no single-sex committees as a minimum:

“ In proposing a member to be a committee member under Rule 6.3.4, the Parliamentary Bureau must ensure that, in so doing, the result would not be that all members of a committee would be of the same sex.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴⁰

As for proportionate participation of women in committees, the Committee proposed inserting a new Rule 6.3.4B that committee memberships should "normally" reflect the Parliament's overall gender balance, and when they do not, the Parliamentary Bureau must explain why.⁴⁰ The proposed Rule 6.3.4B read:

“ When a committee is first established, the Parliamentary Bureau shall normally ensure that the proposed membership reflects the gender balance of the Parliament. Where a proposed membership does not do so, the member of the Parliamentary Bureau moving the motion shall explain the reasons for this.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴⁰

The Parliament approved the changes when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21053](#) and they came into effect in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

Recommendation 18 of the Gender Sensitive Audit also asked the SPPA Committee to consider gender quotas for committee convener roles. However, the SPPA Committee did

not bring forward proposals on this matter. Instead, the SPPA Committee brought forward proposals for elected committee conveners (see section on [Elected conveners](#) for further detail).

Parliamentary Bureau membership

The [Parliamentary Bureau](#) is responsible for proposing the Parliament's business programme each week. The Bureau is also responsible for proposing the establishment of committees, and their respective remits and memberships. Membership of the Bureau includes: the Presiding Officer (who chairs the Parliamentary Bureau) and a member of parties or groupings with 5 or more MSPs.

Recommendation 18 of the Gender Sensitive Audit set out that the SPPA Committee bring forward proposals to amend Standing Orders to ensure there is a minimum of 40% of women on the Parliamentary Bureau. The SPPA Committee, in its report on Standing Order Rule changes related to Gender Sensitive Audit recommendations, concluded that it did not support the introduction of a gender quota for Parliamentary Bureau membership.

⁴¹ It did, however, indicate its support for strengthening the requirements for party leaders to have regard to the gender balance of Parliamentary Bureau. ⁴¹ The SPPA Committee stated in its report:

“ Standing Orders Rule 5.2A sets out the current requirement in relation to a gender quota for Parliamentary Bureau membership. This currently states that each leader or group must “consult each other and have regard to gender balance”. The Committee wishes to change the rules to strengthen the current requirements to increase the prospect of gender balance on the Bureau from the start of the next parliamentary session. The Committee recommends that the wording in Rule 5.2A is strengthened to reflect this and require each party leader or group to “consult each other and ensure that due regard to is given to achieving gender balance”. Standing Orders Rule 5.2.6A also sets out the requirement to consider gender balance when nominating of a new member should a current member ceases to hold office. The Committee believes that gender balance should also be considered in these circumstances and recommends wording consistent with the proposed wording change for Rule 5.2A in Rule 5.6A. We note that having this requirement in relation to Parliamentary Bureau Membership provides a route for Members who may not consider that due regard has been given to achieving gender balance to question whether proper procedures have been followed.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴¹

The Parliament approved the changes in the SPPA Committee's 4th Report of 2026 when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21052](#) and they came into effect in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026. ¹⁶

Election of the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers

Recommendation 21 of the Gender Sensitive Audit suggested that the SPPA Committee propose that there should also be some gender balance in the holders of the offices of Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers. ³⁵ The SPPA Committee had previously

indicated that it would propose rule changes to give effect to this recommendation and formalise an existing Scottish Parliament norm.³⁹ It then brought forward proposals to give effect to the recommendation.⁴¹

The Standing Order rule changes proposed by the SPPA Committee to give effect to the recommendation mirror the party balance provisions for election of the Deputy Presiding Officers.⁴¹ First, the changes update Rule 3.3.7 of the Standing Orders so that the Presiding Officer and the two deputy Presiding Officers cannot all come from the same political party or be the same gender.⁴¹ The amended Rule 3.3.7 states that in the case of an election of the Deputy Presiding Officers:

“ (a) Where the Presiding Officer and the first deputy Presiding Officer represent the same political party, any candidate representing that party shall not be a candidate for election as the second deputy Presiding Officer; and (b) Where the Presiding Officer and the first deputy Presiding Officer are the same gender, any candidate of that same gender shall not be a candidate for election as the second deputy Presiding Officer.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴¹

Second, to ensure gender balance among the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers if there is a vacancy for a Deputy Presiding Officer, the SPPA Committee proposed an amendment to Rule 3.3.9.⁴¹ The amended Rule 3.3.9 states that in the case of an election to fill a vacancy in one of the offices of Deputy Presiding Officer:

“ (a) where the elected Presiding Officer and a deputy Presiding Officer represent the same political party and there is a vacancy in the office of the other deputy Presiding Officer, a member representing that party is not eligible for nomination as a candidate for election as that other deputy Presiding Officer; and (b) where the elected Presiding Officer and a deputy Presiding Officer are the same gender and there is a vacancy in the office of the other deputy Presiding Officer, a member of that same gender is not eligible for nomination as a candidate for election as that other deputy Presiding Officer.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴¹

The SPPA Committee's report included consequential provisions relating to the gender balance of all "available" officers (i.e., the Presiding Officer, Deputy Presiding Officer, and additional [temporary] Deputy Presiding Officers elected to fulfil the office during periods where a substantive post-holder is ill, for example). The Committee stated in its report:

“ The Committee recommends a rule change to give effect that any new additional Presiding Officer should take account of gender balance in relation to who are the 'available officers'. This would mean in a scenario where the Presiding Officer is a woman and the two Deputy Presiding Officers are men if the Presiding Officer was absent for an extended period of time, such as due to a health issue, whilst it would be permissible for the two existing Deputy Presiding Officers to continue without any change if the decision was taken to appoint an additional deputy this individual would need to be a woman.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴¹

The SPPA Committee proposed inserting an additional Rule 3.3.10DA to provide for mixed gender representation among available officers in the case of the election of an additional

Deputy Presiding Officer. Specifically, Rule 3.3.10DA states:

“ Where— (a) all the available officers are of the same gender; or (b) the election of a member of a particular gender as additional deputy Presiding Officer would result in all the available officers being of the same gender, a member representing that party or of that gender is not eligible for nomination as a candidate for election as additional deputy Presiding Officer.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴¹

Rule 3.5A governs what happens when all available officers are from the same political party. The SPPA Committee proposed amending Rule 3.5A to clarify that provisions in Standing Orders for adding a Deputy Presiding Officer or removing the Presiding Officer and deputy Presiding Officers can also be used in the event available officers are all of the same gender.⁴¹

The Parliament approved the changes relating to the election of the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21052](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Recommendation 18 of the Gender Sensitive Audit set out that the SPPA Committee bring forward proposals to amend Standing Orders to ensure there is a minimum of 40% of women on the SPCB.³⁵ The Committee, as with its conclusion on membership of the Parliamentary Bureau, did not support the introduction of a rule requiring a minimum percentage membership for women on SPCB.⁴¹ Instead, the Committee recommended changes to wording in Standing Orders Rule 3.7 to strengthen gender balance as an issue for consideration at the nomination stage for members.⁴¹ It proposed that the wording of Rule 3.7A1 should be strengthened to:

“ [...], members intending to make such a nomination must ensure that due regard is given to achieving gender balance in the nominations of individuals for elections for membership of the Parliamentary corporation.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴¹

The Parliament approved the changes in the SPPA Committee's 4th Report of 2026 when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21052](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

Recommendation 24 additionally recommended that Standing Orders should be changed to allow for an ‘acting’ SPCB member in circumstances where an SPCB member is taking parental leave.³⁵ The SPPA Committee concluded it would not bring forward any proposals to change Standing Orders to give effect to the recommendation.⁴¹ This is primarily due to its consideration that such a change may require consideration of changes to the Scotland Act 1998.⁴¹ It explained in its 4th Report of 2026:

“ In relation to the second recommendation – ‘acting’ SPCB membership – the Committee noted that the Scotland Act 1998 Act does not provide for temporary or acting members of the SPCB. Paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 of the 1998 Act sets out the terms of membership of the SPCB, which essentially means that once appointed to the SPCB that membership is retained until the person either resigns or is removed from office by resolution of the parliament (or ceases to be a member other than by virtue of dissolution). [...] Taking these matters into account the Committee considered that as members remain members of the SPCB unless they resign or are removed by resolution of the Parliament, as set out in the 1998 Act, this gives security of tenure for members of the SPCB and also certainty to members, the Parliament and the public given the important role of the SPCB. The Committee considered that having provisions in Standing Orders which could allow for acting members would be at odds with this given the importance of the role of membership of the SPCB, responsibilities and liabilities of the SPCB and the accountability of its members both potentially individually and as part of the SPCB as a distinct legal entity.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴¹

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee inquiry into committee effectiveness

The SPPA Committee announced an inquiry into committee effectiveness in February 2024.⁴² This inquiry followed a preliminary evidence session on committee effectiveness and consideration of elected conveners.⁴³ The aim of the inquiry was to establish whether there were any changes to the Parliament's practices and procedures that could help committees to work more effectively. In support of this aim, the Committee sought to assess:⁴²

- the structure of committees and possible changes to committee structures,
- the cultural change that introducing elected conveners could support, and
- how committees evaluate their work and whether a change in approach to evaluation could support committee effectiveness.

As discussed in the section on [The Scottish Parliament Gender Sensitive Audit](#), the SPPA Committee decided to continue its consideration of rule changes in response to the Gender Sensitive Audit as part of its inquiry into committee effectiveness. The SPPA Committee additionally agreed to ensure that any rule changes to Standing Orders that it proposes provides that, as a minimum, there should be no single sex committees.⁴² These changes were considered as part of the exploration of committee structures (see section on [Rule changes related to the Gender Sensitive Audit](#) for further detail).

The SPPA Committee published its report, [Strengthening committees' effectiveness](#), on 2 October 2025.¹² The report summarised the evidence the Committee received and heard, and set out its conclusions on a range of issues, including committee culture, workload, support and training, committee size, public engagement, and the role of conveners.¹² It also proposed that revisions to Standing Orders be considered in the following areas:¹²

- [Introduction of elected conveners](#)
- [Committee size and workload](#)
- [Outreach and engagement work of committees](#)
- [Novel ways of working](#)
- [Evaluating committee performance](#).

The remainder of this section explores each area where the SPPA Committee recommended changes to the Standing Orders.

Introduction of elected conveners

Conveners of Scottish Parliament committees are responsible for chairing committee

meetings.¹⁴ Under the arrangements in place until the 7th Edition of the Standing Orders, the Parliament decided on a motion of the Parliamentary Bureau the political party whose members are eligible to be convener of each committee.¹⁴ The members of that committee then decided who is to be the convener.¹⁴ The SPPA Committee described this process in its report *Strengthening committees' effectiveness* as a "formality", noting that:

“ Under the current system for appointing conveners, committee membership nominations are made by the parties. Under normal circumstances, the party whose members are eligible to be the convener will already have decided which of its members on the committee is to be the convener. The choice of convener made by the Committee is usually therefore only a formality.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

The SPPA Committee identified the question of whether there would be merit in introducing a system of elected conveners (whereby conveners are chosen by the whole Parliament rather than by committee members) as one of the key questions it explored during its committee effectiveness inquiry.¹² In considering this question, the Committee took account of the systems of elected conveners in the House of Commons (where such office-holders are known as "chairs") and in the Senedd Cymru.¹² It also considered previous SPPA Committee work on committees and elected conveners, none of which had recommended taking forward proposals to provide for elected conveners.¹² This previous work comprised the [Session 4 SPPA Committee inquiry into the election of committee conveners \(2015\)](#) and the [Session 4 SPPA Committee inquiry into committee reform \(2016\)](#).¹²

The SPPA Committee also considered the recommendations of the Commission on Parliamentary Reform, a commission established by the Session 5 Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, Ken Macintosh MSP, to consider how the Parliament scrutinises legislation, how the committee system functions, and the extent of the Parliament's independence from the Scottish Government.⁴⁴ The Commission, unlike the prior SPPA Committee inquiries, recommended that the Parliament move to a system of elected conveners, concluding that doing so "would empower conveners and help committees to deliver more effective scrutiny".⁴⁴ The Session 5 SPPA Committee considered the Commission's recommendations but, on the issue of elected conveners, concluded there was "insufficient support" among MSPs to take the recommendation forward.⁴⁵

Consideration of elected conveners during Session 6

Prior to initiating its committee effectiveness inquiry, the SPPA Committee consulted MSPs, the Parliamentary Bureau and the Conveners' Group on the issue of elected conveners in February 2024.⁴² Although a majority of respondents indicated support for introducing elected conveners, the Committee noted that the responses did not indicate "a clear view" on the additional issues consulted upon (such as how candidates should be nominated, what method of election should be used, and what rules should govern the removal of conveners).¹² The Committee therefore decided to incorporate its consideration of these matters into its committee effectiveness inquiry.¹² That inquiry also considered, as a further matter that had not featured in the earlier consultation, whether conveners should receive additional remuneration for their role.⁴²

Recommendation for elected conveners in Strengthening committees' effectiveness

The SPPA Committee's committee effectiveness inquiry concluded that the convener is "central to a committee operating effectively".¹² To strengthen the role, the Committee recommended that a dedicated support and training programme for conveners be established from the start of Session 7, overseen by the Conveners' Group (i.e., the group composed of the conveners of all Scottish Parliament committees, chaired by the Presiding Officer).¹²

On the question of how conveners are appointed, the Committee noted in the Strengthening committees' effectiveness report that:

“ [...] being elected by the whole chamber can bring confidence and visibility to the role and a sense of legitimacy and accountability for a Convener for the activities of their committee. It can also assist in the perception by the public that committees operate independently from the Government and have a distinct identity.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

The Committee's conclusions on elected conveners and remuneration were set out as follows in the Strengthening committees' effectiveness report:

“ Having looked at the evidence in the round, we consider that the time is right to allow an opportunity for the whole Parliament to consider whether there should be elected Conveners in the next parliamentary session. [...] We do not, however, consider that the case for remunerating conveners has been made. We do not consider it is necessary for conveners to receive an additional payment in order to enhance the status of the role. Furthermore, at a time of financial constraint it would not be appropriate, or send out the right message, for public money to be directed towards additional payments for a parliamentary role. The Committee recommends that if an elected convener process was agreed to by Parliament, it should be implemented from the start of the next Parliamentary session and that a review of the system should be conducted before the session ends. The issue of Convener remuneration should be considered as part of this review.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

Alongside this recommendation, the SPPA Committee published a [model procedure](#) for electing conveners based on the approach used in the Senedd Cymru with a view to gauging the views of MSPs on the proposal before bringing forward Standing Order changes.¹²

Rule changes for elected conveners at the Scottish Parliament

The SPPA Committee published its proposals for Standing Order changes to implement the elected conveners procedure in its 8th Report of 2026.⁴⁶ Those changes gave effect to the model procedure set out in the Strengthening committees' effectiveness report. The Parliament approved the changes when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21049](#) by division, and the changes came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

In its 8th Report of 2026, the SPPA Committee reiterated its recommendation from Strengthening committees' effectiveness that the Standing Order changes should be reviewed during the first half of Session 7.⁴⁶ Whilst the Strengthening committees' effectiveness report had indicated that the remuneration of conveners should be considered as part of that review, the 8th Report of 2026 indicated that the review would also provide an opportunity to consider the rules regarding the appointment of deputy and temporary conveners.⁴⁶

The changes to the Standing Orders establish a new procedure for electing the conveners of subject and mandatory committees by the whole Parliament.⁴⁶ The overarching framework for the election of conveners is set out in the amended Rule 12.1 (on Conveners of committees). The election procedure itself is provided for by a new Rule 11.10B. There are also technical and consequential amendments to Rule 6.3 (on membership of committees) and Rule 12.1.

The following sections explain the rule changes and the procedure by which committee conveners will be elected during Session 7:

- [Framework for electing committee conveners](#)
- [Election procedure](#)
- [Technical and consequential amendments to provisions on committee membership and conveners.](#)

Framework for electing committee conveners

New paragraphs 2A to 2L inserted into Rule 12.1 set out the overarching framework for the election of conveners.⁴⁶

In its 8th Report of 2026, the SPPA Committee confirmed that the rule changes preserve the existing procedures for the choice of convener by committees other than subject or mandatory committees (e.g., Bill committees tasked with taking certain stages of a Bill) and for the choice of deputy and temporary conveners.⁴⁶ This is reflected in new paragraph 2A of Rule 12.1, which clarifies that the new provisions apply only to conveners of subject and mandatory committees.⁴⁶

Paragraphs 2B to 2L then establish the timing, date, location, nomination process and nomination deadline for convener elections, along with rules on concurrent elections, unopposed elections and committee membership.⁴⁶

An election must take place no later than 10 sitting days after a committee is established or a convener becomes vacant.⁴⁶ The date, time and location of the vote are appointed by Parliament on a motion of the Parliamentary Bureau.⁴⁶ Where Parliament has already determined which party is eligible to hold a convener, nominations must come from a member of that party but must be seconded by a member of a different party or an independent member.⁴⁶ Where the convener is reserved for members not representing any political party, equivalent nomination rules apply.⁴⁶

Where more than one convener election is running concurrently, a member may not be nominated for more than one committee.⁴⁶ Nominations must be submitted in writing

to the Clerk no later than one hour before the voting period begins.⁴⁶ If only one nomination is received and no member objects, that candidate is elected without a ballot being held.⁴⁶ Once elected, the convener automatically becomes a member of the relevant committee and holds office for the duration of the committee, unless they resign, are removed by Parliament on a motion of the committee, or cease to be an MSP other than by dissolution.⁴⁶

Election procedure

New Rule 11.10B sets out the detailed procedure for convener elections. All elections are conducted by secret ballot, supervised by a person designated by the Presiding Officer.⁴⁶ A result is valid only if more than one quarter of all MSPs participate, counting those who vote for a candidate, against a candidate, or to abstain.⁴⁶ Each candidate may appoint a fellow member as a scrutineer to monitor the count and request a recount; the Clerk may refuse such a request only if they consider it unreasonable.⁴⁶

The voting method varies according to the number of candidates. Where there is only one candidate, members vote for, against, or to abstain, and the candidate must receive a simple majority of votes in their favour to be elected.⁴⁶ Where there are two candidates, members vote for one or abstain, and the candidate with more votes wins.⁴⁶ Where there are more than two candidates, a preferential voting system applies: members rank candidates in order of preference, and a candidate is elected outright if they receive more first-preference votes than all other candidates combined.⁴⁶ If no candidate reaches that threshold, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated and their votes redistributed to remaining candidates according to next preferences.⁴⁶ This process of elimination and redistribution continues until one candidate has more votes than all remaining candidates combined.⁴⁶

If no candidate is elected (for example, because the quorum is not met, or because the preferential voting process produces no winner) the Presiding Officer announces that fact to the Parliament and the Parliamentary Bureau must arrange a further election as soon as possible.⁴⁶ Where the preferential count concludes with one remaining candidate who still does not have more votes than those cast against them, only the candidate who received the highest number of votes in that count is eligible to stand in the subsequent election.⁴⁶ Following a declaration by the Presiding Officer that a candidate has been elected, or that no candidate has been elected, the Clerk destroys all ballot papers.⁴⁶

Technical and consequential amendments

Existing provisions in Rule 12.1 governing the choice of conveners for committees other than subject and mandatory committees (e.g., Bill committees) are preserved by minor amendments to paragraphs 6 to 8A of that Rule.⁴⁶ A further minor amendment to Rule 12.1.13 removes the existing provision requiring a committee meeting to be chaired by the deputy convener for the purpose of choosing a convener, since that function will now be performed by the Parliament rather than the committee itself.⁴⁶

The amendments to Rule 6.3 make three related changes: Rule 6.3.1 is amended to clarify that the elected convener of a subject or mandatory committee becomes a member of that committee upon election; Rule 6.3.2 is amended to make explicit that the total number of members of a committee includes the convener; and Rule 6.3.5 is amended to disapply from such conveners the general provisions governing the duration of committee membership.⁴⁶

Committee size and workload

As part of its committee effectiveness inquiry, the SPPA Committee considered whether changes to committee structures could improve the effectiveness of committees, and what factors affect the capacity and workload of committees.^x The Strengthening committees' effectiveness report concluded that "smaller committees could be more flexible and adapt more readily to changing work and priorities" and that "some committees' workloads were dominated by the consideration of legislation, leaving insufficient time for other work".¹² The report included three recommendations to amend the Standing Orders: to reduce the maximum committee size, to change the rules on the last date by which Members' Bills can be introduced, and to amend the rules on committees meeting in private at the same time as Chamber proceedings.¹²

Each of the proposed changes was set out in the SPPA Committee's 3rd Report of 2026.⁴⁰ The Parliament approved the changes when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21053](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶ The following sections explain the changes now provided for in the 7th Edition of Standing Orders:

- [Reduction of maximum committee size](#)
- [Introduction of Members' Bills](#)
- [Committees meeting in private at the same time as the Chamber.](#)

Reduction of maximum committee size

The SPPA Committee concluded in its Strengthening committees' effectiveness report:

“ We think that a new approach is needed to setting the size of committees. We support the concerns raised that larger committees are exacerbating the issue of members serving on more than one committee and changes being made to the membership of committees. [...] We also agree with the concerns expressed that larger committees present practical issues with meeting management and ensuring there are opportunities to probe more deeply into issues. The Committee is of the view that to address these issues smaller committees should be established at the start of the next session. We recommend that a change is made to Standing Orders to reduce the maximum number of members for subject and mandatory committees down from fifteen to ten members. We recommend that committees should normally have a maximum of seven members.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

^x SPICe published an extended [blog](#) explaining the statistical analysis conducted in support of the SPPA Committee's exploration of committee workload (including legislation and referred work), size, structure, and remit.

In its 3rd Report of 2026, the SPPA Committee proposed giving effect to this recommendation by replacing "15" with "10" in Rule 6.3.2 of the Standing Orders, which provides for the minimum and maximum number of committee members.⁴⁰ Rule 6.3.2 now reads:

“ Each committee other than a Private Bill Committee or a Hybrid Bill Committee shall have at least 5 but not more than 10 members.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴⁰

Introduction of Members' Bills

Committees have significant responsibilities in relation to the scrutiny and amendment of legislation introduced to the Parliament. A second area in which the SPPA Committee proposed Standing Order changes as part of its consideration of committee size and workload was the deadline for introducing Members' Bills.

Rule 9.14.15 of the Standing Orders (until the 7th Edition) provided that Members' Bills must be introduced by the first sitting day^{xi} in June — or, in exceptional cases with the consent of the Parliamentary Bureau, by the last sitting day in September — in the year preceding the next ordinary general election, in order to be considered by the Parliament during that parliamentary session.¹⁴

SPICe analysis of the time taken to pass Bills indicated that the median time to pass a Bill has been increasing.⁴⁷ During Session 6, up to 2 October 2025, the median number of days to pass a Bill was 305 days.⁴⁷ Ordinary general elections to the Scottish Parliament are held on the first Thursday in May in the fifth calendar year following the year in which the previous ordinary general election took place, and in previous sessions the Parliament has completed its business approximately six weeks before the election.² Under the pre-amendment Standing Orders, Members' Bills introduced close to the final introduction deadline would therefore have been under pressure to complete all scrutiny and legislative stages in less than the median time taken for Bills to pass.

The SPPA Committee subsequently concluded in the Strengthening committees' effectiveness report:

^{xi} Under Rule 2.1.3 of the Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament, a sitting day is any day when the office of the Clerk is open but not when the Parliament is in recess or dissolved.¹⁴

“ It is probably not realistic to expect there to be a significant reduction in the amount of legislation both primary and secondary referred to committees. Both the Scottish Government and individual Members have the right to pursue their own legislative priorities by introducing Bills and seeking to amend legislation at Stage 2. Similarly, committees have the right, and obligation, to give proper scrutiny to that legislation. With these circumstances in mind, we consider that the deadline should be brought forward for when Members Bills must be introduced by in a parliamentary session. We suggest that the deadline be moved from the first sitting day in June in the calendar year proceeding a general election to the first sitting day in December in the third year of a parliamentary session. Whilst this reduces the time for Members to introduce their own legislation we consider that this could potentially reduce some of the pressure of legislation on committees in the final part of the parliamentary session as it would bring forward committee consideration of members bills.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

In its 3rd Report of 2026, the SPPA Committee proposed amending Rule 9.14.15 so that Members' Bills must be introduced by the first sitting day in December in the third year of a parliamentary session, or — in exceptional cases with the consent of the Parliamentary Bureau — by the last sitting day in March in the calendar year preceding that in which the next ordinary Scottish Parliament general election is due to be held. ⁴⁰

Committees meeting in private at the same time as the Chamber

Rule 12.3.3B of the Standing Orders (until the 7th Edition) provided that a committee meeting may only be held while a meeting of the Parliament is in progress if the Parliament so decides on a motion of the Parliamentary Bureau. ¹⁴

In Strengthening committees' effectiveness, the SPPA Committee recommended that more time should be allocated in the parliamentary week to committees, and proposed that the Standing Orders be amended to allow committees to meet in private at the same time as the Chamber is sitting (except when the Chamber is considering Stage 3 of a Bill, the final stage of a private Bill, or there is a meeting of a Committee of the Whole Parliament). ¹²
The Committee stated:

“ This new provision will be particularly useful for committees' consideration of draft reports, which normally take place in private. However, as we have discussed earlier in the report, we consider there is value in committees building in more time to discuss their objectives and to reflect on their future work programme, and to build a sense of collective purpose. Also to discuss lines of questioning and generate more ownership of this among Members where they wish to do so. Allowing more opportunities for private meetings will help facilitate more time for these discussions.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

In its 3rd Report of 2026, the SPPA Committee brought forward amendments to Rule 12.3.3B to give effect to this recommendation. ⁴⁰

Outreach and engagement work of committees

The Session 6 Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee published its report, A blueprint for participation - embedding deliberative democracy in the work of the Scottish Parliament, on 22 May 2025.⁴⁸ This report considered how to enable engagement and participation between the public and Parliament.⁴⁸ It also indicated that the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee was of the view that People's Panels should be embedded into committees' working practices.^{xii 48}

The SPPA Committee considered this recommendation during the Committee effectiveness inquiry and stated in its report on Strengthening Committees' effectiveness:

“ We recognise and support the call by the Citizen Participation and Petitions Committee that deliberative democracy, and specifically the use of People's Panels, be embedded in the work of committees as a part of wider participation approaches used by committees. We recommend that Standing Orders is updated to provide for an additional dedicated Committee debate slot following a People's Panel as detailed in the CPPPC Blueprint for Participation. We also recognise and support the Citizen Participation and Petitions Committee's recommendation that People's Panels be part of a wider package of participation approaches used by committees.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

The SPPA Committee's 3rd Report of 2026 proposed Standing Orders changes to insert into Rule 5.6 (which provides for how the Parliamentary Bureau handles special cases of Parliamentary business) a requirement for there to be a Committee debate slot following the conclusion of a People's Panel.⁴⁰

The Parliament approved the changes when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21053](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

Novel ways of working

The SPPA Committee considered how committees could use tools or provisions currently available to them in Standing Orders in more innovative ways.¹² This led the Committee to consider amended provisions for joint committee meetings and the hosting of members from other committees.¹² The Strengthening committees' effectiveness report summarised some of the evidence received on these approaches:

xii The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee defined People's Panels (alongside Citizens' Assemblies) as "Larger or smaller groups of people, selected to be broadly representative of the wider population, who are invited to consider a topic together and come up with recommendations".⁴⁸

“ Another approach taken by committees to date to deal with cross-cutting issues has been to hold joint committee meetings to discuss a cross-cutting issue across broad perspectives. This has included the work of the Criminal Justice Committee, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and Social Justice and Social Security Committee on tackling drug deaths and drug harms. Whilst a number of committees collaborating together has proved successful, there were some calls for more flexibility in how this approach should operate in practice. The Social Justice and Social Security Committee, in its written submission, highlighted the current requirement in Standing Orders that resulted in three members of each committee needing to be present for the meeting to be quorate and enable the committee to take decisions or vote. They referenced one particular instance where one of the committees attending the joint meeting did not meet the quorate requirements. The attending members from that committee had to be considered as ‘visiting members’ which meant that they were unable to attend the private part of the meeting. [...] During the inquiry, we heard of another approach used by some other legislatures to cross-committee working which was less resource intensive than holding joint committee meetings. This involved the ‘hosting of members’. Under this approach Members are formally invited in their capacity as a committee member to attend another committee’s meetings and are granted similar permissions to the members of the committee they are being hosted with.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

In Strengthening committees' effectiveness, the SPPA Committee recommended that the Standing Orders be amended to reduce the number of members required to be present from each individual committee at a joint committee meeting, and that a mechanism for the hosting of members from other committees be placed in the Standing Orders.¹²

Each of the proposed changes was set out in the SPPA Committee's 3rd Report of 2026.⁴⁰ The Parliament approved the changes when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21053](#), and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

The following sections explain the changes now provided for in the 7th Edition of the Standing Orders:

- [Joint committee meeting quorum](#)
- [Visiting committee members](#).

Joint committee meeting quorum

Previously, Rule 12.2.1 of the Standing Orders required that at least three members of each committee be present for a joint committee meeting to be quorate and for the committee to proceed to consider business or vote.¹⁴ In its 3rd Report of 2026, the SPPA Committee proposed reducing this threshold.⁴⁰

Rule 12.2.1 now refers to paragraph 12.2.1A, which sets quorum requirements for joint committee meetings under Rule 6.14. A joint meeting cannot proceed to business or voting unless at least two members from each committee are present, and at least four members are present in total.⁴⁰

Visiting committee members

New Rule 6.3C introduces a formal mechanism for the hosting of members from other committees.⁴⁰ Under this provision, a committee may unanimously decide to invite a member of another committee to participate in a meeting as a visiting committee member in relation to a specified item of business.⁴⁰ Any such decision must be communicated in writing to the visiting committee member and published.⁴⁰ Whilst a visiting committee member is not regarded as a member of the host committee for the purposes of the Standing Orders (and does not have the right to vote) they may participate in any consideration of the specified item of business, including where that consideration is taken in private.⁴⁰

Evaluating committee performance

As part of the committee effectiveness inquiry, SPPA Committee considered how committees evaluate their work and whether a change in approach to evaluation could support committee effectiveness.¹²

Until the 7th Edition of Standing Orders, there was no requirement for committees to set out their aims and assess their progress in meeting their objectives.¹⁴ However, each subject and mandatory committee is (and was) required under Rule 12.9 to submit an annual report setting out its annual activities including how it has taken account of equal opportunities in its work.¹⁴ The SPPA Committee concluded evaluation of how committees have met its objectives should be required of committees, and stated in its report on Strengthening committees' effectiveness:

“ We recommend that Standing Orders is amended to place a requirement in a committee’s annual report to set out how effectively the committee has conducted its scrutiny and what this has achieved. This approach will encourage accountability and allow committees collectively to learn from each other and informal approaches to future work.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2025¹²

The SPPA Committee's 3rd Report of 2026 proposed that Rule 12.9 is amended to additionally require that committees' annual reports include information on how effectively committees have conducted its scrutiny function and what the outcomes have been of that scrutiny.⁴⁰ The Committee's 3rd Report of 2026 also noted that:

“ Further internal guidance, drafted by Clerks, is currently provided to committees which sets out the specifics of what annual reports should contain. The Committee expects that this guidance will be updated to incorporate further details on what this new provision for the annual reports will require in practice.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026⁴⁰

The SPPA Committee's proposals for amendments to the Standing Orders governing committee annual reports were set out in its 3rd Report of 2026.⁴⁰ The Parliament approved the changes when it agreed to [Motion S6M-21053](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

Miscellaneous changes

The SPPA Committee published a number of further proposals for changes to Standing Orders during Session 6. These proposals were not connected to committee inquiries or broader themes, but arose from the Committee's standing remit to keep the Parliament's procedures under review. They covered the following areas:

- [Financial Memorandums and Hybrid Bill procedures](#)
- [References to Her Majesty](#)
- [Deadlines for lodging amendments to public Bills](#)
- [Election of Presiding Officer](#)
- [Scottish Parliament Corporate Body supported bodies](#)
- [Forms of address](#)
- [Referral of Bills at Stage 2](#)
- [Appointment of Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Members](#)
- [Location of committee meetings](#)
- [Decision and voting.](#)

Financial Memorandums and Hybrid Bill procedures

The SPPA Committee's 3rd report of 2022 set out a number of miscellaneous changes relating to prior Session 5 amendments to Standing Orders on Financial Memorandums and Hybrid Bill procedures.¹¹ The miscellaneous proposals aimed to ensure consistency with the updated Guidance on Public Bills, update cross-references, and correct a drafting error.¹¹ The Parliament agreed to the changes in [Motion S6M-03030](#) and the changes took effect in the Standing Orders 6th Edition 5th Revision on 11 February 2022.⁷

References to Her Majesty

Following the death of Her Majesty The Queen and prior to the coronation of His Majesty, the SPPA Committee proposed in its 9th report of 2023 that all references to "Her Majesty" in Standing Orders be amended to "His Majesty".⁴⁹ The Parliament agreed to the changes in [Motion S6M-08720](#) and the changes took effect in the Standing Orders 6th Edition 8th Revision on 4 May 2023.⁵⁰

Deadlines for lodging amendments to public Bills

The SPPA Committee's 1st Report of 2026, published on 9 January 2026, outlined revised deadlines for the lodging of amendments to [public Bills](#) (i.e., those introduced by MSPs and dealing with matters such as public policy and the general law).⁵¹ The report summarised correspondence from the Parliamentary Bureau requesting a temporary amendment to Standing Orders to bring forward the daily lodging deadline (from 4.30 pm to 2.30 pm) on all days except the final lodging day, which would remain at 12pm.⁵¹ The purpose of this change is to enable the Parliament's legislation clerks to prepare the daily list of amendments earlier in the day rather than late in the evening.⁵¹

The SPPA Committee's report set out proposals for a new Temporary Rule 6 to give effect to the arrangements requested by the Parliamentary Bureau.⁵¹ The Parliament approved these changes through [Motion S6M-20373](#), and they came into force in the Standing Orders (6th Edition, 11th Revision) on 19 January 2026.⁵² Temporary Rule 6 will remain in place until 21 December 2026 and will be reviewed by the SPPA Committee during Session 7.⁵² The earlier lodging deadline applies to amendments to public Bills at Stage 2, Stage 3, Reconsideration Stage, and to Budget Bills.⁵¹

Election of Presiding Officer

The SPPA Committee set out a couple of proposed rule changes related to the election of the Presiding Officer in its 7th Report of 2026.¹⁵ These rule changes were considered outside of the Session 6 SPPA Committee's [consideration of rule changes related to the Gender Sensitive Audit](#).

The first of these relate to the restriction, required by the Scotland Act 1998, that ensures the Presiding Officers (i.e., the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers) are not all from the same party. Rule 3.2.7 of the Standing Orders gives effect to this requirement and stated (until the 6th Edition, 12th Revision):

“ Where there are 2 elected deputy Presiding Officers who represent the same political party, a member representing that party is not eligible for nomination as a candidate for appointment as Presiding Officer. The person chairing the meeting shall reject any such nomination as being invalid.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹⁴

The SPPA Committee noted in its report that Rule 3.2.7 operates correctly when a new Presiding Officer is elected mid-session while two Deputy Presiding Officers are already in post.¹⁵ However, it identified an anomaly in how the rule applies at the start of a new parliamentary session, when the previous session's Deputy Presiding Officers remain in office at the point a new Presiding Officer must be elected.¹⁵ In such circumstances, if both Deputy Presiding Officers were from the same party, Rule 3.2.7 would have prevented the Parliament from electing another MSP from that party as Presiding Officer.¹⁵ The SPPA Committee's report explains the rationale for changing Rule 3.2.7:

“ [...], that is not how it should work. Under the Act, the previous-session DPOs automatically lose office as soon as a new PO is elected – so there is no need for their party-affiliation to restrict which MSPs are eligible to stand for election as PO. Instead, it should be the other way around – that is, once someone has been elected as the new PO, it is that person's party affiliation that should limit who can stand to be a DPO.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹⁵

To address the anomaly, the SPPA Committee proposed changes to Standing Orders to clarify that Rule 3.2.7 applies when a new Presiding Officer is being elected mid-session.

¹⁵ The amended Rule 3.2.7 reads:

“ In the case of the election of a Presiding Officer under paragraph 2, where there are 2 elected deputy Presiding Officers who represent the same political party, a member representing that party is not eligible for nomination as a candidate for appointment as Presiding Officer. The person chairing the meeting shall reject any such nomination as being invalid.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹⁶

The second proposed rule change relating to the election of the Presiding Officer during a session (as opposed to at the beginning of a session) concerned the requirement for a person nominated for the office of Presiding Officer to have taken an oath of allegiance or solemn affirmation before beginning the voting period. ¹⁵ Rule 3.2.8 of the Standing Orders stated (until the 6th Edition, 12th Revision):

“ A person nominated as a candidate must take the oath of allegiance or make a solemn affirmation before the beginning of the voting period. If that nominated person has not done so, the person chairing the meeting shall reject that nominated person's nomination.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹⁵

The SPPA Committee indicated in its report that this rule was "unnecessary" given that "Rule 1.2.1 already ensures that a person who has not taken the oath or made a solemn affirmation cannot participate in any other proceedings". ¹⁵ The SPPA Committee proposed deleting Rule 3.2.8 to address this issue. ¹⁵

The Parliament approved the changes relating to the election of the Presiding Officer as proposed in the SPPA Committee's 7th Report of 2026 by agreeing to [Motion S6M-21050](#). The changes came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026. ¹⁶

Scottish Parliament Corporate Body supported bodies

The SPPA Committee in its 7th Report of 2026 proposed changes to Standing Orders providing for re-appointment of certain officeholders and the referral of certain documents laid by officeholders to parliamentary committees. ¹⁵

Specifically, the SPPA Committee proposed the deletion of Rule 3.11A and Rule 3A.1. ¹⁵

The Committee concluded that the rules providing for parliamentary approval of re-appointments to certain public offices^{xiii} are now redundant.¹⁵ Rule 3.11A, which applied the approval process to re-appointments under Rule 3.11, is no longer needed because legislation^{xiv} passed in 2010 removed the possibility of re-appointment for all posts covered by that rule.¹⁵ The same legislation also removed the possibility of re-appointment for the offices covered by Rule 3A.1, except for a one-off transitional allowance enabling existing members of the Standards Commission at that time to be reappointed for a limited period.¹⁵ No current member of the Standards Commission is eligible for re-appointment and as a result the transitional allowances have served their purpose.¹⁵

The Committee also proposed amendments to Rule 3A.6, which governs the referral of annual reports and strategic plans from SPCB-supported bodies to parliamentary committees.¹⁵ One amendment removes an obsolete cross-reference to a deleted rule.¹⁵ Another replaces the outdated list of SPCB-supported bodies with a new definition to ensure that all current and future SPCB-supported bodies are automatically captured.¹⁵ Under the revised rule, a “supported body” is defined as any body that is supported by the Parliamentary Corporation under its establishing legislation and is required to lay an annual report or strategic plan before the Parliament.¹⁵

The Parliament approved the changes relating to SPCB-supported bodies in [Motion S6M-21050](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

Forms of address

Rule 7.6.1 requires MSPs to be referred to in proceedings by their name (including any title they wish to use).¹⁵ It also allows certain office-holders (specifically the Presiding Officer, Deputy Presiding Officers and Scottish Ministers) to be referred to by their role titles as well as, or instead of, by name.¹⁵ In its 7th Report of 2026, the SPPA Committee proposed amendments to Rule 7.6.1 to clarify how additional office-holders may be referred to during parliamentary proceedings.¹⁵ The proposed clarifications concerned Deputy Presiding Officers, the Scottish Law Officers, and conveners of Scottish Parliament committees, so that Rule 7.6.1 would instead read:

xiii The posts referred to by the SPPA Committee are the Auditor General for Scotland, the Scottish Parliamentary Services Ombudsman, the Scottish Information Commissioner, the Children and Young Persons Commissioner for Scotland, the chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner and the Patient Safety Commissioner for Scotland.

xiv The specific Acts referred to in this sentence are the Scottish Parliamentary Commissions and Commissioners etc. Act 2010 and the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

“ Each member shall normally be referred to in any proceedings of the Parliament by name, except that— (a) the Presiding Officer shall normally be referred to as “Presiding Officer”; (b) a deputy Presiding Officer, when acting in that capacity, shall normally be referred to as “Presiding Officer”; (c) the First Minister, the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor General for Scotland shall normally be referred to by those titles; (d) other members of the Scottish Government, when acting in that capacity, shall normally be referred to by the titles of their ministerial roles or as “Cabinet Secretary” or “Minister”; (e) junior Scottish Ministers, when acting in that capacity, shall normally be referred to by the titles of their ministerial roles or as “Minister”; (f) the convener (or acting convener or deputy convener) of a committee, when participating in proceedings of the Parliament on behalf of the committee, shall normally be referred to as the convener (or acting convener or deputy convener) of the committee in question.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹⁵

The Parliament approved the changes in [Motion S6M-21050](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026. ¹⁶

Referral of Bills at Stage 2

Rule 9.7.1 sets out how the Parliamentary Bureau must decide where Stage 2 of a Bill will be taken if the Parliament has agreed to its general principles at Stage 1. ¹⁴ This rule provides that the Parliamentary Bureau refers the Bill back to the lead committee for Stage 2 proceedings. ¹⁴ However, Standing Orders (up until 6th Edition, 12th Revision) provided that the Parliamentary Bureau may also by motion propose that Stage 2 of the Bill be taken entirely, or partly, either by a Committee of the Whole Parliament or by a committee (or committees) other than the lead committee. ¹⁴

The SPPA Committee’s 7th Report of 2026 identified that this did not allow Stage 2 to be split between the lead committee and another committee. ¹⁵ The Committee therefore proposed amendments to permit Stage 2 to be taken by the lead committee and one or more additional committees, with the motion specifying which provisions each committee will consider. ¹⁵ The amendments read:

“ If the Parliament has agreed to the Bill’s general principles, the Parliamentary Bureau shall— (a) refer the Bill back to the lead committee to take Stage 2 of the Bill; or (b) by motion propose that Stage 2 of the Bill be taken by— (i) a Committee of the Whole Parliament, (ii) a committee other than the lead committee, or (iii) more than one committee, in which case the motion should normally specify the provisions of the Bill to be taken by each committee.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹⁵

The Parliament approved the changes in [Motion S6M-21050](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026. ¹⁶

Appointment of Scottish Parliamentary Corporate

Body Members

The Session 6 SPPA Committee considered changes to Standing Orders to improve the gender balance of SPCB membership and eventually proposed changes to Standing Orders to require that Members intending to make nominations for SPCB membership give "due regard" for gender balance. The Session 6 SPPA Committee then considered rule changes to the procedure for elected Members to the SPCB after nominations are made.

Rule 11.10A sets out the procedure for electing MSPs to the SPCB.¹⁴ Rule 11.10A.19 of the Standing Orders (until 6th Edition, 12th Revision) provided that where an election process leaves a vacancy unfilled, another election shall be held.¹⁴ However, the SPPA Committee in its 7th Report of 2026 identified that Rule 3.8.1 also allows the Presiding Officer to appoint a member directly if a vacancy remains unfilled for 28 days.¹⁵ The SPPA Committee proposed clarifying the position in Standing Orders and stated in its 7th Report of 2026:

“ Taken together, these Rules leave it unclear at what point the PO is entitled to stop holding elections and resort instead to directly appointing a new SPCB member. It would be helpful to clarify this. The suggested approach is to qualify the requirement (in Rule 11.10A.19) that a further election immediately be held – and instead make this subject to the PO’s discretion. This avoids the need for a further election if, in the PO’s opinion, doing so would be pointless (e.g. because it is already clear that there are no further MSPs willing to put themselves forward for election, or that the only MSPs willing to put themselves forward won’t secure a simple majority).”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹⁵

The SPPA Committee proposed that Rule 11.10A.19 instead read:

“ If an election under this Rule ends with a vacancy unfilled, the Presiding Officer shall decide whether to hold a further election under Rule 3.7 or to appoint a member under Rule 3.8.1, and announce that decision.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹⁵

The Parliament approved the changes in [Motion S6M-21050](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026.¹⁶

Location of committee meetings

The SPPA Committee, in its 10th Report of 2026, published proposals to amend Rule 12.3.2 which governs the location of committee meetings.¹³ Specifically, the SPPA Committee suggested in its report that Rule 12.3.2 be amended to make clear:

“

- that Bureau and Convener Group approval is not required if a committee meets in the Parliament building at Holyrood (but such approval is required for a meeting anywhere else in Scotland); and”
- that the options for a committee to meet in-person or on a hybrid basis apply whether the committee meets in the building or elsewhere in Scotland.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹³

It therefore proposed that Rule 12.3.2 be amended to state:

“ A committee shall meet— (a) in the Parliament, Holyrood or, with the approval of the Parliamentary Bureau and the Conveners Group, at such other place in Scotland as it may decide, (all members meeting collectively at such place, or in part remotely by video conference hosted on such platform as may be provided by the Parliamentary corporation) or (b) wholly remotely, by video conference hosted on such platform as may be provided by the Parliamentary corporation.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹³

The Parliament approved the changes in [Motion S6M-21048](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026. ¹⁶

Decision and voting

The SPPA Committee’s 10th Report of 2026 proposed amendments to Rule 11.6, which governs divisions (voting), to clarify that the question on a motion to approve a Bill need only be put once. ¹³ The SPPA Committee stated in its report:

“ Rule 11.4.3 provides that if any member disagrees with the question put on a motion, an amendment to a motion or an amendment to a Bill, there shall immediately be a division. Rule 11.6.2 then says that, where a division is required, the Presiding Officer “shall repeat the question”. However, these Rules have not been adjusted to reflect changes made in consequence of the Scotland Act 2016 which made it necessary for any decision to pass a Bill (or approve it at Reconsideration Stage) to be taken by division. As a result, with any motion to pass (or approve) a Bill, the question need only be put once and a division held immediately.”

The Scottish Parliament, 2026¹³

The Parliament approved the changes in [Motion S6M-21048](#) and they came into force in the Standing Orders (7th Edition) on 11 May 2026. ¹⁶

Bibliography

- 1 The Scottish Parliament. (2024). Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/standing-orders> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 2 legislation.gov.uk. (1998). Scotland Act 1998. Retrieved from <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/46/contents> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 3 The Scottish Parliament. (2021, May 12). Standing Orders, 6th Edition. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/69ff878fad8d4c0aaeb2b2435f65c812.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 4 The Scottish Parliament. (2021, June 30). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 2nd Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/3052465825ca456e8ed66208f0ab0203.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 5 The Scottish Parliament. (2021, October 8). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 3rd Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/2148205a789a4a83b81f0f0c01e6971f.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 6 The Scottish Parliament. (2021, December 21). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 4th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/85ab3c991b0a4203b61534d830ada40c.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 7 The Scottish Parliament. (2022, February 11). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 5th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/423140cbf4eb478aa8ce23d7c1094118.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 8 The Scottish Parliament. (2022, April 1). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 6th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/5d38f9e0016f40f98a27181a9345e3d1.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 9 The Scottish Parliament. (2021). Official Report Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid): Tuesday, June 15, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/chamber-and-committees/official-report/what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-15-06-2021?meeting=13237&iob=119975> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 10 The Scottish Parliament. (2021, June 15). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 1st Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/5243c4c4ea694a85be066a8c449f2e7f.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]

- 11 The Scottish Parliament. (2022, February 1). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Orders Rule changes – Committee name and remit and miscellaneous changes. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPA/2022/2/1/f6edfc7d-2750-4fe1-b2a1-4236e57b69bd#694054b6-0978-11eb-b91a-000d3a23af40.dita> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 12 The Scottish Parliament. (2025, October 2). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Strengthening committees' effectiveness. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2025/10/2/391fce22-7a6a-4efb-b004-633df313ebac#6951dfff-ea0d-408d-ba60-09eb04f7651d.dita> [accessed 2 October 2025]
- 13 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, March 9). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Order rule changes - Miscellaneous and minor amendments. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2026/3/9/17edd191-51f7-47af-835e-fc5e84c5b3f8#Chapter-1> [accessed 29 April 2026]
- 14 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, April 1). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 12th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/cc60aebc894c480e8166952b33bae64c.ashx> [accessed 27 April 2026]
- 15 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, February 27). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Order Rule Changes - Miscellaneous and Minor Amendments. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2026/2/27/e6cd8bb9-06a4-46f5-a2d3-69d4a7a217b5#Chapter-1> [accessed 17 March 2026]
- 16 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, May 11). Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament 7th Edition. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/standing-orders/-/media/68a4464836e14e0ea048964a16cc41ab.ashx> [accessed 11 May 2026]
- 17 The Scottish Parliament. (2022). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee report on a proxy voting pilot. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2022/11/29/02d73591-f3fc-4ac8-9a4a-f51698d95ca5#Introduction> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 18 The Scottish Parliament. (2022). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Parliamentary procedures and practices inquiry. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/business-items/parliamentary-procedures-and-practices-inquiry> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 19 The Scottish Parliament. (2022). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Report on inquiry into Future Parliamentary procedures and practices. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2022/7/6/e5cd2e5a-9b82-41e1-b787-d5d3f169b22e-2#0b9ba056-9396-43d3-869d-001ae1e0d9ac.dita> [accessed 29 May 2025]

- 20 The Scottish Parliament. (2022). Standing Orders Temporary Rule Change – Proxy Voting Pilot. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-07078> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 21 The Scottish Parliament. (2023, January 4). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 7th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/9ee74ed53aed471981000a1cfd7c8a9.ashx> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 22 Aitken, C. (2023). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee SPICe paper: Summary of the proxy voting scheme’s operation to the date of 6 October 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/~media/committ/6977/newsummaryschemecfvs> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 23 The Scottish Parliament. (2023). Standing Order Rule changes - Proxy Voting. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2023/12/7/5d4978b1-fd7e-405f-9609-3f8276e1c806-1#Introduction> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 24 The Scottish Parliament. (2023, December 22). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 9th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/cc6e0f21031445aca3e435dd80d68d52.ashx> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 25 The Scottish Parliament. (2024). Proxy voting scheme. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/proxy-voting-scheme> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 26 Cowie, G., & Torrance, D. (2020). Devolution: The Sewel Convention. Retrieved from <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8883/CBP-8883.pdf> [accessed 24 February 2026]
- 27 The Scottish Parliament. (2024). Sewel Convention. Retrieved from <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/sewel-convention> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 28 The Scottish Parliament. (2022, September 22). Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee: The Impact of Brexit on Devolution. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/CEEAC/2022/9/22/1b7a03d8-e93c-45a4-834a-180d669f7f42#Introduction> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 29 The Scottish Parliament. (2022, April 27). Letter to Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee from Liam McArthur MSP, Chair of the Conveners Group. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/correspondence/2022/conveners-group-legislative-consent-correspondence-27-april-2022.pdf> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 30 The Scottish Parliament. (2023, February 15). Letter to the Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee from the Convener of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/correspondence/2023/ceeac-legislative-consent-motions-15-february-2023.pdf> [accessed 29 May 2025]

- 31 The Scottish Parliament. (2023). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Legislative Consent Memorandums. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/business-items/legislative-consent-memorandums> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 32 The Scottish Parliament. (2024, June 20). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Order rule changes - Procedures on consent in relation to UK Parliament Bills. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2024/6/20/eec7c4e4-0316-4654-a0b3-54cc9cbffa47#Introduction> [accessed 29 May 2025]
- 33 The Scottish Parliament. (2024, July 2). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 10th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/09d6d8adf8cd4dd3be3b274fa800a361.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 34 The Scottish Parliament. (2023). Ensuring equal representation and participation. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/equal-representation-and-participation> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 35 McKay, F. (2023, March). A Parliament for All: Report of the Parliament's Gender Sensitive Audit. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/spcb/gender-sensitive-audit.pdf> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 36 The Scottish Parliament. (2023, March 6). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Agenda: 09 March 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.parlamaid-alba.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/meetings/2023/sppacs6234> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 37 The Scottish Parliament. (2023, October 23). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Agenda: 26 October 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.parlamaid-alba.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/meetings/2023/sppacs62317> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 38 The Scottish Parliament. (2023). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: The Scottish Parliament's Gender Sensitive Audit. Retrieved from <https://www.parlamaid-alba.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/business-items/parliaments-gender-sensitive-audit> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 39 The Scottish Parliament. (2024, November 12). Letter to the Presiding Officer from the Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. Retrieved from <https://www.parlamaid-alba.scot/-/media/files/committees/standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/gender-sensitive-audit.pdf> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 40 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, January 27). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Order rule changes arising from the Committee's report 'Strengthening committees' effectiveness'. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2026/1/27/ec2613f2-b8d8-4cde-a5b5-e79d4cb746e3#Introduction> [accessed 30 April 2026]

- 41 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, January 28). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Order Rule changes - Related to Gender Sensitive Audit recommendations on Parliamentary Bureau Membership, Election of Presiding Officer/Deputy Presiding Officers and SPCB Membership. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2026/1/28/b85bd585-d297-44f5-a838-523aead5e7e9#Introduction> [accessed 30 April 2026]
- 42 The Scottish Parliament. (2024). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Committee effectiveness. Retrieved from <https://www.parlamaid-alba.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/business-items/committee-effectiveness> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 43 The Scottish Parliament. (2024, February 29). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Agenda: 29 February 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.parlamaid-alba.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/meetings/2024/standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee-29-february-2024> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 44 Commission on Parliamentary Reform. (2017, June 20). Report of the Commission on Parliamentary Reform. Retrieved from <https://test123582.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/commissiononparliamentaryreformreport-june2017.pdf> [accessed 1 May 2026]
- 45 The Scottish Parliament. (2020, December 4). Letter from Convener Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee to the Presiding Officer on the Commission on Parliamentary Reform recommendations on conveners . Retrieved from <https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20240327040904/https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/108084.aspx> [accessed 1 May 2026]
- 46 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, March 2). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Orders rule changes - Elected Conveners. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2026/3/2/f2a12945-915a-432e-8a13-0e0ca8a0a46f#Introduction> [accessed 1 May 2026]
- 47 Burn-Murdoch, A. (2025, October 8). Exploring how busy committees are – can statistics help?. Retrieved from <https://spice-spotlight.scot/2025/10/08/exploring-how-busy-committees-are-can-statistics-help/> [accessed 1 May 2026]
- 48 The Scottish Parliament. (2025, May 22). Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee: A blueprint for participation - embedding deliberative democracy in the work of the Scottish Parliament. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/CPPP/2025/5/22/016edb5a-5804-4c9e-a709-65f6120d81b2#Introduction> [accessed 1 May 2026]
- 49 The Scottish Parliament. (2023, April 20). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Order Rule changes - minor amendments. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2023/4/20/eba337cd-fe47-4185-9ec7-8ae5b64c7c91#Chapter-1> [accessed 27 June 2025]

- 50 The Scottish Parliament. (2023, May 4). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 8th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/559f76e1d8c84ebe97817dea5e900de8.ashx> [accessed 27 June 2025]
- 51 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, January 9). Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Standing Order Rule changes - lodging deadlines for public bills. Retrieved from <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/SPPAC/2026/1/9/4047dd18-9c3f-4613-8015-2396f39c25f5#Introduction> [accessed 27 April 2026]
- 52 The Scottish Parliament. (2026, January 19). Standing Orders, 6th Edition, 11th Revision. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-rules-and-guidance/-/media/24b42bf2da6742b4b8391a4738eb4385.ashx> [accessed 27 April 2026]

Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) Briefings are compiled for the benefit of the Members of the Parliament and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with MSPs and their staff who should contact Courtney Aitken on telephone number 85918 or Courtney.Aitken@Parliament.scot.

Members of the public or external organisations may comment on this briefing by emailing us at SPICe@parliament.scot. However, researchers are unable to enter into personal discussion in relation to SPICe Briefing Papers. If you have any general questions about the work of the Parliament you can email the Parliament's Public Information Service at info@parliament.scot. Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in SPICe briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

