

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

First Delegated Legislation Committee

MOTION IN THE NAMES OF CHRIS GRAYLING
AND DR THERESE COFFEY RELATING TO THE
ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Monday 26 October 2015

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STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT WILL GREATLY
FACILITATE THE PROMPT PUBLICATION OF
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IN GENERAL COMMITTEES

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The Committee consisted of the following Members:

Chair: GRAHAM STRINGER

† Barwell, Gavin (*Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household*)

Buck, Ms Karen (*Westminster North*) (Lab)

† Burns, Sir Simon (*Chelmsford*) (Con)

Campbell, Mr Gregory (*East Londonderry*) (DUP)

† Coffey, Dr Thérèse (*Deputy Leader of the House of Commons*)

† Coyle, Neil (*Bermondsey and Old Southwark*) (Lab)

† Duncan, Sir Alan (*Rutland and Melton*) (Con)

† Flynn, Paul (*Newport West*) (Lab)

† Freer, Mike (*Finchley and Golders Green*) (Con)

† Hall, Luke (*Thornbury and Yate*) (Con)

Hunt, Tristram (*Stoke-on-Trent Central*) (Lab)

† Jayawardena, Mr Ranil (*North East Hampshire*) (Con)

† Jones, Mr David (*Clwyd West*) (Con)

† Morris, Grahame M. (*Easington*) (Lab)

† Onn, Melanie (*Great Grimsby*) (Lab)

† Pincher, Christopher (*Tamworth*) (Con)

Robinson, Gavin (*Belfast East*) (DUP)

† Warburton, David (*Somerton and Frome*) (Con)

Ben Williams, *Committee Clerk*

† **attended the Committee**

First Delegated Legislation Committee

Monday 26 October 2015

[GRAHAM STRINGER *in the Chair*]

Motion in the Names of Chris Grayling and Dr Thérèse Coffey relating to the Electoral Commission

4.30 pm

The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Dr Thérèse Coffey): I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the motion, That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that Her Majesty will reappoint Anna Carragher as an Electoral Commissioner with effect from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2020.

It is great privilege to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer.

Anna Carragher has served as an electoral commissioner since 1 January 2015. Her current term of appointment ends on 31 December. The Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission has produced its second report of 2015, which relates to the motion.

Commissioners are appointed under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended by the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009. Under the Act, the Speaker's Committee has a responsibility to oversee the selection of candidates for appointment to the Electoral Commission. Commissioners are appointed for a fixed term, but the committee may recommend their reappointment where appropriate. The committee is not regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments but it has chosen to follow OCPA recommended best practice in its supervision of appointments. The OCPA code of practice for appointments to public bodies, which was published in April 2012, provides that no reappointment may be made without a satisfactory performance appraisal.

The committee's second report confirms that evidence of Anna Carragher's performance was submitted to the committee by Jenny Watson, the chair of the Electoral Commission. Ms Watson indicated that Ms Carragher's understanding of the complexities and sensitivities of

Northern Ireland's politics and society had been of immense value to the commission. She noted a number of issues facing the commission on which Ms Carragher's knowledge and understanding of Northern Ireland would be particularly valuable, such as the impact of the recent local government reorganisation in Northern Ireland and the move to greater transparency of loans and donations. Jenny Watson indicated that Ms Carragher has demonstrated acute understanding of the commission's wider priorities and had been able to draw on her experience of Northern Ireland in contributing to discussions on matters such as individual electoral registration.

The Speaker's Committee reported that, having considered Ms Watson's submissions, it was content to recommend Ms Carragher's reappointment. Once the committee has reached a decision, statute requires that the Speaker consults the leaders of the political parties represented at Westminster on the proposed reappointments. The statutory consultation provides an opportunity for the party leaders to comment but they are not required to do so. Their responses were published by the committee as an appendix to its report. Where the leader of a political party has changed since the consultation took place, new leaders have been approached to comment on this appointment, and no objections have been received.

If the appointment is made, Anna Carragher will continue to serve on the Electoral Commission until the end of 2020. I am sure that her expertise will continue to be appreciated by the commission in a period that will include the European Union referendum. I hope that Anna Carragher has the support of the Committee and of the House.

4.33 pm

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I will make some brief comments. The Labour party endorses, with full support, the reappointment of Anna Carragher as electoral commissioner with special responsibility for Northern Ireland. I further acknowledge the support from party leaders across the spectrum, including the Democratic Unionist party, the Ulster Unionist party, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour and Co-operative party, the Scottish National party and the Conservative party.

Question put and agreed to.

4.34 pm

Committee rose.