

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT
GENERAL COMMITTEES

Public Bill Committee

PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Twenty Seventh Sitting

Wednesday 30 January 2019

CONTENTS

Sittings motion agreed to.
Adjourned till Wednesday 27 February at Ten o'clock.

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the final version of the report should be clearly marked in a copy of the report—not telephoned—and must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons,

not later than

Sunday 3 February 2019

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The Committee consisted of the following Members:*Chairs:* †Ms NADINE DORRIES, ALBERT OWEN

Allan, Lucy (<i>Telford</i>) (Con)	Mills, Nigel (<i>Amber Valley</i>) (Con)
Bone, Mr Peter (<i>Wellingborough</i>) (Con)	† Norris, Alex (<i>Nottingham North</i>) (Lab/Co-op)
Charalambous, Bambos (<i>Enfield, Southgate</i>) (Lab)	Paisley, Ian (<i>North Antrim</i>) (DUP)
† Fletcher, Colleen (<i>Coventry North East</i>) (Lab)	Smith, Chloe (<i>Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office</i>)
† Foster, Kevin (<i>Torbay</i>) (Con)	† Stewart, Bob (<i>Beckenham</i>) (Con)
Harper, Mr Mark (<i>Forest of Dean</i>) (Con)	Wiggin, Bill (<i>North Herefordshire</i>) (Con)
† Khan, Afzal (<i>Manchester, Gorton</i>) (Lab)	
† Lee, Karen (<i>Lincoln</i>) (Lab)	Adam Mellows-Facer, <i>Committee Clerk</i>
Linden, David (<i>Glasgow East</i>) (SNP)	
† Matheson, Christian (<i>City of Chester</i>) (Lab)	† attended the Committee

Public Bill Committee

Wednesday 30 January 2019

[Ms NADINE DORRIES *in the Chair*]

Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill

10 am

The Chair: As usual, I ask Members to turn electronic devices off. I call Afzal Khan, the Member in charge of the Bill, to move the sittings motion that stands in his name on the amendment paper.

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): I beg to move,

That, notwithstanding the Order of the Committee of Wednesday 4 July 2018, during further proceedings on the Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill the Committee do next meet at 10.00 am on Wednesday 27 February and thereafter at 10.00 am on Wednesday 27 March and Wednesday 24 April.

It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries, and I thank Committee members for being here once again as I amend the sittings motion. I have proposed that the Committee meets once a month. Disappointingly, this Committee has been meeting every week for over a year and yet we still have not drawn any closer to a money resolution. I have pressed the Minister time and time again for an update, but have received no indication of any development. It is clear that the Government have no desire to prioritise this Bill.

Yesterday's vote reinforces that Brexit continues to dominate the parliamentary agenda. As such, I have moved a motion that will ensure that the Committee meets regularly enough to maintain emphasis on this important issue, but also ensure that we do not waste time unnecessarily. Although the Government wish to use delaying tactics, rest assured that I will not stop championing my Bill. I am fully aware that it has cross-party support, and therefore I will continue to encourage the Minister to seriously consider pressing ahead with it in order to produce the new boundaries that our democracy needs.

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): What a great pleasure it is to see you again in the Chair, Ms Dorries. Before I start, the Minister is obviously not in her place this morning. She has written to the Member in charge explaining why, and those reasons are entirely routine. Opposition Members send our best wishes to her given the entirely understandable reasons why she is not here, and perhaps the hon. Member for Torbay will convey those best wishes to the Minister and send her our continued support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton has been stoic in his determination to maintain a presence in this Committee. Having had discussions through the usual channels, he has now decided that we should meet less frequently. I will make two points in addressing the

Committee this morning: first, that the Committee will be meeting less frequently does not mean in any sense that the urgency or importance of the Bill is diminished or has gone away. We will maintain pressure on the Government to bring forward the orders on the existing proposed boundaries so that they can be agreed or disagreed to by the House as soon as possible. That urgency has not gone away, and we will continue to press for that.

My other point is that, as we head towards Brexit, the Government and the House are considering all the legislation, including secondary legislation, required for either a Brexit shaped by a deal or—dare I say it?—no-deal. The amount of work that the House is being asked to undertake is increasingly clear, particularly work on secondary and delegated legislation. It will continue for a good while after we leave the European Union. The management and consideration of delegated legislation is putting a lot of pressure on colleagues across the House.

I simply say to the Committee that such pressure once again emphasises the folly of reducing the capacity of the House by reducing the number of hon. Members in this place from 650 to 600, which is why it is important that my hon. Friend's Bill is given consideration. We are reducing the capacity of the House at a time when we should not be, and the legislature not being able to properly scrutinise the Government would be a bad thing for this House and for democratic scrutiny. Ms Dorries, I look forward to seeing you in the Chair again in a few weeks when this Committee sits again.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I want to reinforce the points made by the hon. Member for City of Chester. A substantial number of hon. Members in my party entirely agree with both points. First, we should keep pressure on the Government to get this sorted and get back to 650 and, secondly, the amount of legislation we must deal with puts pressure on Back Benchers much more than normal. Let us get it done and get back to 650.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): I will briefly reply to thank hon. Members for understanding why the my hon. Friend the Minister is not here. I will certainly ensure that the good wishes of the hon. Members for City of Chester and for Manchester, Gorton are passed on to her. Other than that, I have no further update to offer the Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chair: As the Committee cannot consider the clauses of the Bill until the House has agreed a money resolution, I call Afzal Khan to move that the Committee do adjourn.

Ordered, That the Committee do now adjourn.—(Afzal Khan.)

10.6 am

Adjourned accordingly till Wednesday 27 February at Ten o'clock.