



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Experiments with Digital First

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Director of Information Management





Digital Democracy Commission

Recommendations

1. By 2020, the House should ensure that everyone can understand what it does

To map out how it will reach this target, the House of Commons should develop a new communications strategy with the aim of:

- increasing public awareness of the role of Parliament and MP, and
- increasing public participation in the work of Parliament.

It should build on previous experience to focus on what works and what is most cost-effective. (Recommendation 1)

The House of Commons should take action, during the 2015-16 session, to make parliamentary language and communications easier to understand. This should include:

- simplifying and clarifying parliamentary language, including procedural terms;
- developing digital tools such as jargon busters to help readers understand parliamentary language and processes, including the law-making process;
- clarifying and simplifying online and printed communications; and
- the wider use of aids for people with disabilities and sensory impairments such as British Sign Language translations and subtitles for video material to help the hard of hearing to engage with Parliament. (Recommendation 4)

The House of Commons should pilot a new procedure for amending bills so that amendments can be written, debated and voted on in plain English. (Recommendation 5)

The Commission recommends that Parliament's website should use more infographic and visual data to help provide alternative methods of accessing content and to improve transparency. While the Commission acknowledges the need for intellectual rigour in parliamentary reports and other publications, lengthy documents can act as a barrier to citizen engagement with democracy, particularly for those with learning difficulties, special needs or just limited time. For example, the Register of Members' Financial Interests could be transformed into a more accessible document for voters by the use of icons to represent data. (Recommendation 2)

The Commission recommends that improving the search function on the parliamentary website should be a priority for the new parliamentary digital service. (Recommendation 7). It should also provide tools to help people track Parliament's activities on specific issues. These should be easy to find and register for. (Recommendation 9)



Open up!

Report of the Speaker's Commission on Digital
Democracy

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 Contents



Foreword



Over the past 25 years we have lived through a revolution – created by the birth of the world wide web and the rapid development of digital technology. This digital revolution



Hansard

1739

15 JUNE 2016

1740

House of Commons

Wednesday 15 June 2016

The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

CABINET OFFICE

The Minister for the Cabinet Office was asked—

Government Estate

1. **Sir Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): What progress his Department is making on the creation of a more modern and efficient government estate. [905408]

The Minister without Portfolio (Robert Halfon): My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that since 2015 the Government estate strategy has ensured that running costs have fallen by £750 million. We have raised some £1.8 billion in council receipts and reduced the estate size by nearly a quarter. This is a huge achievement and in terms of space it makes the UK Government one of the most efficient organisations in the world.

Boycott and Divestment Guidance

2. **Dedre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): What representations he has received on his Department's boycott and divestment guidance. [905409]

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Matthew Hancock): We have received a wide range of representations about boycotts in public procurement. The Government's position is very clear: public sector organisations should not use procurement to run their own independent foreign policies.

Dedre Brock: Does the Minister agree that people who stand for election to local authorities and who then serve as councillors perform an important role in communities the length and breadth of these islands, and does he further agree that they should be trusted to make political judgments for themselves? Will the Government abandon the boycott and divestment guidance in favour of supporting local democracy?

Matthew Hancock: Yes, I think councillors do an excellent job at what councils are meant to do, but councils are not meant to set foreign policy, and attempts at local foreign policies that are discriminatory are potentially illegal, and we make that clear at every opportunity.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Was it wrong for my local authority to boycott South African goods in the 1970s?

Matthew Hancock: Where a national boycott is in place and where a national decision has been made, local authorities should of course follow that, but these decisions are rightly for the Foreign Office and not for local authorities; the country cannot be run by having hundreds of different foreign policies.



Search Hansard... [Search icon]

Mrs Theresa May - Contributions



Mrs Theresa May

Conservative
Commons, Maidenhead (1997 - present)

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Machinery of Government Change

21 July 2016

This written ministerial statement confirms the following Machinery of Government change. The functions of the Office for Civil Society (OCS) have been transferred from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The trans...

Machinery of Government Changes



Question

We can use IT to produce ever more sophisticated briefings & reports:

- **Is there a risk that the medium may overpower the message?**
- **How can we make the most of digital publishing?**