

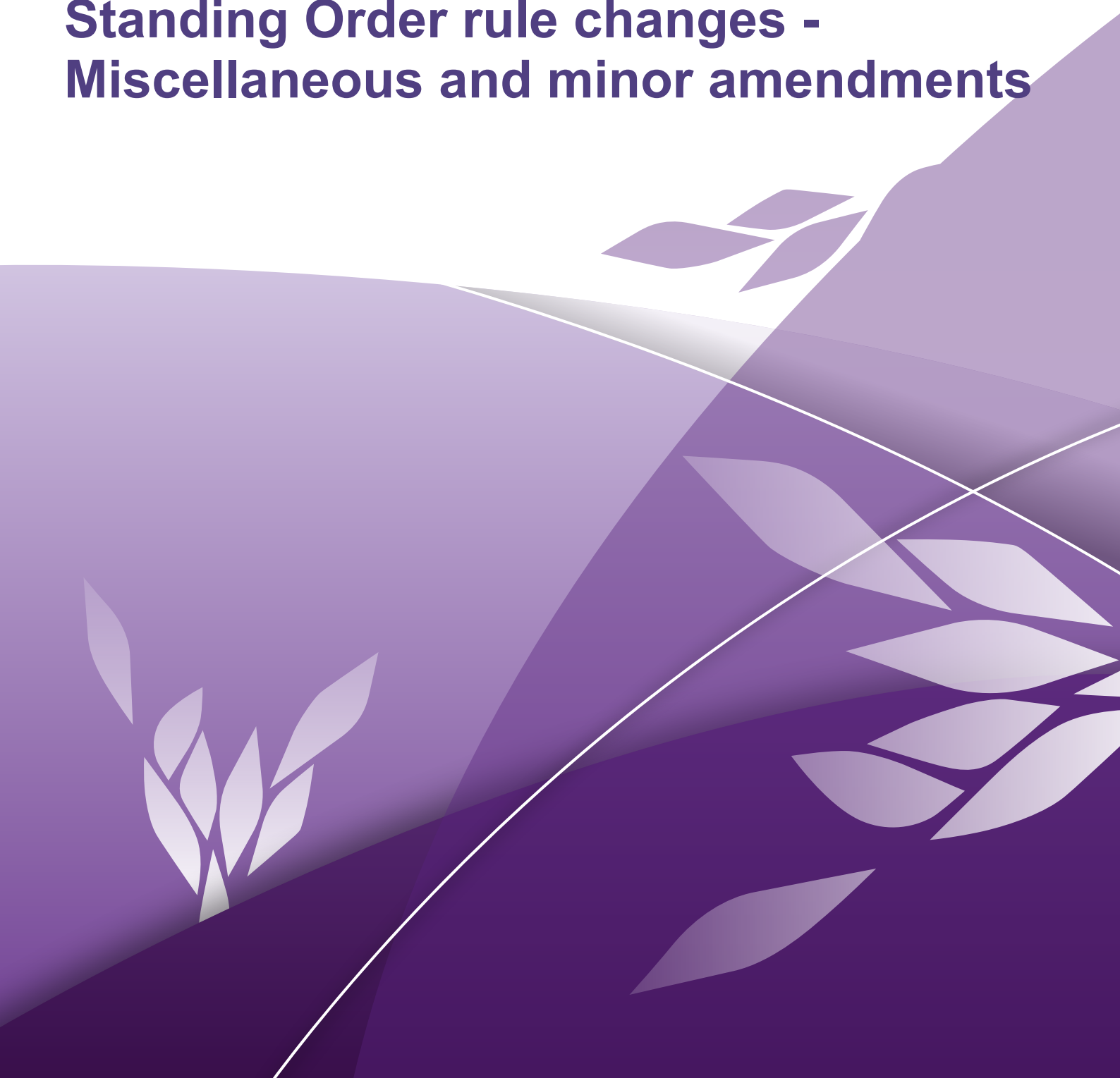


The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Published 9 March 2026
SP Paper 1052
10th Report, 2026 (Session 6)

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Standing Order rule changes - Miscellaneous and minor amendments



Published in Scotland by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

All documents are available on the Scottish
Parliament website at:
<https://www.parliament.scot/documents>

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:
Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: info@parliament.scot

Contents

Introduction	1
Remit of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee	2
Committee consideration	3
Minor rule changes	4
Location of committee meetings	4
Decision and voting - Putting the question	4
Recommendation	5
Annexe A: Proposed change to temporary rule 4	6
Annexe B: Proposed Standing Orders rule changes	7

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

To consider and report on the following (and any additional matter added under Rule 6.1.5A)—

- (a) the practice and procedures of the Parliament in relation to its business;
- (b) whether a member's conduct is in accordance with these Rules and any Code of Conduct for members, matters relating to members interests, and any other matters relating to the conduct of members in carrying out their Parliamentary duties;
- (c) the adoption, amendment and application of any Code of Conduct for members;
- (d) matters relating to public appointments in Scotland;
- (e) matters relating to the regulation of lobbying; and
- (f) matters falling within the responsibility of the Minister for Parliamentary Business.

2. Where the Committee considers it appropriate, it may by motion recommend that a member's rights and privileges be withdrawn to such extent and for such period as are specified in the motion."



SPPA.Committee@parliament.scot



0131 348 5176

Committee Membership



Convener
Martin Whitfield
Scottish Labour



Deputy Convener
Ruth Maguire
Scottish National Party



Emma Roddick
Scottish National Party



Sue Webber
Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party



Annie Wells
Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party

Introduction

1. The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee ("the Committee") has considered further requests for miscellaneous and minor changes to be made to Standing Orders to take effect from the start of the next Parliamentary session.
2. The Committee has considered these requests and has agreed to recommend changes to Standing Orders. Further information on the recommended changes is detailed in this report. The proposed changes to Standing Orders are attached as the annexe to this report.

Remit of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

3. As noted in the Committee's 7th Report, 2026, the Convener of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture (CEEAC) Committee wrote to the SPPA Committee in June 2024¹ with the outcome of the CEEAC Committee's review of the EU-related rules in Standing Orders. This letter referred to the future remit of the CEEAC Committee, as well as to references in Standing Orders to EU matters that are no longer applicable in the post-EU landscape.

4. Standing Orders set out at Rule 6.8 a remit for a mandatory Europe and External Relations Committee. At the start of Session 6, the Parliament agreed a temporary rule to apply a different name and remit for that mandatory Committee. Temporary rule 4 provides for the name and remit of that committee, as follows:

“Temporary Rule 4 Change to Mandatory Committee Remit and Name

1. This rule applies to the committee mentioned in Rule 6.8. It ceases to apply when the Parliament has taken a decision to amend rule 6.8 in accordance with Rule 17.1 or on the date of dissolution, whichever is the earlier.

2. Where provisions contained in this temporary rule are in conflict with other standing order provisions, those in the temporary rule have precedence.

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

3. 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) 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.”

5. The current remit of the CEEAC Committee takes account of the post-European Union (EU) landscape, and the fact that much of the remit of the mandatory Europe and External Affairs Committee is no longer relevant following the UK’s exit from the European Union.

6. In the June 2024 letter, the CEEAC Committee indicated it was content with its current name and remit for the remainder of Session 6 it recognised that there was a need for Rule 6.8 to be reviewed in advance of Session 7. Temporary Rule 4 is currently due to lapse at dissolution or when a permanent change to Rule 6.8 is agreed.

Committee consideration

7. The Committee considered the future remit of the CEEAC Committee in its report Strengthening committees' effectiveness. The Committee stated that 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 and that further inclusion of European matters in Standing Orders will need to reflect this requirement.
8. The Committee also stated in its report that it would consult further with the CEEAC Committee on whether any elements of the remit in Temporary Rule 4, or in relation to other aspects of the post-EU landscape should be included as part of a mandatory committee remit for the next Parliamentary session.
9. The Committee returned to the issue at its meeting on 19 February 2026 and agreed to write to the CEEAC Committee.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. The Clerks to the CEEAC Committee have confirmed that the members of that Committee would be content with the extension of Temporary Rule 4.
13. The Committee recommends an extension to the temporary rule until 2 October 2026. This is a little later than the end of September date that we proposed in our letter to the CEEAC Committee, simply because it is the end of a parliamentary week. Annexe A to this report sets out the proposed change to temporary rule 4.

Minor rule changes

14. Parliamentary officials have recently been working to produce and revise guidance documents, including those for Chamber business to support the work of the Parliament. During the course of this work a series of potential rule changes were identified that could be made to bring the rules in lines with long-established practice, clarify rules that are currently open to conflicting interpretations, and delete rules that are no longer required.
15. Following consideration of these proposals the Committee has agreed to recommend changes to the following rules.

Location of committee meetings

16. Rule 12.3.2 states:

“A committee shall meet—

(a) in Scotland at such place as it may decide, with the approval of the Parliamentary Bureau and the Conveners Group (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.”
17. This implies that approval from the Bureau and Conveners Group needed for any in person or hybrid meeting, including one held in the Parliament building at Holyrood. In practice, however, Bureau and Conveners Group permission has only ever been sought for external committee meetings.
18. It is suggested that this Rule is changed 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.
19. It is proposed that this change to Standing Orders would take effect from the start of the next parliamentary session.
20. Annexe B to this report sets out a proposed change to Standing Order Rule 12.3.2 to give effect to this change.

Decision and voting - Putting the question

21. 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”.

22. 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.
23. It is proposed that this change to Standing Orders would take effect from the start of the next parliamentary session.
24. Annexe B to this report sets out a proposed change to Standing Order Rules 11.6.2 and 11.6.3 to give effect to this change.

Recommendation

25. The Committee recommends to the Parliament the Standing Order rule changes in Annexe A and Annexe B of this report.

Annexe A: Proposed change to temporary rule 4

Temporary Rule 4 Change to Mandatory Committee Remit and Name

Paragraph 1

delete "date of dissolution,"

and replace with:

"2 October 2026,"

Annexe B: Proposed Standing Orders rule changes

Rule 11.6 Divisions

In Rule 11.6.2, add at the beginning “Except where, under these Rules, the question is one that must be decided by division,”

In Rule 11.6.3,

delete “repeated the question,”

and replace with

“asked members to vote,”

Rule 12.3 Committee meetings

In Rule 12.3.2(a) delete

“in Scotland at such place as it may decide, with the approval of the Parliamentary Bureau and the Conveners Group”

and replace with:

“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,”

