

“ORDER!” MEET THE MAN WHO KEEPS THE COMMONS IN CHECK

House of Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle takes a break from shouting at MPs, to speak to PUNCHING UP about his work, punishing badly-behaved politicians, and some of Parliament's wackiest traditions.



SIR LINDSAY WHO?

By Ben Shahrabi

Perhaps best known as the man who shouts “ORDER!” when MPs are acting out of line in Parliament, Sir Lindsay Hoyle has pretty much seen it all in his quarter of a century in British politics.

As Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Lindsay (AKA Mr Speaker) is a very powerful man. He gets to choose who speaks and when in debates, as well as punishing those who misbehave. Plus, he's the only one who can address MPs by their names and tell them to ‘shut up’ if they get too rowdy.

The son of another famous Labour politician from the 1970s to the 1990s, the Lord Hoyle, Sir Lindsay was elected as a Labour MP for Chorley in Lancashire in 1997. Since then, he worked under the former Speaker John Bercow (“Orderrrr!”) as principal Deputy Speaker (AKA the Chairman of Ways and Means) before being elected as Speaker following Bercow's resignation in 2019.

And we may be seeing a lot more of him in the next few years...

Mr Speaker's Diary:

Start at 8:30am: a briefing of what's ahead for the day with Helen Wood, Chief of Staff at the Speaker's Office.

9am: a run-through of meetings and events, followed by a meeting with Deputy Speakers to discuss what is going to happen in the chamber throughout the day. The Clerk of the House, the Clerk's Assistant, the Serjeant-at-arms, and others meet with the three deputies and Sir Lindsay. The group discusses what's on the order paper. Then, they decide whether they have urgent questions to include or if the government is proposing to issue a statement. Next, the Speaker sits in the Commons chamber (the room with green seats where Prime Minister's Questions is held) for two and a half to three hours a day, moderating debates.

Afternoon: the Speaker then carries on with his engagements, including meetings with speakers from other Parliaments, staff of the House or other MPs. He also meets with foreign dignitaries, most recently Inigo Lambertini, Italian ambassador to the UK.

10 Questions with Mr Speaker

Why do MPs groan in Parliament? Why don't they just clap like normal people?

We don't allow clapping because we're not a debating society. We're not at university!

This is about debate, formal business, and trying to get people to contribute.

Why do the Prime Minister and opposition leader address the Speaker instead of each other?

It's to take some of the sting out of it and to try and stop [the debate] being personalised.

I'm the mediator – the third party that everything goes through – and I think that's always the key.

Speaking through the Speaker de-personalises the question, which he says, "works most of the time, hopefully."

Why can't you use a person's name in Parliament?

That is a good question. I suppose you could have some people with the same name, but you only ever have one constituency. That would be my general view.

I think it's also about taking [the personality] away, because you're actually talking to that person via their constituency, rather than directly.

Why is the Speaker dragged to their chair when they're appointed?

I'm not sure they are really dragged, but they're meant to be.

The history behind it is we know numerous speakers were beheaded and murdered in office. So why would you want to take on something where the consequences weren't very good? The outcomes were never worth it!



SIR LINDSAY BEING ESCORTED TO THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR IN 2019.

(Photo: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/ PA Wire)

That's why people resist going to the chair. It's not been a happy relationship historically.

What kind of bad behaviour have you experienced in Parliament?

I suppose the shouting down of the Prime Minister, by two MPs that decided to not let the PM speak, was really disruptive, disrespectful and not acceptable.

That was in July last year, when two Alba MPs (from a Scottish pro-independence party) were ejected from the House and suspended for bad behaviour after refusing to sit down during a debate.

At the time, Sir Lindsay told them he wouldn't tolerate their behaviour, so they should make their minds up or... "shut up and get out!"

How can we help those without a political connection or coming from disadvantaged backgrounds get involved in politics?



“There should be no barriers to representing people.

We’ve got to encourage more and more people to be involved in politics, to make sure democracy has a future.”

SIR LINDSAY WELCOMED 500 CHILDREN FROM HIS CONSTITUENCY LAST NOVEMBER, FOR ‘SPEAKER DAY’.

(Photos: Speaker’s Office)

What bothers me is the future of politics – and the future of democracy in this country.

There should be no barriers to representing people, and the encouragement of the democratic process is part of what I wish to base my speakership on.

Schools elect school councils, and that introduces young people to the idea of representing the class but also about electing a spokesperson.

We recently had ‘Speaker Day’ in Parliament, with about 30 schools from my constituency. We brought all these young people in and tried to show them democracy, get them involved, and give them a democratic day with Chorley being in the House of Commons. Those young people are the future. We need to get them early, and get them involved with the democratic process.

We’ve also got the Youth Parliament, where members sit in the Chamber, act as the MPs and debate their subjects.

This is the way to guarantee the future of the democratic process.

It’s about inspiring people to realise they can be part of the solution: you can be there to speak up.

I’m also patron of Patchwork, a foundation which encourages young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to speak out and be part of their communities.

Nobody should be kept away from the democratic process. We’ve got to encourage more and more people to be involved in politics, to make sure democracy has a future. We are a great advocate of democracy in Westminster, but we’re also respected throughout the world. People replicate the Westminster model.

We also want to inspire young people from overseas. Last November, for the first time ever, we invited the overseas territories to each send a representative to the Youth Parliament here in Westminster, where they were able to speak in the Chamber. It was a great opportunity, and they thanked us for allowing them to be part of the process.

RE-ELECT



Lindsay Hoyle

From Chorley...

...for Chorley

SIR LINDSAY ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL IN HIS CHORLEY CONSTITUENCY DURING THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION IN 2019. (Photo: Twitter)

Do you have to know Erskine May (the Parliamentary rulebook) inside out? How do you know which parts to use?

The good thing [about being Speaker] is that you do pick up the history and you do get to know quite a lot of Erskine May. But because there are so many technical views or ways to interpret it, you've got a clerk sat in front of you to check.

They are the expert. They turn round and give you advice if you're unsure.

What are your thoughts on reforming or even abolishing the House of Lords?

Being Speaker, I don't have a political view as such.

But I think to have a second - elected - chamber would not be helpful to our chamber [the House of Commons]. Everything starts here and finishes here, so we ultimately decide what goes through,

in legislative terms.

As the elected house, we are the senior house. Therefore, if you were to have an elected second chamber, you'd then question who had supremacy. Who takes the lead?

If you're both elected by

even consider a second elected chamber.

It might be that you don't have a House of Lords. That would be for others to decide - not for me.

My [focus] is about protecting the supremacy of the upper chamber, which is us.

I think the answer lies in having political stability. Recovery will come by stable leadership.

Three Prime Ministers in three months is turmoil. The public, quite rightly, is looking for leadership.

It's been difficult for everybody. And until the election is called, we need the opposition to hold the government to account and the government to respect the House by coming to it.

Will you be standing at the next general election?

My intention is absolutely to stand again. I'm as excited now as when I was first elected in 97'. I've still got the same energy, and the same belief in delivering for the people I represent - that's the good people of Chorley.

So yes, I will be standing as an MP and hopefully I intend to stand as Speaker again as well.

“I've still got the same energy and belief in delivering for the people... so I will be standing as an MP and, hopefully, Speaker again.”

the electorate, you really would be challenging each other when you had differing views.

Reform the House of Lords by all means, but think long and hard before you would

You previously said the country was “struggling to recover” after the turmoil of the last few years. How can we get back to some sort of normality?