

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

**TRANSITIONING TO NEW
PARLIAMENTS:
HANDBOOK FOR
PARLIAMENTS IN ELECTION
PLANNING**

About the CPA

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA collaborates with Parliaments and other organisations, including the intergovernmental community, to achieve its statement of purpose. It brings Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify benchmarks of good practices and new policy options they can adopt or adapt in the governance of their societies.

About the authors

This Handbook was written by Philippa Helme with contributions and editorial support from Matthew Salik.

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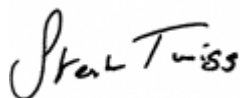


Foreword

One of the greatest challenges for Parliaments is managing the transition from one parliament to the next following a General Election. For new Parliamentarians, it will be a case of **‘first impressions count’**, so it is essential Parliaments get it right.

For over twenty-five years the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has been at the forefront of supporting Parliaments to train newly elected Members as part of its Post-Election Seminar Programme. Over that period, thousands of Parliamentarians have gained much needed professional development training, arguably when they need it most. However, providing induction training is the tip of the logistical iceberg for Parliamentary Administrations in the post-Election period. This Handbook has been developed to broaden and augment that post-Election support, by supporting the institutions of Parliaments to effectively transition from one Parliament to another. In particular, this Handbook looks at how Parliaments should plan for Elections, how they should coordinate their activities, how they should provide the right information at the right time to new Members, and how to evaluate if the transition period was successful or not.

I am delighted to present the latest resource developed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for the benefit of its member Branches, but also the wider community of Parliaments outside of the Commonwealth. This Handbook seeks to continue the CPA’s approach to develop valuable and timely toolkits, handbooks and resources for Parliaments to utilise. We believe this publication will offer a useful guide on sharing best practices from across the globe for senior parliamentary staff to utilise as part of the pre- and post-Election planning and implementation, in both large and small jurisdictions.



Stephen Twigg, Secretary General,
Commonwealth Parliamentary
Association

Introduction



Elections* are a common feature of democratic Parliaments. Their frequency and impact will vary, depending on constitutional arrangements and political circumstances, but for parliamentary administrations, both large and small, across the Commonwealth they represent a regular challenge. Parliaments, and in particular parliamentary administrative teams, must be ready to welcome the Members of Parliament returned at each Election and to support them in carrying out their parliamentary functions. This means providing induction and training, but also a range of advisory and support services in a timely and accessible manner. At the same time, Parliaments must give appropriate care to retiring and defeated Members, and respond to the political change, and new demands, which may follow the Election. In some jurisdictions, the Parliaments may also have a role in managing the electoral process.

Getting ready for the next Election, and for the new Parliament that will follow, is important and demanding. It requires advance planning and flexibility; and has to be done alongside meeting the operational requirements of the current Parliament. It can be particularly challenging for smaller administrations with limited resources.

But as well as providing a challenge, Elections provide an opportunity. They provide an opportunity for the Parliamentary Administration to impress new Members with the quality of their service and the commitment and professionalism of their staff. They may also provide a chance to showcase to the wider country how the Parliament performs. And, as well as leading to new demands on Parliaments, the Election may also provide an opportunity for the Administration to make changes proactively. For example, a shift to digital services, or a change in working culture.

The purpose of this Handbook is to assist Parliaments by suggesting approaches and sharing examples of best practice from across the Commonwealth. It is primarily intended for use by the Parliamentary officials who are tasked with planning for their next Election, but it may also be of interest to Members of Parliament, especially those charged with overseeing their House Services or Administrations, who wish to ensure that Election planning in their Parliament reflects good practice across the Commonwealth.

* For the purposes of this Handbook, 'Elections' mainly refer to parliamentary General Elections only.



Parliaments and Elections – Some Key Considerations



In all Commonwealth jurisdictions, Parliaments will be engaged in some way in the electoral process, either directly or indirectly. This could range from the obvious role of passing laws around electoral reform, to facilitating the swearing in of Parliamentarians. Elections and Parliaments are intertwined. Elections after all, are the manner in which Parliamentarians (for the lower House at least) will be recruited for their legislative, oversight, scrutiny and representative functions.

There are a number of key international and regional principles, commitments, and standards all countries should follow as part of the electoral process. It is the responsibility of Parliaments to adhere, promote and scrutinise these. For example:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is a multilateral treaty that commits nations to respect the civil and political rights of individuals, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights and rights to due process and a fair trial. Specifically, Article 25 states that “*every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity... (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic Elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.*”

Sustainable Development Goal 16

SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels is the key goal in relation to the management of Elections. Parliaments and wider electoral stakeholders must collectively seek to develop inclusive political processes to improve citizen participation, to build responsive and accountable institutions and reduce inequality.

Commonwealth Charter

The Charter of the Commonwealth sets out the values of the Commonwealth of Nations as well as the commitment to equal rights and democracy. It was adopted in 2012 and officially signed in 2013. In terms of democratic rights, it states that “*We recognise the inalienable right of individuals to participate in democratic processes, in particular through free and fair Elections in shaping the society in which they live. Governments, political parties and civil society are responsible for upholding and promoting democratic culture and practices and are accountable to the public in this regard. Parliaments and representative local governments and other forms of local governance are essential elements in the exercise of democratic governance.*”

CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

The CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures which was updated in 2018 sets out expected standards for the conduct of Elections, professional development, and accessibility, openness and engagement. In particular:

- 1.1.1 *Members of the popularly elected or only House shall be elected by direct universal and equal suffrage in a free and secret ballot.*
- 1.1.2 *Legislative Elections shall meet international standards for genuine and transparent Elections.*
- 1.1.3 *Term lengths for Members of the popular House shall reflect the need for accountability through regular and periodic legislative Elections.*

When planning around the Election, it is important for Parliaments to consider these international and regional standards. For example, by properly training Parliamentarians soon after their Election, institutions are aiming to increase the capacity of Members and thus build the effectiveness of legislatures for sustainable (long-term) development.



Planning Ahead

THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

Different electoral arrangements apply in different jurisdictions. In some countries there is a fixed timetable for Elections, which may mean it can be assumed with reasonable confidence that there will not be another Election for, say, four or five years. But in others, it may be open to the Government to call a surprise Election at a time of its own choosing, or the usual timetable may be subject to change in particular circumstances.

COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

In the **United Kingdom**, the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 removed the prerogative power of the Government to decide on the timing of a General Election, fixing the term of a Parliament to five years, though permitting an early Election if the House of Commons voted for it by a two-thirds majority. Both the 2016 and 2019 General Elections were called early and the Fixed-term Parliaments Act has now been repealed by the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022.

Trinidad and Tobago does not have a fixed term Parliament but has a maximum five year term. The Constitution provides that, although a Parliament lasts for five years, *“The President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, may at any time prorogue or dissolve Parliament”*.

The Federal Constitution of **Malaysia** states that Parliament unless sooner dissolved, shall continue for five years from the date of its first meeting and shall then stand dissolved. However, the Prime Minister can request that the King dissolve Parliament, and the King may then decide to do so. While in most cases the King must act on the advice of the Prime Minister, the Constitution says that the King may refuse to consent to a request to dissolve Parliament before the five-year term ends.

The House of Representatives of **Cyprus** is elected for a period of five years, though it may dissolve itself earlier by a decision of the Plenary carried by an absolute majority.

According to the [Venice Commission’s Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#), Elections must be held at regular intervals; a Parliament’s term of office must not exceed five years. Both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights provide that Elections must be held periodically. General Elections are usually held at four- or five-yearly intervals, while longer periods are possible for Presidential Elections, although the maximum should be seven years. Jurisdictions that do not have regular, or more importantly, fixed-term Elections place a considerable administrative burden on their Parliaments and wider electoral stakeholders to have adequate time to plan for Elections, this is especially important for resource poor Parliaments who won’t have the spare capacity to manage the electoral process as outlined in this publication.

The above matter becomes further compounded when Governments leave it to the last minute to present legislation around electoral reform. Not only does this place pressure on legislators to adequately scrutinise and pass such laws, it also offers limited time to implement reforms comprehensively and to a high standard. Best practice approach is to ensure that such laws should not be amended less than one year before an Election is called. As the Vienna Commission Code stipulates, the fundamental elements of electoral law, in particular the electoral system proper, membership of electoral commissions and the drawing of constituency boundaries, should not be open to amendment less than one year before an Election.

BY-ELECTIONS

Between Elections there may be by-elections, at which one or perhaps several new Members are returned to Parliament mid-term. While this is unlikely to require significant planning by the Parliament, it is important to remember that these new Members will also require induction and a co-ordinated approach by the Administration may be helpful.



WHEN TO START PLANNING?

After an Election, it is tempting to breathe a sigh of relief and think that Election planning is over for the next few years. In many Parliaments it has been customary to start work on the next Election just 18 months or a year before it is expected to take place. This may reasonably reflect the period of maximum effort but there is a strong case for starting planning earlier – soon after the last Election.

If there is any possibility of an early General Election, it is important that the Parliamentary Service should be ready to respond at short notice. But, even if not, it is good to get on and consider what needs to be done in preparation for the next Election. Overleaf is an example of an Election timeline from **New Zealand**.

CASE STUDY - WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

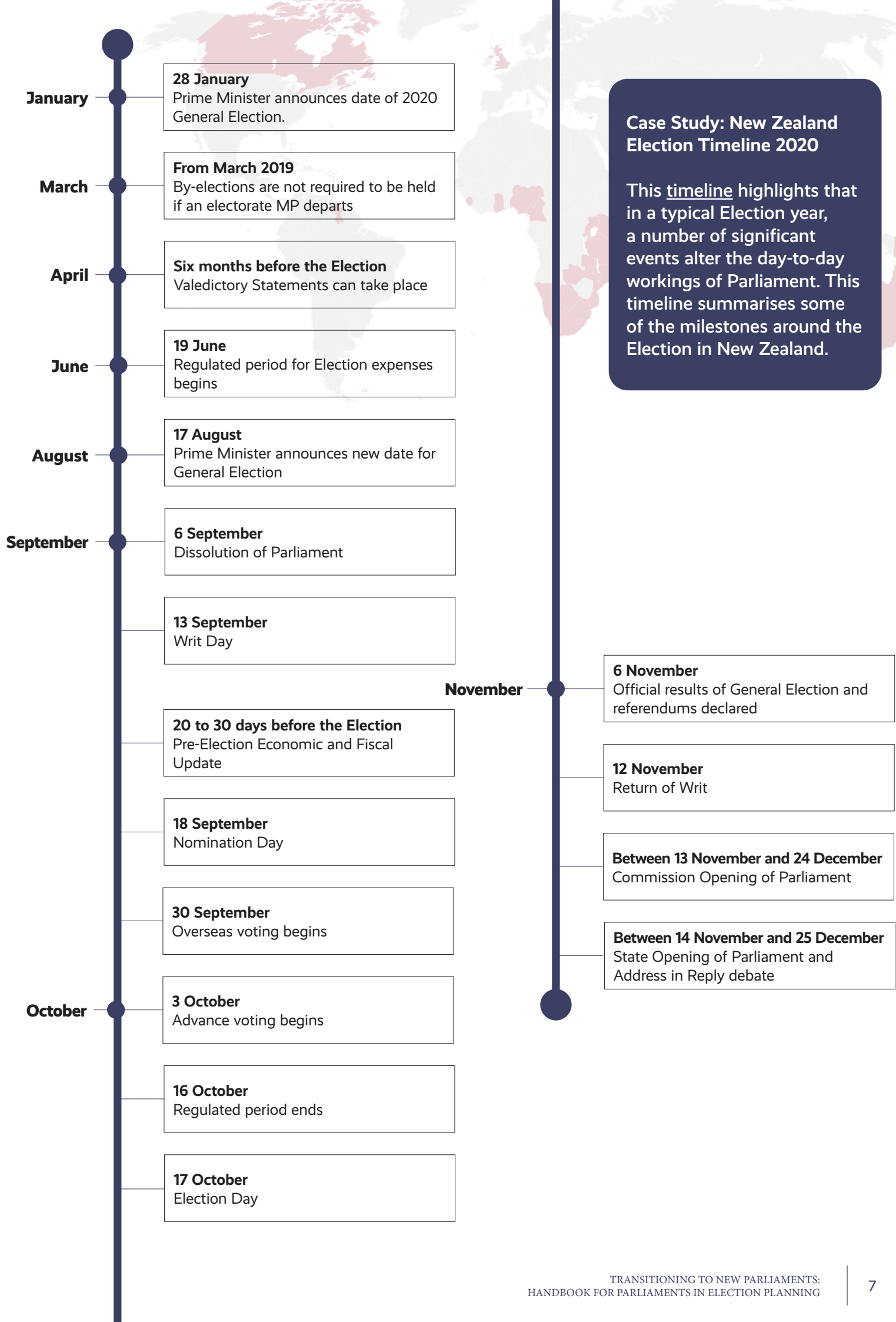
Planning for the Election commences more than a year before the actual Election date. The first steps typically begin with researching what the needs of Members are in terms of tools of the trade and what is available in the market. As that has a big financial impact, this needs to be done far in advance in order to ensure that the budget required is obtained and ring-fenced for this purpose. In the year leading up to the Election, the Public Education and Outreach Section would start to include voter education in the content of public workshops. The Western Cape Provincial Parliament (WCPP) has a great relationship with the Independent Electoral Commission and would include them in our programmes prior to Elections. The Stakeholder Management and Communication Services Section would also increase voter aimed messaging on the WCPP's website and social media platforms.

The WCPP would start to plan the orientation programme for the newly elected Members, which would include administrative processes and training. In planning, the WCPP identifies the key areas Members need to understand in order to function effectively in the first few days and weeks. More detailed training on matters of import would be scheduled for the first three months of their term.

In order to determine which matters are addressed first, the WCPP liaises with current Members on what their experiences were, what they needed to know and what were challenges when they were newly elected Members.

The WCPP also prepares information packs, including fact sheets on key parliamentary procedures, the standing rules, the Members' Guide and other critical reference material.





SETTING UP A PLANNING GROUP

A good first step is to identify who will be responsible for Election Planning, or for delivering the different elements of services around the Election. Staff turnover may mean that not all the people first identified will actually be in post at the next Election, but if people move jobs or leave Parliament, responsibility should be clearly transferred to a named successor.

It is also important to consider that there may be leadership gaps over the Election period. Especially if there is an absence of a Speaker or Presiding Officer or other Parliamentarians with a mandate to guide the institution of Parliament between dissolution and the new Parliament. Officials should be empowered to keep the show on the road and be given the necessary transitional powers in advance by whichever authority is authorised to delegate such responsibilities.

Because of the range of services involved, and the importance of ensuring consistency and coherence, it is well worth establishing a Planning Group, consisting of the lead staff from the relevant parliamentary service units or departments. If outside agencies will be directly involved in providing services (for example, if Members' pay and expenses are managed externally to Parliament), then they should also be involved. Staff on the group should be sufficiently senior to be able to make decisions on behalf of their departments but have time to give to this role – and be close enough to operational delivery to understand the practicalities.

The Group should have a Chairperson with the personal authority to challenge senior colleagues and to engage with Members and with sufficient time to give to the role. (In the Legislative Assembly of **Alberta**, the Clerk of the Assembly chairs the group themselves.) It will also need to have adequate secretariat support. If resources permit, a dedicated project manager is strongly recommended, at least in the final year before the Election and during the intense delivery period around the Election. Depending on the circumstances and culture of the Parliament, it might be appropriate to invite a Member – most likely, a representative of the relevant Member Committee – to join the Planning Group or to attend its meetings as an observer. This could help to ensure that planning is well focused on Members' needs, but might risk inhibiting candid discussion amongst officials.

It is important to be clear about the remit of the Group – what it is responsible for and what it will be leaving to others. Depending on the size and resources of the Parliament, it may be better for the Group to focus on strategy and overseeing / challenging the operational plans made by other groups or workstreams, rather than getting involved in detailed operational planning. For example, management of the Opening of Parliament events involves a great deal of detailed planning, which it may be more appropriate to leave to another group.

Overleaf is an illustration depicting the types of individuals (internal and external) who could be involved in the Group.





Senior internal stakeholders

Administration/
Parliamentary
Committee

Speakers/
Presiding
Officers

Parliamentary
Counsel

Constituency
Operations Team

Ethics/
Commissioner
for Standards

Facilities,
Catering and
Works

Library and
Research Team

Planning Group representatives

Corporate
Services/
Operations

CHAIR
Clerk of Parliament/
Senior Officer

Serjeant at
Arms/Security

Members
Pay and
Remuneration

Media and
Communications

Finance and
Accounts

IT and Digital
Services

Education and
Outreach

Wider internal stakeholders

Political Party/
Members Affairs

Other
parliamentary
Chamber

Procedural/
Committee
Team(s)

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Election
Commission &
Returning Officers

Local Political
Parties

Senior Political
Leadership

Head of State/
Government

Judiciary

International/
Regional Orgs
(CPA)

Local and
National Media/
Journalists

Police



BUDGETING AND ADMINISTRATION

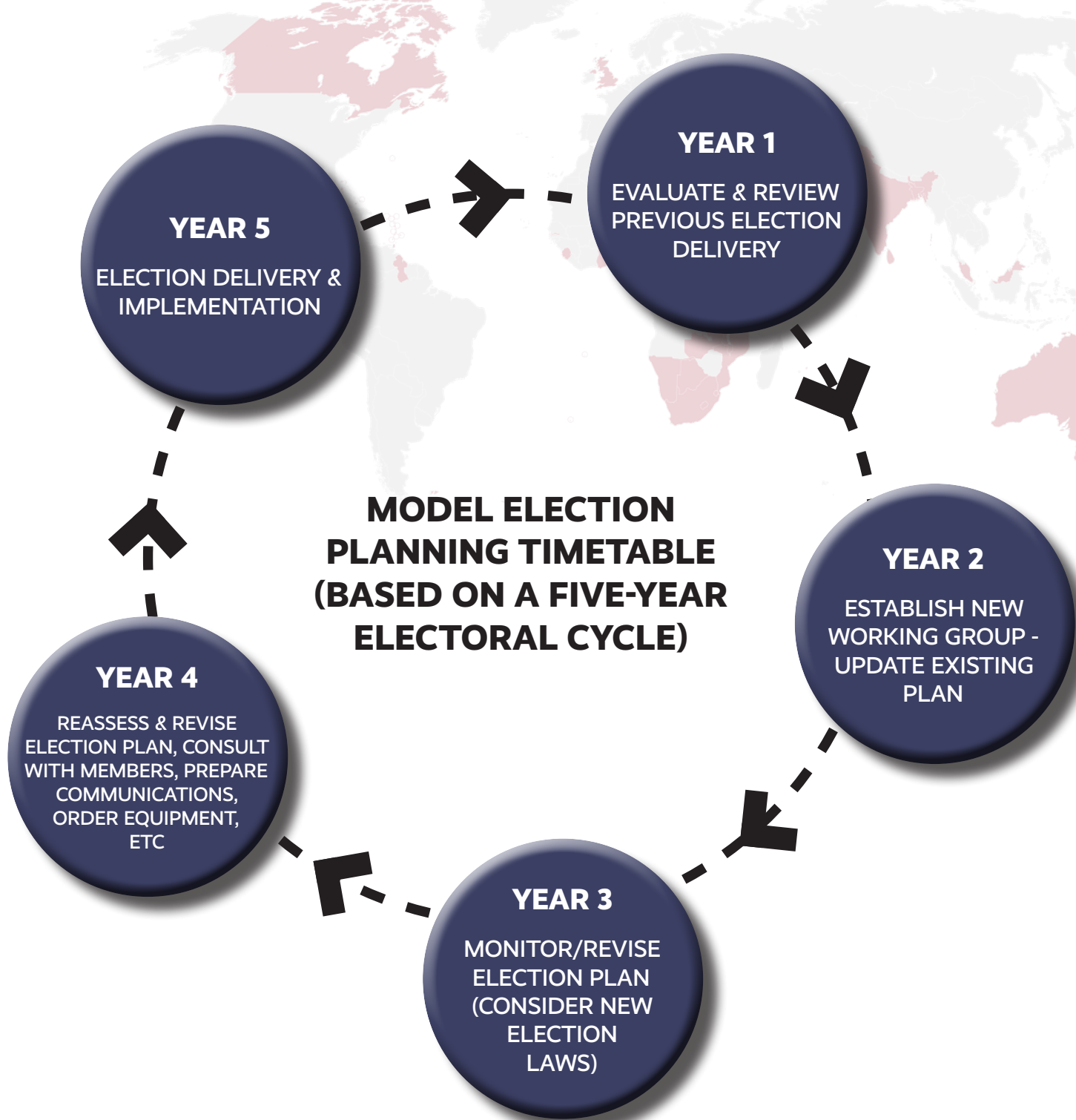
It is also important to be clear whether the Group is to be an executive group with its own budget, or a co-ordinating group with budgets held by the relevant House departments. This is a matter for each Parliament to decide, taking into account circumstances and culture. Either way, what is important is that the Group's ability to deliver is not impeded by others' resistance or slow response.

The costs of Election services should be reflected in the Parliament's future expenditure plans, and estimates, and also reported as transparently as possible in its subsequent accounts and annual performance reports. It may not always be easy to disaggregate the costs of the Election from the general administrative costs of Parliament. Where Parliaments are dependent on Government for decisions on its budget, or on Government departments for delivering services, it is particularly important that there are early discussions to ensure that Election services are properly resourced. For example, in **Kiribati**, the budget is allocated to the Ministry of Home Affairs. In **St Lucia**, the Office of the Prime Minister assists with the costs of a post-Election seminar. In **Guernsey**: a budget of £55K was agreed for the 2020 Induction and ongoing support of Members. There was also an IT budget allocated for the provision of devices to States' Members.

It is also important for legacy planning and reputational-risk management that any Planning Group keeps a record of decisions taken and any plans or processes approved. Such information will be invaluable for future Election planning as the same staff may not be around for successive Elections, especially if they are five years apart. Having clear records will also help in evaluating the success of the planning process. A sensible place for the Planning Group to start is to have a thorough review of what was done last time. Namely, what went well and what could be done better, if anything. The chapter on Evaluation covers this in more detail.

As part of its day-to-day work, the Group should follow best practice in project management. As well as financial management tools, as mentioned above, the Group should also consider risk management, change management, communication planning and clear goals, outcomes and activities need to be considered and formalised. If there is an absence of robust corporate governance structures and resources in place, these should be established in the first instance. There are many freely available resources and tools available to access online to support Groups in this area of work (see, for example, <https://www.projectmanager.com/>, www.apm.org.uk) not to mention more comprehensive and standardised systems such as Microsoft Project.

How often the Group should meet, and how it should best operate, depends on the circumstances. It might need to have an early period of activity, evaluating the last Election and establishing initial plans for the next, and, if necessary, agree contingency plans in case of a surprise Election. This might be followed by a relatively quiet period in which the Group meets less frequently before ramping up in the run-up to the Election. The final 18 months before the Election will be the busiest period.



In the **Scottish Parliament**, the executive team sets up a Programme Board, which co-ordinates Election deliverables of individual departments and takes the lead on specific areas immediately following the Election. For example, registration, induction of new Members and first days of parliamentary business, including oath-taking, selection of Presiding Officer, and selection of nomination for First Minister.

In a bicameral Parliament, especially when both Houses are subject to an Election around the same time, such as in **Nigeria, Kenya and Australia**, there may be a case for planning bicamerally – that is, for having a single Election Planning Group for both Houses. Where the Election only affects one House, it is still important to liaise closely with officials in the other House, particularly in regard to shared services.

Smaller Parliaments may take a different approach to Election Planning and might have a greater degree of overlap in responsibilities. There may only be a handful of staff to coordinate with across the entire legislature. Nevertheless, a coordinated approach that considers all of the key principles and approaches taken in this Handbook should be kept in mind.



SCENARIO PLANNING AND MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

Inevitably, Election Planning Groups will have to manage a great deal of uncertainty and political sensitivity. Firstly, there may be uncertainty about the timing of the Election, as discussed in the previous section. Secondly, there may be uncertainty and sensitivity about the electoral outcome, whether there will be a change of Government and how many seats will change hands.

The scale of the change in membership, and whether there is a change of Government or political leadership, will make a big difference to the services which the Parliament has to deliver, to the way in which those services can be delivered and to the surrounding political environment. If there is only a small number of new Members, they could be offered an individual welcome and personalised induction; while the arrival of a large new cohort would require a collective approach.

There may be a widespread expectation of a change of Government, and perhaps of a large change in elected Members, but it may be difficult for the Parliamentary Service to be openly planning for an outcome of that kind. It would be inappropriate and risky for an impartial Parliamentary Service to look as if it was assuming a particular outcome or (worse still) making that outcome more likely. It may be safer and more clearly impartial to identify a number of different scenarios with varying plans for each. For example, there could be plans for a 10%, 20% and 50% change in membership. On the other hand, it would be a waste of time and resources to develop detailed plans for fanciful outcomes and in some circumstances it may be wiser to keep quiet about the planning assumptions.

In a number of jurisdictions, especially where there are Election primaries for political parties, there is traditionally a very large turnover of Parliamentarians. In such cases, it is a safe and sensible approach to consider large scale changes to the membership. In countries like **Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa**, where primaries take place, it is good practice to watch the outcomes of these primaries to give an indication of what to expect at the General Election.

PLANNED RETIREMENTS

One element which can often be planned for without political controversy is the number of Members who intend to stand down at the Election. It can be useful to keep a list of Members who announce that they are going to retire at the next Election. This may be subject to change (and some Members may keep their intentions quiet or their options open till later on) but it should help as a guide to minimum turnover. In some jurisdictions, members of the elected Chamber who are not standing for re-election may make the move to the upper (appointed) Chamber following the Election. This again reinforces the benefits of coordinating bicamerally in predicting the make-up of Parliament following the Election.



FORECASTING CHANGES IN DEMAND

As well as considering the likely turnover of Members, it may be possible to anticipate certain changes in Member demand or expectations in the new Parliament. For example, if a lot of older Members are expected to retire, is there likely to be a generational change, with an influx of younger Members who may expect to operate digitally. More specifically (and particularly in smaller Parliaments), it may be possible to monitor the candidates who are being selected to replace retiring Members in safe seats, or to compete for marginals, and to identify whether they are likely to have different needs. For example, are they wheelchair users or requiring assistive technology?

WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES AND MEMBER GROUPS IN PLANNING

In principle, it is a good idea for the Parliamentary Service to work closely with the political parties and with Member groups and relevant committees in planning for the Election.

The benefits of this are multiple. Firstly, involving Members in planning helps to make sure that the plans reflect the needs and expectations of Members, who are the primary customers for the services that will be provided. Secondly, it helps to ensure that the Parliament's plans fit with the parties' own plans. The parties may well be planning their own induction of new Members, and a schedule of events after the Election. Thirdly, and particularly if relevant Member groups endorse what the Parliament is planning, it will give the Parliamentary Service some "political cover" – which may be helpful if there is criticism later on.

In practice, engagement with the parties is not always easy. Particularly when the timing of the Election is uncertain, or felt to be a long way off, the parties may not be interested in discussing what is planned, or may be unwilling to do so openly. The key political players will be more concerned about the Election itself than about what is planned by the Parliament afterwards. If there is a strong prospect of the Government being defeated, the Government party, and its Members, may be resistant to any discussion of what will come next.

It may be easier, and less contentious, to engage with Member groups or cross-party Committees within the Parliament rather than directly with the party organisations, though there is a risk that Parliamentarians are not fully informed of exactly what is being planned by their parties. If you have an Administration, House or Members' Services Committee, that is often a good place to start. The whips or business managers for the different parties can also be useful points of contact, though they may not necessarily remain in the same roles after the Election.

Because of the sensitivity and the need to establish a relationship of trust, it may be worth the Elections Planning Group nominating one person to act as the lead contact for engagement with the parties. This could be the Chair of the group, or another official with good political understanding and interpersonal skills.

WORKING WITH ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES

Where the administration of the Election, or oversight of electoral law, is the responsibility of a separate Election Management Body (EMB), it will be important for the Parliamentary Service to establish a direct working relationship, to make sure that the Parliament's plans are consistent with that body's plans and expectations. Planning Groups should, as a standard practice, be in touch and work closely with the EMB, especially when it comes to the timing and scheduling of the Election and result announcements and the rules for Members standing for re-election (see later section on Dissolution Rules). There are also important cross-over considerations around qualification for standing. For example, if a Parliamentarian has breached a code of conduct or committed an egregious act which disqualifies them to stand as a candidate, the Parliament may have a legal obligation to share that information. The Parliament's Standards Committee or equivalent might still be investigating a Member who is now a candidate which might need to be shared with relevant authorities at an early stage. There may also be overlap when it comes to campaign financial reporting and Members' interests which will need to be examined after the Election.

Delivering the Election



- 1.1.5 *An independent Electoral Commission or similar authority shall be established for the management of the conduct of Elections and its tasks shall include monitoring the election expenses of parliamentary candidates and political parties.*

The CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

INVOLVEMENT IN THE ELECTION

In some jurisdictions, the Parliamentary Service may have responsibility for the administration of the Election or some aspect of the electoral process which might create additional pressure over the transitional period. If so, it is important to manage parliamentary resources carefully as well as ensure a sharper distance from any political involvement. For example, in smaller jurisdictions, this could consist of parliamentary staff acting as returning officers or polling clerks. In the **British Virgin Islands**, the Chamber of the Assembly is used as a polling station. In **Montserrat**, the Office of the Legislative Assembly (see image), as well as supporting the function of the Assembly, also staffs the Electoral Commission. This is NOT considered best practice, as the legislature should be kept separate in its work and remit, but in such cases the Parliamentary Service will need to take a more hands-on approach to Election management.

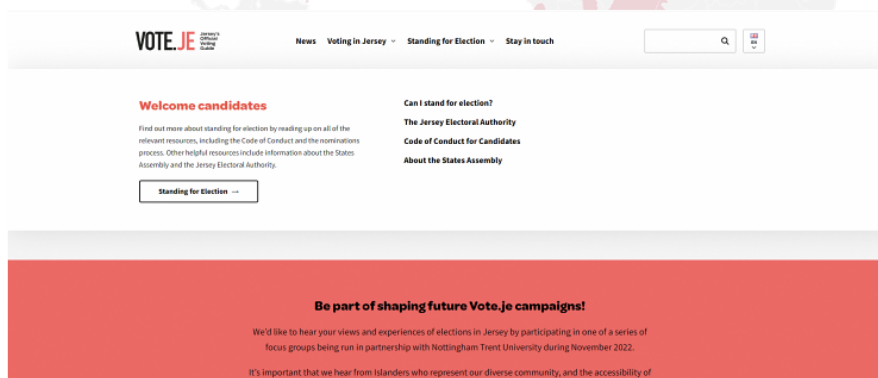


INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT / ENCOURAGING ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

Most Parliamentary Services have a programme of public engagement work, informing the public of the work of Parliament and engaging them in its proceedings. In some Parliaments, this extends to encouraging electoral participation. For some, this may mean an active role in the run-up to an Election, informing the public about the process ahead. More commonly Parliamentary Services take a backseat during the Election period, to avoid any appearance of partiality. Even encouraging participation could be seen as attempting to influence, or having the effect of influencing, outcome.



For example, the **Jersey** States Assembly manages a website (<https://www.vote.je/> - see example page below) giving guidance on voting and Elections on behalf of the Jersey Electoral Authority. The Jersey Electoral Authority was established in response to recommendations contained within the CPA Electoral Observer's Mission Report published after the 2018 Elections to increase the separation of responsibilities between the different governance entities on the Island.



Parliamentary entities might also be active prior to the Election period in engaging with candidates which might have a knock-on effect on parliamentary staff. Parliamentary caucuses, such as Women caucuses like the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) in **Kenya**, actively engage with women parliamentary candidates. KEWOPA undertake a mentorship and capacity building programme in various locations across the country on women participation in politics under the UN Women programme that seeks to advance and encourage more women to take part in politics and run for office.

In **Guernsey**, the States of Deliberation have provided briefings to prospective candidates on the rules and processes around the Election and proposes to increase these to include sessions on what the States and its elected Members do.

PARLIAMENTS, ELECTIONS AND THE SEPARATION OF POWERS

It is important for any Parliamentary Service to be sufficiently independent to not be politically pressurised or constitutionally mandated to sacrifice resources or services to support General Election delivery. In smaller jurisdictions, budgets might have to be reallocated, and staff who are contracted to the Government Public Service may have to be seconded to Electoral Bodies. It is therefore important that staff are employed by the Parliamentary Service and not the Government, and that Parliament has a ring-fenced budget which cannot be curtailed because, for example, a Parliament might be sitting fewer days in an electoral year.

5.4.3 *The Legislature should, either by legislation or resolution, establish a corporate body responsible for providing services and funding entitlements for parliamentary purposes and providing for governance of the parliamentary service.*

The CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

It is also important for Parliaments to consider, however unlikely, the possibility that staff of the Parliamentary Service may wish to stand as a candidate at the Election. This is equally important for local Elections. Typically, the rules which might apply in such circumstances maybe outlined in the jurisdiction's electoral laws or general orders. Nevertheless, the Parliamentary Service should have guidelines established around whether such individuals would be entitled to stand at all, whether they are permitted to have an extended leave of absence from prorogation/dissolution or nomination day, or if they resign, they have the right to be reappointed if they are unsuccessful. Guidelines may also have to stipulate whether such rules only apply to junior staff as opposed to senior staff who might work closely with political stakeholders.

The Election Period



The process of triggering an Election and the length of the Election period will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For most countries this period is known as Dissolution: the old Parliament is dissolved (ended). In some countries, there may be a brief Prorogation or interregnum (a temporary suspension of Parliament) prior to the Dissolution.

DISSOLUTION RULES AND GUIDANCE

While these vary in their detail, most countries have certain rules which candidates and others are obliged to follow during the Election period, in order to ensure fair electoral process. These will include rules applying to Members who are standing for re-election on the use they can, or cannot make, of Parliamentary services during the period. The purpose is to minimise the “incumbency benefit” that sitting candidates inevitably enjoy, and to provide a reasonably “level playing field” between sitting candidates and those standing against them. For example, former Parliamentarians who are candidates should no longer refer to themselves as MPs / MLAs / MNAs, etc. These rules may be set by electoral law, by the Electoral Commission or similar external body, or by the Parliamentary Administration – or perhaps by a mixture of all three.

Setting these Dissolution rules can be difficult and controversial. Potentially they could impact on the outcome of the Election, and could be challenged in the courts. Parliamentary Administrations need to make sure that the rules they apply have the support of, and are consistent with the rules made by, the Electoral Commission or other relevant bodies. Parliamentary officials may come under pressure from Members to allow them to continue to access services. In such circumstances, it should be explained that the rules are there to protect them from accusation of electoral malpractice.

Examples of Dissolution Rules for the **UK**: [Dissolution Guidance](#), [Dissolution Guidance for Members' Staff](#) and **Manitoba** Legislative Assembly [General Effects of Dissolution May 2019](#).

Areas which need to be covered in the Dissolution rules will include:

- **Access to the Parliamentary estate** - It is usual for sitting Members to be denied access to their offices in Parliament and the wider Parliamentary Estate during the Election period. They may be given a short grace period at the beginning to allow them time to get personal effects from their offices, or whatever. Special arrangements may be needed for those who have residential accommodation on the Estate, such as the Speaker and their family members.



- **Rules for Members' staff** - It may be considered acceptable (and beneficial for the public) for Members' staff to continue to work on urgent constituency casework, either from Parliament or from their constituency offices. There may be rules about whether they can do political campaigning, and what restrictions apply (for example, not campaigning in time or campaigning in offices paid for by Parliament).
- **Constituency Development Funds or their equivalent** - According to the [CPA's Handbook on Constituency Development Funds \(CDFs\): Principles and Tools for Parliamentarians](#), any CDF's should not give incumbents an advantage, be used for Election campaigning, whilst at the same time projects should not be disrupted in either planning or delivery because of an Election loss or change in district/constituency representation.
- **Use of parliamentary email and parliamentary-funded websites:** There may be rules against using parliamentary email addresses or parliamentary-funded websites for campaigning purposes.

SUPPORT FOR RETIRING MEMBERS

For those Members who are not standing again in the Election, it may be appropriate to have different rules. They may need access to advice or practical assistance from parliamentary officials on a range of issues, including, for example, the termination of their staff's employment or their own pension arrangements. They may also require advice on the handling of their constituency casework and record-keeping, including data protection issues. It may be reasonable to give them a little more time to clear their offices in Parliament and wind up their parliamentary business. However, this needs to be balanced with the operational requirement to get their offices cleared quickly and made ready for the new Parliament. This balance of interests needs to be achieved sensitively, but firmly.

Depending on the resources available and the numbers involved, it may be worthwhile setting up a dedicated contact point or helpline for retiring Members and their staff. Collective briefings and online advice may also be useful. Usually, Members will signal well in advance that they will not stand again, but in some cases, it can be a last minute decision or forced on them by circumstances.

REFURBISHING OFFICES, ETC

The Election period is likely to be a time of intense activity for those involved in providing accommodation, Information Technology and other support services at Parliament. There will only be a short period to prepare Members' office accommodation for new Members (or for returned Members with changed roles). IT services will need to ensure that those offices are appropriately equipped, and also that they have the required mobile equipment to supply to new Members. There should be a clear policy on what IT equipment will be supplied and funding in place to deliver this. All of this will require forward planning and sufficient resource to cope with a range of electoral outcomes. There will be a judgement to be made about how much equipment to purchase in advance, balancing the risk of a higher than expected number of new Members against the likelihood of unnecessary expenditure.

It may be necessary to use the Dissolution period for other works which are impossible when Parliament is sitting: urgent works in the Chamber, for example. However, it is best to avoid doing works which distract effort from the main focus of preparing for the new Parliament and particularly, anything which might overrun and impede the delivery of the post-Election plan. It may be necessary to communicate to other Parliamentary staff that support staff will be under considerable pressure in this period and they should not make additional demands on them.

TAKING LEAVE

For staff whose work is focused on supporting Parliament when it is in session, advising Members or supporting Committees, the Dissolution period may be a good time to take leave. It may be desirable for staff to take time out and to return reinvigorated and ready for the busy period which is likely to follow the Election. The Dissolution may also be a good time to arrange training or other development activity, such as visits or secondments to other organisations. However, this needs to be balanced against the need to have enough staff, and the relevant staff, available to support delivery of the Election plan. This includes making sure that senior managers are available to make decisions, if required; that the people involved are

available to prepare and rehearse for after the Election; and that there are refreshment and other services available for those who are working. What is going to be required – particularly if this is a change from the past – should be clearly communicated to staff, and their expectations managed, before they arrange holidays.

PARLIAMENTARY STOCKTAKE AND RESULTS

This time might also be a useful juncture to evaluate or review general parliamentary or staff performance. In **Kenya** for example, the National Assembly used the Election period to sign off on Scorecards for middle level management and performance indicators for lower-level staff to ensure performance was aligned the overall Strategic Plan. Parliaments also find this time valuable for closing off parliamentary sessions, publishing sessional returns or digests, clearing the decks for Committee inquiry reports and catching up on outstanding Hansard backlogs.

PLANNING AND REHEARSAL

A major focus of activity during the Dissolution period is likely to be finalising plans for the post-Election period, and particularly for the first arrival of new Members. In the final days before the Election, it is worth arranging a full rehearsal of any major events planned. It is important to test the arrival of new Members and their flow through the new Members' reception area, for example, or the arrangements for a briefing in the Chamber or group photograph. Other staff can be invited to act as new Members and give feedback. As well as improving the service, this will help to inform and engage them in the process.

INFORMING THE MEDIA

Those planning for the new Parliament will need to consider how and when to inform the media about what is planned. While the Parliamentary Service will need to avoid generating any news stories which could have party political impact during the Election period, the media may be interested in learning about what is planned and it is important to be transparent about what is planned. It may also be good for the reputation of the Parliamentary Administration to show the effort and professionalism that is going into preparing for the new Parliament.

A policy will need to be agreed on what access the media should have after the Election. Will they be allowed to film new Members as they arrive in Parliament or go through the reception area within Parliament – or would this be intrusive? Will they be allowed to attend events, such as a Chamber briefing for new Members – or would they inhibit clear briefing on security matters, for example, or simply get in the way? If they are to be excluded from these events, it is important to explain why this is, and perhaps to offer them something else – such as access to film the rehearsals.



COMMUNICATION WITH CANDIDATES

During the Election period, it is generally best for Parliamentary Administrations **NOT** to communicate with candidates, in order not to convey any advantage to, or possible appearance of preference for, one candidate over another. An exception to this general rule might be made if it became known, for example, that a candidate was a person with disabilities, which would require pre-planning by the House Service.

During the Election period, the Parliamentary Service will need to plan and prepare the communications which will go to the candidates who are elected. They will need to be given information on when to go to Parliament, how to get there, what to bring, etc. Ensuring that all the new Members get, and retain, this information promptly and reliably is not straightforward. The best approach may be to send to Returning Officers in each district a pack for them to pass on to the successful candidate or candidates. These will need to be sent well in advance, and it is wise to consult with Returning Officers to make sure they know what is expected, and that the Parliament has the right contact details. In addition, and in case this information pack goes astray, it is sensible to make sure that the parties have access to this information, so that they can pass it on to their elected Members if required.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Without redirecting too many resources away from Election planning, the Election period can be an opportunity for Parliamentary Services, and in particular, the Planning Group to consider recording and evaluating key statistical data around the overall composition of candidates and the new Parliament. To ensure Parliament, as a key democratic and representative institution, is doing all it can to be as inclusive and diverse as possible, some essential work should go into recording the gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexuality and ability/disability of candidates and elected Members of Parliament. It is also worth recording the socio-economic, educational, relationship status and career background. By recording this information, Parliaments can be better able to track and report on trends in composition and take action where there are gaps and deficiencies, whilst at the same time promoting and highlighting successes. A good example of this work is around Gender-Sensitive Parliaments. In 2022, the CPA published its [Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines: Standards and a Checklist for Parliamentary Change](#) which clearly stipulates that Parliaments should be recording data as... *“Without accurate data over time, it is impossible to determine whether there has been increase, stagnation or fall-back in the numbers of women elected as representatives. Comparative studies are necessary too.”* Of course it is essential that any data-collection exercise is compliant with all local laws and regulations around holding and utilising personal data in a secure and confidential manner. It is also important to bear in mind that candidates and Parliamentarians may refuse or be reluctant to share personal details. Therefore, any request, and handling of such information should be undertaken cautiously and sensitively.

As mentioned above, it is important that focus is given to adaptation of the physical, but also the digital environment of Parliament in particular for newly elected Parliamentarians with Disabilities. Since 2017, the CPA's [Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities \(CPwD\)](#) network has sought to promote the need for Parliaments to be proactive in creating enabling environments for effective and full participation of persons with disabilities at all levels. As well as recording key data around this information, which should be undertaken with extreme sensitivity, Parliaments should be committed to implementing necessary policies to ensure Parliamentarians, whatever their ability, can fully fulfil their mandate. Parliaments should consider utilising the CPwD Disability Inclusion Guidelines on [Facilities of Inclusion](#) and [Linguistic Principles](#) to guide them in this work.

The range of languages spoken by the new membership should also be noted. If this represents a significant proportion of the new composition of Parliament, the Parliamentary Service should give serious consideration to providing translation and interpretation, especially to those who may only speak one language which may not be the main working language of the Parliament. There may of course be political ramifications to taking such an action. As such, any action taken to provide this extra service should be first approved by relevant political leaders.

After the Election



MONITORING THE RESULTS

How quickly the results of the Election will emerge, and how these are formally communicated to Parliament, will vary. In some countries results will be known by the next morning; in some this may take several days. Whether those results will lead to a change in Government may be immediately apparent, or it may not be clear for days, or even weeks.

Most parliamentary staff will be closely watching the results coming in from the Election on the media but it is worth tasking someone with maintaining a list of Members returned and a tally of the number of new Members – ideally with photographs. Though it may not be entirely accurate, it may be useful to circulate the informal list to parliamentary staff, for their information. In due course, this list can be checked against the official results received from Returning Officers.

RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES AND INFORMING THE PUBLIC

The Parliamentary Service will need to be ready to respond to inquiries from the public and media about the impact of the Election. Prepared “lines to take” – that is, previously agreed responses to likely questions – may be helpful. Importantly, it may also need to respond to early inquiries from new Members. Even if you have advertised a contact point for them to ring, do not be surprised if they get in touch through other routes, and make sure that other Parliamentary staff are ready to respond helpfully. Some effort will need to be made in the advanced planning stage to bring all relevant Parliamentary staff up to date on post-Election arrangements. Not all staff will know the answers to questions, but they should know who to ask, at the least.

Parliament’s website should be kept up-to-date. As soon as possible, a list of the newly elected Members should be provided, if necessary, with a warning that this is subject to confirmation. In due course this list of Members should be extended to include photographs, brief biographies and contact details, but these should be checked first with the Member concerned. Obtaining recent photographs can be difficult, but an option is to arrange for a good quality photograph to be taken when the Member arrives, or perhaps at the time of swearing in (for both new and returned Members). Do **NOT** use official candidate or party images as these may have party political colours or slogans included.

COMMUNICATING WITH NEW MEMBERS

As discussed in the last chapter, you will probably have sent out to the electoral districts

information packs for the Members who are newly elected, or perhaps forwarded this information via the parties. Do not be surprised if this information does not reach them – or if they mislay it in the excitement of Election night. Depending on the number of new Members involved, you might want to adopt a proactive approach, contacting each new Member and checking that they have the information they need. It may not be easy to locate them. Remember that they are probably exhausted after weeks of campaigning and may have gone home to sleep. In the case of an unexpected result, they may be in a state of emotional upheaval.

WHAT TO SAY?

In your first communication with new Members, do not overload them with information that they do not need at this stage. Focus on the first essentials:

- When should they go to Parliament?
- Can they bring family members with them? (Will there be any childcare facilities / family facilities?)
- Do they need to bring anything with them – such as passport/identity document, banking details, proof of address?
- Is there anything they should be warned not to bring – such as large suitcases, items seen as a threat to security, pets, etc?
- How should they travel? (Will you be arranging travel/providing tickets or should they buy their own and be refunded later? Are there any rules on class of ticket etc?)
- If they drive, will there be parking and where?
- Where will they stay? (Will you be providing or arranging accommodation?)
- Do they have special needs or requirements? (For example, wheelchair access, carer support, auditory assistance, large-size printing, or dietary requirements?)

SUPPORTING DEFEATED MEMBERS

As well as communicating with new Members, you will need to communicate with any former Members who were defeated in the Election. They, and their families and personal staff, may be greatly distressed by the result. Some of them may come to Parliament immediately to clear their offices. You will need to make sure that they are supported in this, and have access to information and advice about their personal finances (pay and pension arrangements) and the management of their staff and offices, both in Parliament and in their electoral districts. Some defeated Members may not get in touch. Their response to the defeat may, understandably, be to go to ground, turning off their mobiles and not looking at email. You will need to be sensitive: give them a little time but then be clear in your communication. If you need their office to be emptied for a new Member, then give them a deadline and explain what will be done if they do not turn up. Will you keep their property in store for a certain period, for example? If they are required to return parliamentary assets (such as computer equipment), you will need to make arrangements for this, and for the purging of data.

Depending on the numbers of defeated Members involved, it might be worth having a nominated person, or a small team, dedicated to their support.

CASE STUDY: PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA AND LIFE AFTER PARLIAMENT

As part of a report produced by the Parliament of Victoria and supported by the CPA, titled '[Transitioning to Life After Parliament](#)', it was recommended that legislatures should do much more to support outgoing Members who either voluntarily retire or are defeated at the Election. The report highlights that Members in this position can often struggle to adapt to life outside of Parliament and need support such as a Parliamentary Career Support Programme to provide training on career development, personal financial management and post-parliament management. It also suggested that more assistance around mental health could be offered through psychological counselling to former MPs on an ongoing basis on the recommendation of a general practitioner or registered psychologist.



WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

In a small Parliament, if there are only a few newly elected Members, you may be able to offer them an individual welcome and, perhaps, take them to the appropriate offices in Parliament which deal with the first priorities. But, if there are more than a few new Members, it may be better to set up a New Members Reception Area, which can be made available over the course of a week or month dependent of the level of need. This “one-stop shop” can provide information and support on immediate priorities.

These immediate priorities are likely to be:

- **Money:** how are they going to be paid or reimbursed for expenses? Take their bank details so this can be done immediately. Make sure you have secure systems for protecting sensitive personal information of this kind.
- **Information Technology:** how are they going to be connected? If you are going to provide them with a mobile phone or laptop, offer this immediately, and explain how to access parliamentary systems. If there are cyber-security requirements or other constraints on the use of parliamentary IT, make these clear.
- **Office accommodation:** where can they work? Explain where they can work now, and how long they may have to wait for an office, if this is not immediately available.
- **Sleeping accommodation:** where can they stay and who pays?
- **Travel:** how are they going to get back home?
- **Security:** what do they need to do to keep safe in a physical and cyber sense? If they will need a photo pass to get around the Parliamentary Estate, provide this immediately.
- **Personal staff:** what to do to employ and pay them [although this can probably wait]

This is not the moment to tell new Members about the many other services the Parliament offers or to inform them about parliamentary procedure or Chamber etiquette. These things can wait for later. Part of the role of those responsible for delivering Election services is to manage colleagues’ enthusiasm and tell them bluntly, but tactfully, that they will not be new Members’ top priority on Day 1.

When setting up the New Members Reception Area, a good tip is to pretend to be a new Member, putting yourself in their shoes. Going through the steps they would take, can be invaluable in identifying things which may be missed. Or better still, get someone or several people not directly involved in front-line Election planning to do the walk-through and stress-test its effectiveness.



Welcome and induction centre for the newly elected and returning members of Parliament, New Zealand, 2017

New Members may arrive with family members, friends or assistants – whether or not you have indicated that this is welcome. If you have provided a family room or childcare facility, you will need to direct them to it, and be clear whether they may, if they prefer, accompany the Member as they go through the Reception Area. Give some consideration to storage and working spaces, such as providing lockers if they have brought suitcases, or temporary office space for those who want to do a bit of work straightway or want somewhere to put their staff. Members will be keen to be seen to be productive straightaway.

After Members have been through the Reception Area, it may be appropriate to offer them a personal tour of Parliament, pointing out the key places they may need to go to in future. Be flexible in this, responding to the time they have available and what they say they are



interested in seeing. Washrooms, prayer rooms, catering spaces will probably be a higher priority than committee rooms or administrative offices. Providing a printed map for larger or complex parliamentary estates can be useful.

Be aware that the new Members may have travelled some distance and may need some rest and refreshment. Whether to provide them with a free meal on Day 1, or offer alcoholic drinks, is a matter of judgement. You will want to be kind and hospitable, but you should avoid being over lavish, looking profligate with public resources, or building an expectation that refreshments will be free in future, if this is not the case. In this and in your welcome more widely, it is important to think carefully about the image you want to project, new Members' likely view of the reputation of Parliament, and the expectations of the public.

In addition to the individual welcome, you may want to arrange some collective events. Depending on the time available before Parliament meets, these could be on the day of arrival or perhaps the following day or two. These might include, for example, a briefing in the Chamber, so that they get an early opportunity to sit, and perhaps speak, in the Chamber before doing so for real. This could be linked to a group photograph and possibly a social event at which they get a chance to network with other new Members. These events are likely to be things that new Members will not want to miss, and may be a useful incentive in getting them to arrive in Parliament at the time you want.

You might also at this early stage provide some other briefings on top priority / "need to know" topics, such as the requirements of the Code of Conduct, ethical and financial rules, or anti-bullying policy, and how to go about employing staff or setting up constituency offices. [For more details, see later chapter on induction and training]. Talks on these subjects may be less immediately appealing to new Members, so you may need to work with the parties to make clear that their attendance is expected, or even mandatory. Some jurisdictions have given serious consideration to withholding resources or even swearing in members until they have read, agreed, and signed a code of conduct. Consider incentivising new Members into complying with rules and procedures.

All these collective events will need to be carefully planned, managed and rehearsed. All the work done to provide a good first impression of the Parliamentary Service can be undermined by one badly managed event, such as a group photograph session which takes too long or an off-message cameraman.

In planning these welcoming events, you will need to take account of other demands on new Members' time. Find out if the parties have scheduled meetings or induction events for their new Members, and co-ordinate your activities with these. Be aware too that new Members are likely to have personal commitments (they may well have arranged to meet up with family, friends or neighbouring Members) or just want to take time out to check on their email or phone home.

STAFF BUDDIES

While some senior parliamentary staff, including the Clerk, will want to be physically present for the official welcome days, senior staff are not required to do all the handholding. An approach adopted in some Parliaments is to pair each new Member with a staff "buddy" who takes them on their initial tour and then stays in contact as a go-to person over the coming weeks. These staff members may be quite junior but need to be friendly and self-confident, and well briefed about the whole Parliamentary Service, so they can point the Member in the right direction if they have specialist questions.

In some Parliaments, parties will pair a new Member with a more senior experienced colleague from the same party. This is not necessarily a substitute for staff 'buddies' or handholding. Parliamentarian mentors may not be readily available to answer questions, they may not know all the answers, and, worse, there is a risk that they share outdated or unwelcome habits with their new colleagues. It is essential to get things right from the offset and the parliamentary administration should seek to reverse existing poor political cultural vices where possible. It is important to convey at an early juncture that staff should be treated with respect – and that it is not their job, for example, to do laundry or collect a vehicle from the mechanics.

SUPPORTING RETURNING MEMBERS

While focusing on welcoming new Members, do not forget about returning Members. It may just be a question of saying welcome back, but some may have changed roles or may be anticipating a change of role. If there is a change of Government, former Ministers may be moving to an Opposition or a backbench role. Other Members may be becoming Ministers for the first time. If there is likely to be a change in the Minister responsible for Parliament (such as Leader of Government Business or Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Governance) you will need to be ready to provide briefing on key issues. [For more details, see later chapter on induction and training]

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

The Election transition period can be an intense time for all those involved, particularly new Members of Parliament. Elections can result in high stress, lack of sleep, family tensions, and in some circumstances bullying and harassment. It is important that appropriate support is available and well publicised. The [CPA's Mental Health Toolkit](#) is a useful reference guide for the procedures, practices and approaches parliamentary authorities should actively pursue in aiding all relevant stakeholders.

MANAGING OFFICE MOVES

Depending on how accommodation is managed and allocated in your Parliament, the turnover of Members at the Election, and the changes of role among returning Members, is likely to mean a change in office accommodation in Parliament. This often means a complex series of office moves, which may be subject to decisions by the party managers rather than by the Parliamentary Administration. These decisions may not be made for some time. Having to wait for an office can be very annoying for Members, so it is important to explain the reasons and manage expectations. In the meantime, adequate temporary working space should be provided.

CONFIRMATION OF RESULTS

Depending on the arrangements for management of the Election, there is likely to be a process for confirming the results and providing the Parliament with an authoritative list of Members elected. Where there is a proportional representative voting system in place, the process may take weeks to confirm. In the case of **New Zealand**, the Chief Electoral Officer will confirm the results up to 20 days following the conclusion of the vote. In the **UK**, the House of Commons authorities receive a list of Members returned to serve in the Parliament from the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. The Return Book is traditionally received from the Clerk of the Crown by the Clerk Assistant standing below the Bar of the House. [[See Erskine May, para 8.15](#)]

If the results of an Election are contested through petitions, recounts, etc, it may be some time before the outcome is decided. This could potentially impact on the overall outcome of the Election. Until the Election is confirmed formally, the individual concerned can take no part in formal proceedings. A decision will need to be made on whether, and to what extent, they should have access to the Parliamentary Estate and to Parliamentary Services. It may be advisable that official access is not granted until certainty exists. Parliamentary officials may wish to get in contact with officials of the relevant courts, EMB or Justice Ministry to make sure that Parliament is promptly informed of any developments.

SECURITY CLEARANCE AND ACCREDITATION

In nearly all jurisdictions, new Parliamentarians will not be officially required to undergo a security vetting process. Nevertheless, they may be required to provide information so as to be issued with a security pass to enable unfettered access the parliamentary precinct. This will be important to differentiate them from staff or visitors whose access maybe restricted. However, when it comes to parliamentarian's staff, Parliamentarians may have to sponsor their employees/volunteers for vetting and security reasons.

CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

Depending on the circumstances which might apply in a jurisdiction, there might be some responsibility on the Parliament around data management and data protection. For example, constituency/riding casework around individuals might not be transferable between and old



and new Members, so permissions may need to be sourced, information may need to be archived or disposed of. There may also be logistical requirements around physically closing down and reopening constituency offices as well as the employment of local staff who may be overseen by the Parliamentary Administration or funded (directly or indirectly) by Parliament.

FORMAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT

It is important that all this activity should not distract the Parliamentary Administration from what may be seen as its primary purpose: supporting the formal proceedings of Parliament. The arrangement of, and timetable for, proceedings following an Election will vary depending on the constitution, the Parliament's particular custom and practice, and the political situation. There are usually some common features including:

- The Election of the Speaker or Presiding Officer
- The swearing in of Members
- The opening of the new Parliament and the King's Speech / Speech from the throne and the debate on the King's Speech/ Speech from the throne.

The length of time between the Election and the opening of Parliament, or the formal proceedings which may precede it, may be fixed or may be subject to political decision. If the Parliamentary Administration has an opportunity to influence this, there is a case to argue for a decent length of time before formal proceedings start, particularly where there is, or might be, a significant change in membership. A few weeks between the Election and the start of proceedings allows more time for the induction of new Members and, if wished, a "big bang" approach to new Member training. For more details, see later chapter on induction and training.

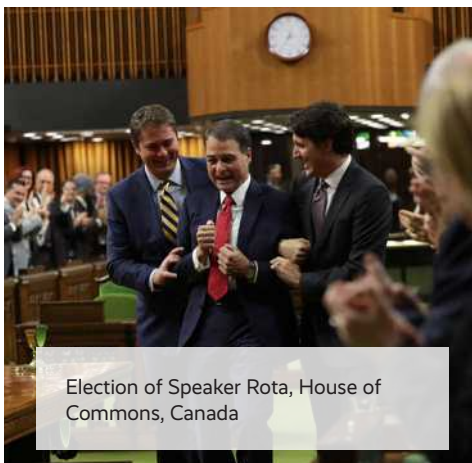
Members, parliamentary staff, media and the public will all want to know what is going to happen when. It may be hard to get clear decisions on this, particularly if the Government is in flux and no Speaker in office. However, even if the timetable is uncertain, it may be worth publishing a note of the likely schedule of events.

Election of the Speaker

In many Parliaments, the first formal proceeding of the Parliament is the Election of the Speaker or Presiding Officer. If the former Speaker is standing for re-election, the motion for their Election may well be agreed without a contest. If it is contested, then the Election may be complex and time-consuming. Each Parliament will have its own procedures for this. It is important that all staff involved are well briefed, both so that they can give accurate advice to Members and prepare for all the possibilities. If, as in many Parliaments, the longest-serving Member of the House, Chief Justice or Clerk presides over proceedings, they will need prior briefing and a prepared script. The media are likely to take a close interest and you could consider publishing a factsheet on the procedure to be followed.

CASE STUDY: HOUSE OF COMMONS, CANADA AND ELECTION OF THE SPEAKER

The Constitution Act, 1867 requires the Election of the Speaker at the beginning of a Parliament and again at any time a vacancy occurs. At the beginning of a new Parliament, the Speech from the Throne is read only after the Speaker has been elected. No other business can come before the House until the Election has taken place and the Speaker has taken the chair.



Election of Speaker Rota, House of Commons, Canada

The process for the Election of the Speaker is laid out in the Standing Orders. The vote, which is presided over by the Dean of the House (the member with the longest unbroken record of service) is conducted by preferential secret ballot using voting booths placed on the table in front of the Speaker's chair. Once the votes are tallied and one of the candidates obtains an absolute majority of the votes, the name of the successful candidate is announced to the House.

Once elected, the Speaker is escorted by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to take the chair and thanks the members for electing him or her. The House then suspends or adjourns until the time fixed for the formal opening of Parliament and the Speech from the Throne.

If a new Speaker is elected, they may want to make changes in their office support arrangements and personal staff. The House Administration will need to be ready to respond in a positive manner to this, and to assist new Speaker's staff with briefing, etc.

Swearing in / administration of the Parliamentary Oath

In many Parliaments, the Election of the Speaker will be followed by the swearing in of, or administration of the Parliamentary Oath or Affirmation to, Members, both those newly elected and those returning. Each Parliament will have its own practice on this. Swearing in is a significant event for Members, particularly those elected for the first time. Most will be proud and perhaps a little nervous. They may wish to arrange for their family to be present in the public gallery to witness the event, and to have access to a video recording, if the proceeding is broadcast.



Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng presides over each Member of the National Assembly's swearing in or affirmation of faithfulness to the Republic of South Africa and obedience to the Constitution. © GCIS.

Some Members may, for political or personal reasons, be opposed to the oath taking, and may want to make it clear that they are taking the oath or making the affirmation on sufferance. You will need to give them clear and firm advice on the legal requirements and on the consequences of not taking the oath in the prescribed form.

1.3.1 No elected Member shall be required to take a religious oath against his or her conscience in order to take his seat in the Legislature.

CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

Generally, while failure not to take an oath or affirmation may not affect the status of an individual as a Member it does prevent them from participating in proceedings of Parliament namely, sitting in the Chamber and voting. In some jurisdictions depending on electoral law, Members not taking an oath or affirmation may still receive a salary. In other jurisdictions they do not receive a salary until after taking an oath or affirmation and may also be fined.

If your procedures allow for the oath to be taken on a range of religious books, according to the religion of the Member, you will need to ascertain in advance which book is required by each new Member and obtain any books which are not already held by the Parliament. Care must be taken to respect any rules on the handling of particular religious books (such as the Quran): the Member concerned, or the appropriate religious authorities, should be consulted, if there is any uncertainty.

If your procedures allow for the Oath or Affirmation to be taken in different languages, or in an additional language, you will need to ascertain in advance if Members wish to do so, and make sure – with any unfamiliar languages – that you have an authoritative translation ready. Returning Members may not always want to do what they did last time.

Managing the process of swearing-in, and the flow of Members through it, can be challenging, particularly in larger Parliaments. Members will not want to spend hours queuing. Some Parliaments adopt some method of prioritisation, such as grouping Members by date of Parliament of first Election, to reduce the waiting time and make it easier for Members to judge when they will be sworn in.



CASE STUDY: SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS, NOVA SCOTIA

In Nova Scotia, swearing in usually occurs about two to three weeks after the Election. The Clerk's Office prepares for the swearing in of new Members upon receiving copies of the returns on the writs of Election for each electoral district. When the returns are completed and transmitted, the Members-elect are declared elected and officially become Members. The swearing-in ceremony usually follows the receipt of all returns (except perhaps for districts in which a recount occurs the Member elected in such a district is usually sworn in later at a separate ceremony).

Post-Election conflict resolution and mediation

It can be the case that during the Election period political and campaign violence may have occurred. Likewise, there may have been challenges around Election results and other occurrences which may have created significant political upheaval and division. The new Parliament may find itself starting proceedings in a politically charged and partisan environment. It is not unusual for violence to breakout in the Parliamentary Chamber. As a consequence, parliamentary leadership may need to be proactive in resolving ongoing hostilities alongside parliamentary officials or external intermediaries to resolve these tensions to ensure Parliament can function effectively and peacefully. For example, following the **Sierra Leone Election** in 2019 and significant party political divisions, the Clerk led a retreat for parliamentary leadership to agree a sustained resolution for cooperation and dialogue. The [Bo Declaration](#), which was supported by the UK's Westminster Foundation for Democracy resulted in an improved working environment for Government- Opposition engagement.

WHATSAPP AND MESSAGING SERVICES

A number of smaller parliaments, in particular, encourage new Parliamentarians to form a WhatsApp (or its equivalent) network group administered by the Parliamentary Service. In the early stages of the new Parliament it can be an efficient way to inform Members of what events are taking place and when. This is typically done alongside political party groups. Although such informal communication channels can be quick and effective, it is essential that they are not considered a substitute for more formal mechanisms of communication, especially official communications and notices.

Induction and Training



Participants and facilitators of the CPA Post-Election Seminar, Zambia, 2022

1.6.1 The Legislature shall take measures to ensure that newly elected Members are assisted in understanding how the Legislature works and its rules of procedure.

1.6.2 The Legislature shall take measures to assist legislators increase their knowledge and skills in the performance of their parliamentary duties.

CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

INDUCTION / TRAINING FOR NEW MEMBERS

A key question is whether to adopt a “big bang” approach to new Members’ training – providing an intensive training event or post-Election seminar – early in the Parliament, or a phased approach – offering a programme of training over the first year or two of the Parliament, designed to fit with when they will need the information.

One-off post-Election seminars – pros and cons

If you can get good Member engagement, arranging a post-Election seminar can be highly worthwhile. First, it capitalises on new Members’ enthusiasm when they are first elected. Second, it can be scheduled to fit with other events and perhaps before formal parliamentary proceedings begin. Third, it means that crucial information and key messages can be communicated to new Members early on, and that Members are well prepared for carrying out their duties from the start.

Member engagement is key. This requires getting the buy-in of the parties for the event in advance of the Election, so that it is part of their planning and messaging to their new Members. It also requires making the event attractive to the new Members: it needs to be seen as a high-status, must-attend event, with an interesting and useful agenda. Well regarded outside speakers may be a draw. There is no point putting a lot of trouble and resource into delivering a seminar if Members do not turn up.

For example in **Alberta**, new Members of the Legislative Assembly are invited to a two-day orientation session, held within one week of polling day. This includes an “information fair”. Procedural orientation is provided later, before the first session of the new legislature. In **India** Union, the Parliaments’ Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE) provides a suite of training provisions and opportunities. More information can be sourced [here](#).



Timing

Scheduling a post-Election seminar immediately after the Election is ideal, but not always achievable. Sometimes participation is undermined by political events. For example, Members may be called away to party discussions or distracted by political events, such as government formation discussions.

It is not too late to arrange a post-Election seminar later in the year, or even later in the Parliament. A later seminar can have advantages. New Members have a better understanding of the everyday challenges of the role, and of what they do not know; and they can be consulted on and involved in the planning of the event. The seminar could focus on areas where there is seen as a need for change or better sharing of good practice, on particular parliamentary functions (such as committee work or financial scrutiny) or on policy areas of current political concern (such as economic management or climate change). Depending on the size of your Parliament, you may want to include returning Members as well as those newly elected, as the seminar may be an opportunity for Members generally to reflect on how the Parliament operates and to consider best practice and experience elsewhere.

Content

The content and focus of the seminar is a matter of choice and for discussion with Members. It may depend partly on timing, and on the length of the seminar. If it is immediately after the Election, it may need to focus on the immediate priorities for Members (code of conduct, Chamber business, finances, employment of staff, etc) though it could also include policy briefings on key issues. If it is held later on, it might focus on parliamentary functions which are now of imminent relevance (such as the legislative process or scrutiny of the Budget).

TRAINING TOPICS: EARLY PRIORITIES

- **Behaviour, Ethics and Standards** – Code of Conduct; rules on declaring interests, prohibiting paid advocacy, and other employment; anti-bullying and sexual harassment policy; potential penalties
- **Employment of Staff** – how to go about this; requirements on contracts; pay rates; best practice as an employer; risks and handling disputes
- **Finance** – how to claim expenses; rules and requirements; policy on transparency etc
- **Physical Security** – risks and assistance available for Members, family and staff; parliamentary estate, constituency offices and home
- **Cyber Security and Data Protection** – cyber risks; online threats; legal requirements and freedom of information
- **Conduct in the Chamber** – what to do and what not to do; any expectations on dress
- **Basic Procedure** – how to table a question, motion or amendment to a bill etc

TRAINING TOPICS: SUBJECTS FOR LATER SEMINARS

- **Parliaments in the 21st Century** – institutional aspects of the parliamentary system, including the concept of the separation of powers, enshrined in the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles. As well as key contemporary issues such as the impact of COVID-19, the need to encourage diversity and inclusion, embracing best-practice and utilisation of technology and innovation in a parliamentary setting.
- **Services and Resources for Members** – the services and facilities available to Members and their staff in order to better carry out their role; and the resource challenges the Legislature faces.
- **Administration and Financing of Parliament** – the importance of parliamentary independence and financial autonomy for legislatures, examining the appropriate relationship between the Executive and Parliament.
- **Powers, Privilege and Procedure** – the Constitution, Standing Orders and rulings from the Speaker; the powers and privileges the Members have and how they can work within those rules to succeed in their roles.

- **The Legislative Process** – a detailed look at the various stages of legislation, types of bills (including Private Members' Bills), the importance of pre and post-legislative scrutiny and oversight of delegated legislation, and the role that Parliamentarians can play in the process to create the best laws.
- **Political Parties and Parliaments** – how parties are organised, the role of Members within their parties, co-operation between parties to create an effective and functional parliamentary environment, planning and business management within parties and how to employ political diplomacy to achieve mutually beneficial results.
- **Political Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution** – conflict resolution between political actors when there are strong political divisions in a post-Election period.
- **Bicameralism (if applicable)** – How parliamentary Chambers interact with one another, how to ensure effective relationships and coordination where there is supremacy and how Chambers can work together to preserve and protect parliamentary sovereignty.
- **Resources, Research and Information** – what resources, internal and external, Parliamentarians can draw on for research on political issues, including the role of civil society organisations and academics in providing relevant information and research.
- **Inclusion and Participation** – the importance of achieving and maintaining a diversity of perspective within Parliament, and the benefits to the legislative and oversight functions of Parliament. Parliaments that are reflective of the population which they serve will be seen as more legitimate by the public and better placed to represent the interests of the people.
- **Giving Parliamentarians a Voice** – the range of tools available to raise issues of importance, including contributing to debates, drafting and signing motions, written and oral questions, proposing Bills and amendments to legislation and raising issues at the constituency level.
- **Representation, Outreach and Education** – the important role a parliamentarian has in representing their constituents; how to harmonise work at the Parliament with constituency work; how to engage with wider stakeholders to get input into the way the Parliament works; and how to use the public, organisations and the media to encourage information dissemination.
- **Role of Select Committees** – the role and importance of Select Committees in effective scrutiny of government, including the powers of committees, the planning of committee business, the formulation of reports, overcoming disagreements to present a united front, and how to effectively leverage committee reports to encourage an executive response.
- **Role of the Public Accounts Committee** – the role and function of the Public Accounts Committee, how to plan its business, and how to conduct a specific inquiry.
- **Writing Reports and Achieving Impact** – how reports should be written, what they should and should not contain, how to formulate recommendations. This session will also examine approaches toward monitoring and evaluation to track progress and achieve worthwhile change.
- **Member/Clerk Relations** – the role of a Clerk and why it is important for an effective parliament; and what makes for an effective working relationship between Members and clerks to ensure Members are best supported in their role.
- **Parliamentary Diplomacy, Networking and Parliamentary Assistance** – the range of possibilities for Parliamentarians engaging with other inter-parliamentary and international organisations, to network and exchange experiences.

Quality

Whatever the focus, it is essential that the training delivered is of a high quality. Those speaking at the event need to be trained and rehearsed. Even very senior parliamentary officials or experienced Members will benefit from rehearsal and feedback. It is really important that the new Members find the training engaging, interactive and useful. Avoid lengthy panel presentations and lectures. People will switch off if it is too boring. If the event is more than an hour or so long, it is worth scheduling breaks and mixing presentations with discussion. It is a matter for judgement how much time to allot to questions from, or discussion among, the new Members. Discussion can be very productive, but it can also be quite irritating to Members if too much time is taken up by one or two of their number.



Make sure learning resources are collated and shared as people learn in different ways. Some people take in information through reading, others through listening and some by doing. Tailor the programme to combine all three approaches for maximum retention.

Ground rules

It is important to be clear to new Members what are the ground rules for any seminar or training event. Are they in confidence? Are photos allowed? Should phones be switched off for the duration of the event? It may be necessary to emphasise the importance of respecting other Members and avoiding partisan politics during the training. Also make sure any domestic resource persons brought in to lead on sessions are not all from the same party or political side.

External assistance

The CPA is available to assist Parliaments with organising a **Post-Election Seminar**. The CPA Post-Election Seminar is a flagship programme which has been delivered for over 25 years in Parliaments across the Commonwealth. These Seminars are aimed at building the capacity of newly elected and returning Parliamentarians. The Seminar usually take place a few months after an Election and are delivered by senior, highly experienced Parliamentarians and parliamentary officials from throughout the Commonwealth. In recent years these have also been delivered virtually for smaller jurisdictions. For example:

- [Virtual post-Election seminar in Belize](#), May 2021
- [Virtual: Trinidad & Tobago post-Election Seminar](#), Feb 2021
- In **Pakistan**, training, induction sessions and workshops are provided to new Members by the [Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services](#)
- In **Kenya**, the [Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training \(CPST\)](#) is similarly involved in training members of Parliament and legislative assemblies
- Some Parliaments also engage with universities or other third parties in delivering seminars and other training for Parliamentarians. For example, [McGill University's School of Continuing Studies](#), in Canada, offers a range of Parliamentary Professional Development Programmes which have been accessed by a number of Commonwealth Parliaments.

Unicameral vs bicameral training

If within a bicameral Parliament, consider organising events bicamerally. There can be advantages to having new Parliamentarians from both Chambers present. Often times, there is a mistaken assumption that Members of both Chambers are clear on how the other Chamber works. When in fact an entire parliamentary term can occur with ignorance on both sides. There can also be rivalries between Chambers. Having an opportunity early on to bring Members from both Chambers together, can help to build relationships and create a collaborative working arrangement, beneficial for both sides.

Phased approach

An alternative to arranging a one-off post-Election seminar, is to arrange a series of training events in the months following the Election. These can be phased according to likely need. For example, there might be early training on Chamber etiquette, and on tabling questions and amendments to Bills; while a briefing on financial scrutiny might best be left till just before the Budget, and training on Committee best practice scheduled for when Committees are appointed.



Participants and facilitators of the CPA Post-Election Seminar, The Bahamas, 2021

CASE STUDY: ARRANGEMENT OF INDUCTION TRAINING IN QUEENSLAND

The first set of sessions are provided by the Admin and Finance teams covering pay and benefits, human resources policies, hiring of staff, budgets, paying invoices. The Members' Allowances team then discusses MLA allowances, and what is allowed and what is not, and how expense claims are filled out and processed. These portions are done first, as it is important for new MLAs to understand what they can and cannot spend their money on, and to also find out information about hiring staff and setting up their constituency offices.

The House and Procedural team then do procedural orientations that cover how the Assembly operates. This includes the sitting days, what happens during the throne speech and budget debates, what happens during routine proceedings, what happens under Orders of the Day, how a Bill becomes law, how standing committees operate, how the Committee of Supply operates, dress codes, expected behaviours, points of order, matters of privilege, how to file a Petition, how to file a Motion, how to bring a Bill forward, where to obtain certain types of information from the different offices, and so forth. In addition, orientation sessions with Independent Officers are also conducted.

Queensland also organise sessions with former MLAs to discuss various aspects about being an MLA from the political and personal perspective where a great deal of useful advice is shared. They also organise sessions with the media so that they can introduce themselves, talk about the type of information they are looking for and what their deadlines are.

Many Parliaments may opt for a mixture of both approaches: some form of collective training immediately after the Election, focusing on the immediate priorities and essential messages for new Members, and then a series of talks or briefings phased over the following months. **New Zealand** has a [training calendar](#) which takes place over the course of two weeks.

Online courses

A good approach to take for time-poor newly elected Members is to encourage them to take up online courses. [The CPA Parliamentary Academy: A Centre of Excellence for Commonwealth Parliamentarians](#) was established in 2021. The Academy was initially intended as a central learning hub for Commonwealth Parliamentarians, Clerks and parliamentary officials. These static courses can be completed in a number of hours and can be undertaken at any time with no time limits for completion imposed on the student. The [Induction for New Parliamentarians course](#) would be most relevant for newer Members. The Agora Portal is another useful platform of online courses which are freely available to access.

Written guidance and handbooks

In addition to providing training events, both in person and online, it is important to provide new Members with written information which they can access when they see a need for it, including contacts or pointers on where to go for more information or personal advice. Many Parliaments produce some form of handbook for new Members, or for Members generally. This is usually printed in hard copy, but also available online.

Unless they contain confidential information, such as about security arrangements, it is good practice to make these documents available to the public on the internet. This is good for transparency and for the reputation of Parliament, but also provides a useful source of information to the public.

Some examples of guides and handbooks are:

- **India** Union, Lok Sabha's [Online Member's Handbook 2019](#)
- **New South Wales** [Legislative Council Members' Guide 2019](#)
- **UK** [Members' Handbook 2017](#) and [New Members' Guidebook – 2010](#)

The CPA may be able to give advice and assistance to smaller Parliaments on producing handbooks. As in the case of Belize, the CPA developed its **Belize** [Induction Handbook for New Members 2020](#) as part of a Technical Assistance Programme.



Access to information online

Many Parliaments provide their Members with information – and increasingly, access to services – online, often on a secure website or intranet, via a Members’ portal. This may be general to all Members, or may be designed so that new Members have a dedicated portal or access point directing them to the areas likely to be of most immediate interest. For example, the **Saskatchewan** Legislative Assembly offers new Members access to its MLA Portal, a secure website which houses all relevant information such as human resource, payroll, expenses and orientation materials.

TRAINING FOR RETURNING MEMBERS

Something that is often neglected is the training of returning Members. Of course, they do not need induction training in the same way as they did when first elected to Parliament, but they may benefit from refresher training, particularly if they are taking on a new role. Former Ministers, returning to the backbenches, may require refresher training on how to table Questions or apply for debates, especially if the processes have changed since they were last on the backbenches. Newly appointed Ministers may require briefing on what to do in the Chamber: exactly what to say when moving a motion, or taking a Bill through the House, for example. Newly elected Chairs of Committees might welcome training on Committee procedure or on chairing techniques and newly elected/appointed Speakers and Deputy Speakers may appreciate training on understanding procedure and standing orders. Experienced Members may not immediately realise that training would be useful, so this needs to be handled sensitively. An informal offer of a one-to-one briefing might be more welcome than a collective approach. Continuous professional development is as important for Members as for all other professions.

TRAINING / INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS’ STAFF

In addition to offering training to Members, you should also consider what induction and training is required by their personal staff.

An option is to open up the training designed for Members to Members’ staff. This will help to ensure events are well attended, even if Member attendance is low. But Members may not want to attend training with staffers – particularly those from other parties. And staffers may not be comfortable participating in training alongside Members. It is probably better to design training specifically for Members’ staff – focusing on their role in supporting their Member.

Timing

The best timing for this training will vary. There may be a need for quick induction and training on the basics immediately after an Election, as new Members employ new staff, but in some Parliaments the turnover of Members’ staff is high throughout the Parliament, so it may be necessary to provide training on a recurrent basis.

Location

In many countries, some Members’ staff are located in their home districts, not at the Parliament. For them, online information and virtual training events may be most effective. However, you might also arrange occasional training and familiarisation days at the Parliament, specifically designed for staffers based elsewhere, with funding for travel and overnight accommodation, if required. And some Parliaments arrange, or sponsor, occasional regional training or support events for Members’ staffers, nearer to their homes.

Written guidance

You should also consider producing written guidance specifically targeted at Members’ staff. This could be a handbook, covering all aspects of their work, or guidance on particular issues. For example, it might be helpful to give guidance on where they are allowed to go, or not go, on the Parliamentary Estate, and what they can do on behalf of their Member and what the Member has to do themselves (e.g. can they table a Parliamentary Question on their Member’s behalf?).

You might consider creating an area on your Parliament’s website or intranet, specifically for Members’ staff, so that they can easily find the information they need, wherever they are based.

ONBOARDING AND OFFBOARDING OVER COVID: A CANADIAN CASE STUDYⁱ

The 2021 Canadian General Election 2021 took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the usual approach taken for inducting and training new Parliamentarians had to change. The pressures for Members to adapt to ways of working in the pandemic proved challenging and so technology had to play a far more dominant role than before. In response, the Canadian Parliament undertook research to find ways of adapting through the **MP Career and Professional Development Framework**. The project took over a year and a half to complete and involved 120 MPs and their staff being surveyed. Experts from eight service areas in Canada's House of Commons focusing on whether training was catering to MPs' specific needs, how the journey of a Member of Parliament is perceived, and what they require most to perform their jobs successfully.

The study's resulting strategy rests on three pillars:

1. **Treat Members of Parliament** – who require nurturing and development like any of us – as human beings who need continuous support for growth and development.
2. **Promote capability development** rather than a traditional competency-based framework, to tap into potential. MPs must be able to perform a wide range of duties, but do not need to be a specialist in every sector.
3. **Approach MPs on two levels** – individual and team. MPs and their teams are essentially small enterprises, so the scheme should help them develop as individuals and as organisations.

The new system allows access to virtual learning, online information and news through a dedicated portal available 24/7.

The System also seeks to support the offboarding of departing MPs and their staff. Transition officers help departing MPs to complete their departure checklist, including closing their offices and their expenses, and parting with their staff.

Career advice is also a big aspect of the departure process, and helps former MPs to enrol in post-parliamentary study programmes, funded by the government. Meanwhile, a benefits programme grants privileges to past MPs, including entry to Parliament buildings with their lifetime Parliamentarian badge, access to libraries onsite, and a lifelong family and employee programme, which caters to mental health.

ⁱ [Extracted from the IPU. Case studies - How Canada's parliament created a new way to onboard MPs... and bid them farewell.](#)



Evaluation



It is important that, after all the work that will have been put into planning for a General Election, you evaluate how it went: what went well and what could have been done better. This should help inform your planning for the next Election.

GETTING FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS

The main element of this evaluation is likely to be feedback from Members, especially newly elected Members. As well as informing you about their experience, it is good to send a clear message that the Parliamentary Service is interested in, and guided by, Member feedback.

Many Parliaments regularly survey the opinion of their Members. An illustration of such a survey is included overleaf. For example, in South Africa, the **Western Cape** Provincial Parliament conducts an annual Members' survey to assess their experience of the Parliamentary Service. In **Alberta**, new Members of the Legislative Assembly are surveyed on the effectiveness of the orientation programme, and the results are reported against Goal 5 of the Legislative Assembly Office's Strategic Plan. Some Parliaments invite feedback after each element of the induction programme. For example, **Manitoba** provide feedback forms to new Members of the Legislative Assembly after each session and make adjustments accordingly.

For more general feedback, it is best not to ask too soon as there is benefit in waiting until new Members have learned what was most useful to their job. On the other hand, do not leave it so late they have forgotten what happened. You might consider a two-phase approach, asking for their initial feedback after, say, three months and then for their mature reflections after, say, a year or even two years. Getting busy Members to respond to surveys is not always easy. It may be more effective to arrange for a member of staff to meet them individually rather than just send a questionnaire.

You may also want to give returning Members, or former Members who retired or were defeated at the Election, the opportunity to express their views.

GETTING FEEDBACK FROM OTHERS

You may also want to get feedback from other people who experienced, or may have views on, the services provided around the Election. Members' staff are a key group, who can provide feedback both on their own experience and on their Member's. Others to consider are party officials, civil servants who work with Parliament, civil society organisations and the media – particularly journalists and broadcasters working in Parliament.

COMMISSIONING RESEARCH

An alternative to gathering feedback internally is to commission academic researchers or an appropriate civil society organisation to conduct research on your behalf. You will need to be clear from the outset whether this will be paid for or delivered on a pro bono basis, and whether they will be reporting to Parliament or publishing their own conclusions. In some countries there are parliamentary monitoring organisations (PMO) that could be encouraged to carry out such work.

INVOLVING MEMBER COMMITTEES

In many Parliaments there is a Committee of Members responsible for oversight of Parliamentary Services. This Committee may well be interested in evaluating services provided around the Election, and in steering planning for the next. From the point of view of the Parliamentary Service, it will be important to have this Committee onside, and it may provide the most appropriate route for reporting on what has been done. In the **UK**, the House of Commons Administration Committee has published reports on post-Election Services following each of the recent General Elections such as the [2013 Report](#). In **Guernsey**, the States' Assembly and Constitution Committee published a [report](#) in 2021 on the States' Members Induction and Ongoing Development Programme.

Below is an example terms of reference that a Committee might use for conducting a review of Election planning by the Parliamentary Service.

POST-ELECTION PLANNING INQUIRY - ADMINISTRATION / HOUSE COMMITTEE

The Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into General Election Planning, taking evidence from current and former Members.

It has called for written submissions addressing:

- Support for retiring Members;
- Support for Members who lose their seats;
- Support for returning Members;
- Support for newly-elected Members; and
- Support for Members' staff in the above four scenarios.

Underneath these five headings, the Committee would welcome views on:

- Communication to Members and their offices through the General Election period, including dissolution guidance;
- Contact and induction programme for new Members, plus ongoing training;
- Support for returning Members;
- Support for those Members and their offices who are standing down or who lose their seats;
- Office accommodation for Members and their staff;
- ITC for Members and their staff;
- Information and training for Members as employers;
- Resources and support for Members' staff, including constituency-based staff;
- Information provided by arms-length commissions (ethics, remuneration, etc).

TRANSPARENCY

Whoever carries out the evaluation, there is a strong case for publishing the results. You may be hesitant about publishing feedback or conclusions which are critical of your Parliamentary Service or sensitive in some other way, but it is important that Parliaments should be models of transparency. The public will have an interest in knowing, for example, the costs of the services you have provided, though it may be difficult to disaggregate these from the overall running costs of Parliament.



POST-ELECTION ASSESSMENT FORM

This form is designed to gather information from newly elected Members of Parliament, Member's Staff, former Members of Parliament and Staff of Parliament.

The data collected will form part of Parliament's monitoring and evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of Election planning. We would be grateful if you could please complete this form.

Please note the contents of this form are confidential and will be used and stored for internal use only. Only non-attributed data may be extracted for external use.

Full Name:

Gender:

Email Address:

Please circle which applies to you: **GOVERNMENT** **OPPOSITION** **INDEPENDENT**

Please state your political party (where applicable):

Please rank the Parliament's performance in relation to the below areas in the post-Election Period:

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor
Quality of communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provision of services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provision of equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provision of facilities and office space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What would you recommend we do differently?

Any other comments?

Consider sharing such feedback forms via online systems like SurveyMonkey or other systems to simplify collating results.

Conclusion



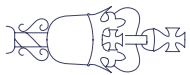
Elections are not all the same, and how Parliaments can best prepare for them will differ. The circumstances will differ from country to country and from Election to Election. The resources available to Parliamentary Services also differ. Not everything suggested in this Handbook will be appropriate in every case. You will need to decide what is needed and achievable in your Parliament.

That said, we offer these top tips:

- **Plan ahead** – don't leave it till the year before the Election
- **Resourcing** - make sure your plans are properly resourced, in both staff time and money
- **Work together** – make sure that the whole Parliamentary Service is working to a single plan with agreed priorities
- **Liaise with others** – particularly the political parties – to make sure your plans fit with theirs
- **Member focus** - consider what it will be like for new Members and don't overload them with too much information too soon
- **Engage at the right time** - make the most of the time and enthusiasm available immediately after the Election to get vital information and key messages across – but take a longer-term approach to Members' professional development
- **Remember the needs of returning Members**
- **Don't ignore Members' staff**
- **Keep your plans flexible and under review**
- **Evaluate** - consider how it went, get feedback and think about what could be done even better next time.



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