

Response to Assembly Members' Questions – Weekend 4

At our last meeting, several members asked for more information on aspects of the UK's democracy. This document offers answers. If you have further questions about any of the concepts raised at the Assembly, please contact James Cleaver (j.cleaver@ucl.ac.uk).

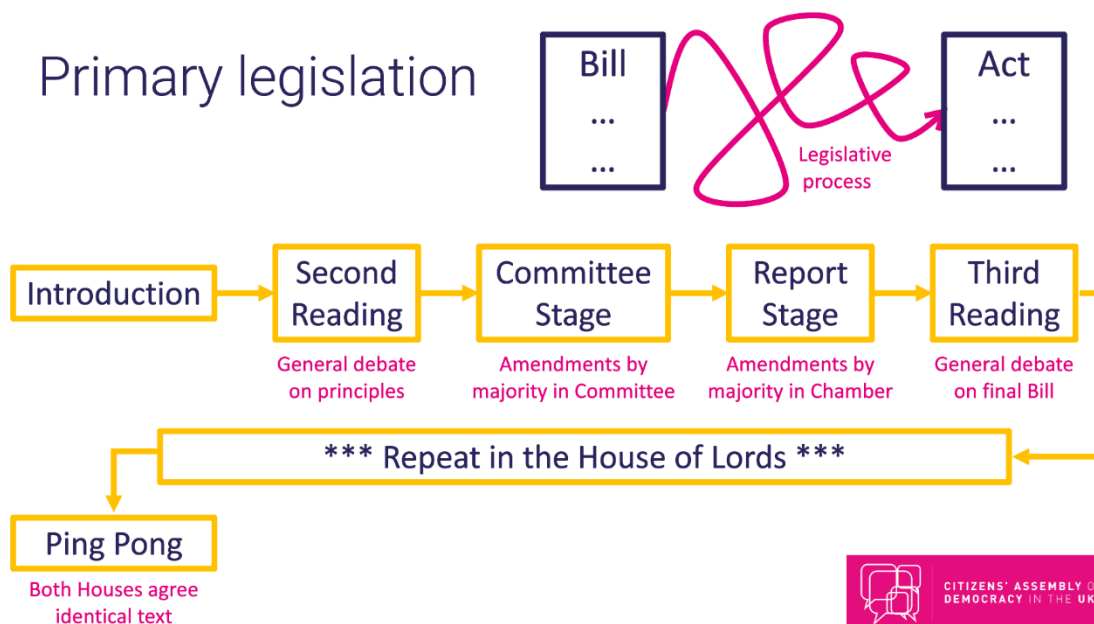
What is the role of committees in creating legislation?

Last weekend, an Assembly member asked about the role of committees in creating legislation (or laws). There are two main types of committee in the UK Parliament. You can read more about the UK Parliament's committees [here](#).

The best-known committees are **select committees**. Each select committee scrutinises policy in a particular area, such as health, education, or defence. The committees are formed after each general election and work until the next election – up to five years. Select committees can make recommendations, but they have a limited impact on the detail of legislation.

In contrast, **public bill committees** deal directly with legislation. A new public bill committee is established each time the House of Commons considers passing new primary legislation. (Remember: 'primary legislation' refers to the main laws passed by Parliament. See the [glossary of terms](#) for more details.) These committees examine proposed legislation line-by-line. Their membership reflects the make-up of the House of Commons, so the governing party generally has a majority on these committees. MPs on the bill committee can vote on amendments to the bill, before the bill goes back for consideration and decision by all MPs.

The image below, from Farrah Bhatti's presentation at weekend 3, outlines how primary legislation becomes law. You can watch Farrah's presentation [here](#).



What security measures are in place to protect MPs?

Following the murder of Sir David Amess, a question was asked about security measures for MPs. The Houses of Parliament at Westminster are patrolled by armed police, and anyone entering must pass through airport-style security gates. Since the murder of the MP Jo Cox in 2016, MPs have been offered a variety of security measures in their constituencies. These include panic buttons, CCTV systems and additional locks on doors. Some MPs have introduced appointment-only constituency meetings. Spending on these precautions has increased from £170,576 in 2015/16 to over £3m last year.