I was fortunate to serve as chair of a committee, on the Equality Act and Disability, and it was an enriching and very worthwhile experience. The support from the clerks was outstanding and all went well. I concluded however that the termination of the membership at the moment of publication was premature, since many inquiries and actions remained, and were addressed to me or other members, and we were left without any support. Fortunately Mr Collon went beyond his duty and did give some help. But it seems to me that committees who make a series of recommendations for action need at least a little ongoing clerical support.

The progress of the recommendations also needs attention. We were grateful for your letter of 6 November inquiring about progress, but I believe committees need more assistance to achieve that progress after the report has been published. We were fortunate too in that the Commons Women and Equalities Committee remains in existence, covers some of the same ground and remained in contact with me; but that was pure coincidence. In brief, committees are cut off and their recommendations may languish once the period of existence has come to an end. There needs to be more post-report action. I know this has been taken on board by the Liaison Committee and just wish to add my voice to the project.

Ad hoc Select Committees. As you may know, the recent choice of four has met with some disappointment. It is not clear what the strategy is in choosing them. It seems almost as if the selected 3 (not the Bribery Act one) were chosen because the topics amount to no more than general debating issues eg intergenerational fairness, regenerating seaside communities. It is hard to see how they can produce recommendations that will make a difference in the short term. They are not controversial or substantial issues (someone said "motherhood and apple pie"!) The impression given is that anything more important and pressing like mental health or financial services might detract from the weighty and time consuming Brexit business. I do not believe that we cannot cope with both.

It is suggested that topics put forward for ad hoc committees should be voted on by the whole House.

In sum - committees need post-publication support to get recommendations implemented
Ad hoc committees' topics should be selected with more transparency and wider input.

28 March 2018