Some while back you asked my views on the future shape of Lords’ Committees going forward. I appreciate that time has elapsed since then and that the Liaison Committee’s Review is now drawing to a close. However, if it is not too late, may I throw out the following ideas as a contribution to the discussion?

I would suggest that Lords’ Select Committee works should be grouped into two main areas: current issues and longer-term horizon-scanning work. This might be achieved by having two over-arching committees, each with the ability to form a number of sub-committees to undertake inquiries that might in some instances be fairly short and concise to others which might last a full session (or conceivably longer). The committees would set a work programme at the beginning of each year identifying the subjects they wished to cover matching them to the committee resources available. They would, however, have the flexibility to conduct some additional one-off hearings on particular topics if the need arose during the year. They could invite members of the House not on the Committee to serve on particular inquiries so as to make the best use of the House’s expertise.

The two over-arching committees I envisage would be:

- Policy and Legislation Review Committee - this would look at the effectiveness or otherwise of existing legislation or policy
- Future Trends Committee - this would look at emerging trends and the opportunities or threats posed by them.

The Policy and Legislation Committee might look at such topics as: the workings of immigration policy; the effectiveness of counter-extremism policies; matching skills requirements to the school curriculum and the offerings of further and higher education institutions; food policy and the health of the nation etc (to give some random suggestions).

The Future Trends Committee might look at such topics as: demographic trends (balance of older people to younger) and the implications for employment and welfare expenditure; impact of climate change on global population movements and the implications of this for security; investment requirements in critical infrastructure (looking at replacement of ageing plant, building in resilience and new requirements); societal impact of communications technology etc.
The aim of both Committees would be to maximise the use of the expertise available amongst the members of the House and contribute a cross-cutting analysis spanning multiple Government departments.

I don’t know if any of this is helpful, but I would be happy to come in and discuss in more detail if that would be useful.

11 March 2018