PPPP is a small organisation which believes that Parliament is out of touch with the people and that its proceedings would be enhanced if it were to have more involvement of people who have a role in life beyond politics.

We have a number of proposals for achieving this:

1. The introduction of job sharing in the House of Commons
2. The establishment as part of Parliament of a National Jury of electors chosen at random
3. The reconstitution of the House of Lords as a chamber of 500wte members meeting 8am to midnight six days a week with members attending for 8 hours a fortnight by rotation, requiring 12,000 members, who could include the National Jury and the Youth Parliament and also a range of members elected by a diversity of methods (including members linking to local government, grass roots proportional representatives of political parties, experts chosen by the National Jury, representatives of organisations elected by the people to appoint delegates, and a small number of representatives of assemblies of interest groups)
4. An arrangement for a proportion of votes in the Second Chamber to be cast by ordinary electors voting remotely or through proxies.

This evidence is concerned solely with the first of these proposals, which is directly relevant to your enquiry as part time working assists participation by women

The evidence is based on that which we submitted to the Speaker’s Conference in 2009 and is in three parts
1. Why this proposal would address the problem of participation of women in Parliament which your committee is examining
2. Other benefits of the proposal.
3. How it would work

**WHY PROVISION FOR PART TIME MPs WOULD ENHANCE PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT**

Provision for part time MPs (either through job sharing or otherwise) would enhance diversity because

- It would make it easier for MPs to combine membership of Parliament with domestic responsibilities and child care. As women still bear a disproportionate burden of domestic duties and child care this would benefit women. This is one of the main reasons that part time work and job sharing have been promoted in other areas of work and it should form part of the solution in Parliament as well. The success of job sharing and part time work in enhancing the role of women has been especially notable in the medical profession.
- Whilst constituencies continue to see the need for a candidate to appeal to the whole electorate they may still have a narrow view of what this means. Job
sharing or multiseat constituencies help overcome this because constituencies can look to a balanced ticket.

- As can be seen from part 3(c) of our evidence the proposal allows STV with quota to be introduced without the very large constituencies that have often been seen as an obstacle to it. STV with quota is an electoral system of proven benefit in promoting diversity because it places a premium on candidates who can win the strong loyalty (and hence first preferences) of a significant section of the population rather than those who least offend the majority.
- Its introduction would offer a significant one off renewal opportunity as existing MPs decided to seek job share partners.

OTHER BENEFITS OF PART TIME MPs

- It may also assist other areas of diversity
- It reduces the currently very unpopular concept of politics as a distinct profession
- It opens up links between the Westminster Village and some of the other worlds that make up our society
- It makes it possible for MPs to inform their contribution to Parliament with current experiences of life in industry, business, the professions, the public services, childcare or local communities.
- It makes possible three new forms of full time political service
  - work divided between Parliament and local government
  - work divided between Parliament and campaign groups
  - work divided between Parliament and political research
  These would augment the links between national government and local government, civil society and political thinktanks. It would make Parliament once again the prime focus of political debate.
- It would increase the House of Commons’ access to expertise as professionals decided to combine professional practice with political service.
- It solves the second jobs issue. There would be no justification for full time MPs having second jobs, but no basis to question part time MPs doing so.

HOW WOULD IT WORK?

THE JOB SHARING OPTION

Under this option people who want to be part time MPs job share with other people who want to be part time MPs.

This option can be used in any electoral system.

Electoral Law
The job-share partners would constitute a single candidate. To avoid innocent members of a job share being held liable for the failings of a partner we suggest it should be possible for voters to strike off the ballot paper one member of a job share with a proviso that if those striking off one of the members exceed 5% of those voting for the candidature and exceed the candidature’s majority that member is not elected and there is a vacancy for a partner. If one member of a job share dies or leaves Parliament the existing member should have a choice as to whether to continue as a full time MP, to have a bye election for a partner, or to have a bye election for the
whole seat. The candidature should be liable as a single entity for any illegal or corrupt electoral practices except that so far as penal consequences are concerned it would be possible to distinguish between an offending member and an innocent member.

**Pay and allowances**  If elected they would share a single salary and a single set of allowances. They would decide how to make this split – in some cases it would be 50/50 but there may also be job shares where one partner is almost full time (80% say) and the other plays a more limited role.

**Parliamentary procedure**  The only changes necessary would be to provide that if both members of a job-share vote on the same side of a vote only one vote will be counted. Otherwise they could be left to make their own arrangements to cover the duties whilst leaving themselves free to live the rest of their lives. It is unlikely that their attendances would overlap much and if they did it wouldn’t matter provided that double voting was excluded. As to committee memberships a member of a job share could be appointed to a committee in his/her own right or a job-share could be appointed as a single member with the members as alternate attenders. The former may be more sensible for Select Committees and the latter for Standing Committees but both options should be available.

**THE MULTIPLE DAY-SEATS OPTION USING STV WITH QUOTA**

Under this option there would be a number of seats each requiring attendance at the House of Commons on one day a week, amounting to 0.2wte. Members who wanted to have a limited commitment could seek one of them. Members who wanted to be about half time could seek two or three of them. Members who wanted to be essentially full time could seek four or five of them. This would be combined with the STV with quota method of proportional representation and one of its advantages is that it overcomes the problem that STV with quota requires large constituencies, as it works best in multi-seat constituencies of 5 to 9 members. Splitting seats into multiple part time seats makes it possible to use STV with quota in small constituencies.

**Electoral Law**

District councils would be used as constituencies. Each would be allocated one seat (0.2wte) for every 20,000 population to keep Parliament at just under its present size (600wte) but if there was a wish to reduce to 400 wte then each would be allotted one seat for every 30,000 population, and for a Parliament of 500wte the figure would be one per 25,000 population. Having divided the population by 20,000 or 30,000 or 25,000 the number of seats would be rounded to the nearest whole number. Voting would be by STV with quota. Candidates who wanted to be full time could, after being elected to one seat, decide that instead of their surplus being immediately redistributed they would remain in the count to see if they could win a second seat. If they failed to win a second seat they would be declared elected for one seat and their surplus would be redistributed when they were eliminated. If they did win a second seat they could repeat the process and remain in the count to see if they could win a third and so on until they had won five, which would be the maximum. Candidates wanting to be part time would quit the count when they had won as many seats as
they wanted. Some electoral technicalities were dealt with in our evidence to the Speakers’ Conference in 2009. They are not repeated here as we think it is unlikely you will see the remit of your committee as extending to the details of a method of introduction of proportional representation.

**Pay and allowances** There would be a full time salary set and part time MPs would be paid pro rata. Office allowances would also be prorata. Travel allowances would be paid to everybody and would probably increase. Overnight/second homes allowances would obviously depend on the number of days a member was expected to attend.

**Parliamentary procedure** As part time MPs would not have dedicated job share partners it would be necessary to have systems of distance voting and proxy voting.

**OTHER OPTIONS**

We think the above are the best two options for part time MPs but some other options were given in our evidence to the Speakers’ Conference.

September 2016