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**Friday
18 November 2016**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Anelay of St Johns	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Whip
Lord Bates	Minister of State, Department for International Development
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government, Wales Office
Lord Bridges of Headley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen	Whip
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Lord Dunlop	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office and Northern Ireland Office
Lord Freud	Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Whip
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Lord Nash	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Baroness Mobarik	Whip
Baroness Neville-Rolfe	Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Lord Price	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
Lord Prior of Brampton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health
Baroness Shields	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office and Department for Culture Media and Sport
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Lord Young of Cookham	Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Friday, 18 November 2016

Equitable Life Payment Scheme

[HLWS269]

Lord Young of Cookham: My honourable friend The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr Simon Kirby) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The Equitable Life Payment Scheme (“the Scheme”) started to make payments in 2011 and was due to close in 2014. The then Chancellor extended the Scheme in 2014 to maximise the number of payments that could be made. He subsequently announced in the Summer Budget 2015 that the Scheme would close to new claims on 31 December 2015. From the beginning of 2016, the Scheme began the process of winding down and completing all remaining claims. As the majority of these claims have now been paid, the Scheme has today published its final progress report, which can be found at www.gov.uk/equitable-life-payment-scheme.

The report gives an outline of the history of the Scheme, details the significant efforts that have been made to trace and pay as many policyholders as possible, and provides a distributional analysis of the payments that the Scheme has made over its four years of operation.

The report gives the final figures compiled by the Scheme, which show that, as at 31 August 2016, the Scheme has issued payments of over £1.12 billion to 932,805 policyholders. This means the Scheme has now issued payments to 90% of eligible policyholders. All the payments issued by the Scheme have been free of tax.

It should be noted that the closure of the Scheme to new claims will not affect the yearly payments made by the Scheme to With-Profits Annuitants, which will continue for the duration of those annuities. The Scheme has written individually to all With-Profits Annuitants to make them aware of this.

In the Summer Budget 2015, the then Chancellor also announced that, as part of Scheme closure, payments to non-With Profit Annuitant policyholders who were in receipt of Pension Credit would be doubled in early 2016. In fact the Scheme succeeded in making the majority of these additional tax-free payments in December 2015, and all were completed by March 2016, providing additional help to this vulnerable group of policyholders.

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council

[HLWS270]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley) has made the following Statement:

The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council will take place in Brussels on 21 and 22 November 2016. Shan Morgan, the UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU will represent the UK at the Youth, Culture and the Sport sections of the Council.

Youth

The Council will be asked to adopt draft conclusions on promoting new approaches in youth work to uncover and develop the potential of young people. The conclusions will recommend the need to promote effective and innovative cross-sectoral policies that can help young people realise their full potential. The UK intends to support the adoption of the conclusions.

The presentation will be immediately followed by a policy debate on youth engagement

Culture

The Council is expected to present a progress report on the proposals for the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive. The Audiovisual Media Services Directive seeks to ensure the effective operation of the internal market for television broadcasting services by ensuring the free movement of broadcasting services throughout the EU.

This will be followed by first reading on the proposal for a European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018). The objective of this initiative is to raise awareness of the opportunities that cultural heritage bring, mainly in terms of intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and economic growth. At the same time, the European Year aims at drawing attention to the challenges that cultural heritage is facing, including environmental and physical pressure on heritage sites and illicit trafficking of cultural objects. The UK intends to support this proposal.

The Council will then be invited to adopt a proposal to amend the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033 to extend the access to EFTA/EEA countries. The UK government is supportive of this proposal.

Finally there will be a public debate, ‘towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations’. This will discuss how the EU and its Member States can cooperate to bring about a more strategic approach to culture in external relations.

Sport

The Council will seek adoption of its draft conclusions on sport diplomacy. The conclusions will acknowledge that sport is a possible tool in supporting intercultural, economic and political cooperation, and that its potential can be part of extending and strengthening contacts between the EU and third countries. The UK intends to support the adoption of these conclusions.

This will be followed by a public debate on the impact of sport on personal development. The UK intervention will be to demonstrate the work the UK is already carrying out in this area through participation, Olympic legacy and the Sport Strategy.

Other business

The French delegation will present information on reform of the European copyright framework. This will be followed by the Croatian and Irish delegations on the European Capitals of Culture 2020. The Italian delegation will then present information on 'Facing crisis in Europe: Investing in Culture'.

The Council will also be presented with information on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) meeting in Glasgow (19-20 November). This information will be provided by the EU Member States representatives in WADA; Belgium, UK and Malta. This will be followed by the French delegation on development and specific features of the organisation of European sport. Finally there will be information from the Maltese delegation on the work programme of their incoming presidency.

Foreign Affairs Council and Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

[HLWS271]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 14 November. He and My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Defence attended the joint session of the Foreign Affairs Council and Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) on 14 November. The UK Ambassador to the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC), Angus Lapsley represented My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Defence at the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) on 15 November. The Foreign Affairs Council and Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) were chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. The meetings were held in Brussels.

Foreign Affairs Council

A provisional report of the meeting and Conclusions adopted can be found at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2016/10/18/>

Turkey

The Council discussed Turkey in the light of recent developments in the country. The Council recalled the Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU of 8 November and agreed on the need to keep communications open with Turkey. No Conclusions were adopted.

Eastern Partnership

Ministers exchanged views on recent developments in the six Eastern Partnership States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine) and looked forward to the next EU-Eastern Partnership Summit, to be held in November 2017 in Brussels. Conclusions were agreed. At the end of the discussion the Foreign Secretary briefed Ministers on his recent visit to the Western Balkans noting that the EU and Member

States needed to be more visible and engaged in the region.

Syria

Ministers discussed the Southern Neighbourhood over lunch, focusing on Syria. Ms. Mogherini informed the Council of her recent outreach efforts with key actors in the region, in line with the European Council mandate and in full support of the efforts of the UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. The Council expressed its concern over the escalation of tensions in the region, and called for an end to the violence in Syria and support for the resumption of a political process. A further 18 Syria sanctions designations were agreed as a procedural point by the Council, bring the total to 28 since the October Foreign Affairs Council.

Libya

Foreign Ministers discussed Libya, and considered how to support the Government of National Accord and implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement. Ministers underlined that building a safe, secure and prosperous Libya that is able to tackle with confidence the challenges in the region is in our collective interest.

Security and Defence Implementation Plan (SDIP)

Member States agreed Conclusions on the Security and Defence Implementation Plan (SDIP), which will increase the effectiveness of Common Security and Defence Policy. The Foreign and Defence Secretaries restated the UK's guiding principle that nothing should undermine NATO as the cornerstone of European Defence, and this was reflected in the Conclusions. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg joined the EU Ministers for a discussion on EU-NATO cooperation, which the Conclusions will help strengthen. The Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) also agreed on the need to keep the European Defence industry open and competitive.

Ministers agreed without discussion a number of measures:

- Council Conclusions on Iran.
- Council Conclusions on Security Sector Reform (SSR).
- Council Conclusions on the upcoming fifth review conference of the Convention on Prohibitions on Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW).
- The Council authorised the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to open negotiations on a Comprehensive Agreement between the European Union and Azerbaijan.
- The Council agreed in principle on the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan and requested the consent of the European Parliament.

Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

Commissioner Bienkowska spoke about the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP), which is due to be adopted

by the College of Commissioners at the end of the month. The EDAP will focus on: funding Defence research; fostering support for Defence supply chains; joint financing of Defence capabilities; and, an internal market with a Defence industry that is fit for purpose.

Member States agreed an increase to the European Defence Agency (EDA)'s budget in line with inflation, the first increase in six years. The UK agreed to maintain the level of the EDA budget in real terms because the EDA had made some progress on reform and performance, and, importantly, in recognition of the EDA's future role in taking forward SDIP and EDAP issues that could benefit UK security and UK industry.

General Affairs Council November

[HLWS272]

Lord Bridges of Headley: My right honourable friend the Minister of State for Exiting the European Union (David Jones) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I attended the General Affairs Council on 15 November. The meeting was chaired by the Slovak Presidency and held in Brussels.

The General Affairs Council discussed: the mid-term Review of the Multiannual Financial Framework; rule of law; legislative programming - the Commission Work Programme 2017 and Joint Declaration; follow up of the October European Council; preparation of the December European Council on 15/16 December and the European Semester.

A provisional report of the meeting and the Conclusions adopted can be found at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/gac/2016/11/15-16/>

Multiannual Financial Framework

The Presidency presented its proposed compromise text for the Mid-Term Review of the Multiannual Financial Framework. The Presidency's proposal allowed for some additional budget flexibility over the remaining years of the seven-year period, while respecting the principles of the original 2013 deal. Most Member States agreed with the proposal and it was agreed that it would be used as the basis for a Council common position for discussions with the European Parliament. However, Italy expressed concerns on the level of support for migration and youth employment and placed a reserve on the agreement. The UK abstained.

Rule of Law

This was the first evaluation of the Rule of Law at the General Affairs Council. The Presidency presented conclusions which called for a more structured preparation of the discussions and more focused topics to ensure a coherent exchange of views. Most Member States agreed with these conclusions. The Presidency also suggested a further review in 2019 to consider turning the rule of law dialogue into an annual peer review process -

this proposal divided Member States and will require further discussion.

Legislative programming – Commission Work Programme and Joint Declaration

First Vice-President of the Commission Frans Timmermans presented the Commission Work Programme for 2017. A Joint Declaration of the EU institutions will outline the priorities and objectives for the year ahead for the EU based on the Commission Work Programme. Themes for the Joint Declaration would be: Jobs and Growth, Migration, Energy and the Digital Single Market. The Presidency will now discuss the draft Joint Declaration with the Commission and European Parliament.

Follow-up to the European Council of 20 and 21 October 2016

The Presidency said it would aim to make progress on migration and trade between now and the December European Council. The Presidency stated they had been working to advance visa liberalisation (Georgia, Ukraine, Kosovo and Turkey), with a trilogue taking place on 16 November.

Preparation of the European Council of 15 and 16 December 2016

The draft agenda for the December European Council is migration, security, economic and social development and external relations. The Commission highlighted that they would like the agenda to cover external migration, with progress on reform of the Common European Asylum System, as well as strengthening external cooperation on security and defence.

European Semester 2017

The European Semester 2017 Road Map was presented and the Annual Growth Survey was published on 16 November.

AOB

Italy presented its plans to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in March 2017.

UK Operations in Afghanistan: Reserves Call-Out Order

[HLWS268]

Earl Howe: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr Mike Penning) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

With the expiry of the call-out order made on 1st November 2015^[1], a new order has been made under section 56(1B) of the Reserve Forces Act 1996 to enable Reservists to be called into permanent service in support of United Kingdom operations in Afghanistan.

Under the call-out order made on 1st November 2015, 146 Reservists have been called out for operations. We anticipate a continued requirement for Reservists, with the right skills and experience, over the period the new order will be in force. This is fully in line with our policy of

having more capable, usable, integrated and relevant Reserve Forces.

The order took effect from the beginning of 9th November 2016 and ceases to have effect at the end of 8th November 2017.

^[1] Call-out order authorising the call out of Reserve Forces for operations in Afghanistan, signed 1 November 2015.

Written Answers

Friday, 18 November 2016

Companies House

Asked by Lord Harris of Haringey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the proposal to reduce the amount of time that records of dissolved companies at Companies House are retained from 20 years to six. [HL3204]

Asked by Lord Harris of Haringey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what objectives they are seeking to achieve as a result of the proposal to reduce the amount of time that records of dissolved companies at Companies House are retained from 20 years to six. [HL3205]

Asked by Lord Harris of Haringey

To ask Her Majesty's Government which external organisations the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has consulted regarding the proposal to reduce the amount of time that records of dissolved companies at Companies House are retained from 20 years to six. [HL3206]

Asked by Lord Harris of Haringey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the savings that will result from the proposal to reduce the amount of time that records of dissolved companies at Companies House are retained from 20 years to six. [HL3207]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government has no current plans to bring forward proposals to reduce the period of time that Companies House retains records of dissolved companies.

We will continue to keep the retention period under review. Any future proposal to change the retention period would be subject to public consultation.

Employment: Disability

Asked by Baroness Thomas of Winchester

To ask Her Majesty's Government how businesses wanting to be involved with the Disability Confident Business Leaders Group can do so. [HL3103]

Lord Freud: Disability Confident is about employers influencing other employers, sharing their evidence and experiences in employing disabled people with other employers to encourage them to also make the journey. This employer led approach will be reinforced by establishing a Business Leaders Group, with membership from Disability Confident employers across a wide range of sectors, sizes and geographic areas.

We are currently finalising the Terms of Reference for the group and will then begin seeking members. Any employers interested in being involved should email disabilityconfident.scheme@dwpgsi.gov.uk, using Disability Confident Business Leaders Group in the subject heading and giving brief details of their organisation and any previous involvement.

Housing Benefit: Lancashire

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of households in (1) the County of Lancashire, and (2) the Borough of Pendle, that will experience reductions in their housing benefit as a result of the new cap introduced on 7 November; and what will be the total estimated annual reduction in each area. [I] [HL3023]

Lord Freud: It is estimated that around 1,700 households in the County of Lancashire and 100 households in the Borough of Pendle will be affected by the lower benefit cap in 2016/17.

The annual benefit reduction from the lower cap is estimated to be around £3,900,000 in the County of Lancashire and £200,000 in the Borough of Pendle in 2016/17 if the cap was in place for the full financial year, however actual savings will be much lower in view of the lower cap only applying to the latter part of the year.

Notes:

- i) Estimates assume no behavioural responses - any behavioural responses to the lower cap, such as claimants moving into employment, would cause the number of households affected to reduce.
- ii) The number of capped households has been rounded to the nearest 100 households
- iii) Annual benefit reduction has been rounded to the nearest £100,000 per year.
- iv) Modelling for this assessment was conducted using administrative records held by the Department for Work and Pensions containing amounts of benefit paid (including Child Benefit, as paid by HM Revenue and Customs) and indicators of receipt of Working Tax Credit and exemption benefits such as Disability Living Allowance. This enables the separation of households into those excluded from the cap, and those which will be subject to it and by how much. The administrative records relate to November 2015, but have been adjusted to reflect the future benefit regime.

The benefit cap will be lowered from 7th November from £26,000 to £20,000, except in London where it will be lowered to £23,000 (a lower cap applies to single adult households). To help ensure Local Authorities are able to protect the most vulnerable Housing Benefit claimants and to support households adjusting to our welfare reforms, the Government will provide £870m funding for Discretionary Housing Payments over the next 5 years from 2016/17.

Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Asked by Baroness Thomas of Winchester

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will define those individuals with severe and lifelong disabling conditions who will not be subject to repeated reassessments for benefits. [\[HL3104\]](#)

Lord Freud: We will be working over the coming months with medical professionals and other stakeholders

to develop criteria that will help us identify those with the most severe health conditions or disabilities, for whom repeat work capability assessments can be stopped.

Rather than a list of specific medical conditions, the criteria will be based on identifying claimants with the most severe health conditions or disabilities where it would be unreasonable to expect the individual to undertake any form or amount of work or work-related activity. This change will only apply to those placed in the Support Group and Universal Credit equivalent.

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