

Order in the Chamber

Rule 7.3 of the Standing Orders makes provision about order in the chamber. It requires members at all times to conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner and to respect the authority of the Presiding Officer. In particular Rule 7.3.1 prohibits members from speaking or standing when the Presiding Officer is speaking. Members must also conduct themselves in an orderly manner and in particular not conduct themselves in a manner which would constitute a criminal offence or contempt of court.

The Presiding Officer wishes to clarify for members his expectations with regard to conduct in the Chamber during meetings of the Parliament:

To maintain courtesy and respect, members should not behave in a way which interferes with the proper conduct of business in the Chamber.

Members should respect the needs of other members to participate in the business of the Parliament and should avoid loud or prolonged discussions which may distract other members.

Members should not use language or gestures likely to cause offence.

Mobile telephones should be switched off. Pagers may be on, provided that the sound is switched off. Lap-top and hand-held computers should be switched off.

There should be no unauthorised singing, whistling or other music.

Members should not take photographs.

Members should not read newspapers or magazines, except where members wish to quote from articles in debate.

Permission to sketch, paint or draw should be sought from the Presiding Officer in advance.

No food, hot drinks or alcohol should be brought into the Chamber.

To avoid walking across the well of the Chamber and the Presiding Officer's line of vision, members should use the doors at the east and west sides of the Chamber.

Members should not walk between the Presiding Officer and the member speaking.

If the Presiding Officer is speaking, a member who wishes to make a point of order should wait until the Presiding Officer has finished speaking before standing in his place.

The Presiding Officer would be grateful for members' co-operation on these matters, which should further the aim of achieving orderly debate in the Chamber.

Conduct in the Public Galleries and Committee meetings

Rule 15.2 of the Standing Orders requires members of the public admitted to the public gallery during any meeting of the Parliament or to any Committee meeting to comply with such reasonable conditions as the Presiding Officer may determine and notify to them. The Presiding Officer has decided as follows:

Members of the public admitted to the public gallery during any meeting of the Parliament must:

respect their surroundings and behave in an orderly manner at all times;

be silent when proceedings are under way;

obey any instructions given to them by staff of the Parliament;

not eat, drink or smoke;

refrain from dropping or throwing objects from the gallery.

not display any banners or slogans;

switch off mobile phones, pagers, laptops and hand-held computers;

not sing or whistle or make or play recorded or broadcast sounds of any kind;

not take photographs, sound or video recordings;

not paint, draw or sketch without the prior authorisation of the Presiding Officer;

enter and leave quietly.

These conditions will apply to members of the public admitted to Committee meetings.

The Presiding Officer is arranging, through the Parliament's security staff, for these conditions to be notified to members of the public admitted to the public gallery.