

Dear Mr Smith,

Mr Speaker asked me to thank you for your email and to respond on his behalf.

There is no general prohibition on discussing of matters relating to the Royal Family in the House of Commons and recent press coverage has rather confused the issue.

Matters relating to the Queen can be debated, and indeed much legislation affects the Crown. For example, in 2011 Parliament passed the Sovereign Grant Act, which made provision to replace the civil list with a grant. This directly affected the Queen and the Royal Family.

There are two different prohibitions which have led to the misconception that the House of Commons cannot talk about the Queen or members of the Royal family.

The first is that it is forbidden to use the Queen's name to influence debate. This has two purposes: it keeps the Crown above politics. Just as importantly, it makes sure that Parliament is independent of the Crown and people cannot argue for a particular measure "because the Queen would like it".

The second is that it is forbidden to make incidental criticism of a wide range of people in public life. This includes members of the Royal Family, but also include the senior judiciary, other MPs all members of the House of the Lords. The prohibition is on incidental criticism: there is no prohibition of debating a motion which explicitly criticises such people. The principle here is that there should be notice that criticisms are going to be made, so that those on both sides of the argument may speak.

The third thing in play is that questions relate to ministerial responsibilities, and while ministers will be responsible for some things related to members of the Royal family, they are certainly not responsible for their conduct.

I hope this reply is helpful. Thank you for taking the time to write and please accept our best wishes.

Kind regards,

Assistant to the Speaker's Secretary



The Speaker