# Home Affairs Committee softens scrutiny under Karen Bradley, easing Yvette Cooper’s grilling



The recent session of the Home Affairs Select Committee, chaired by Karen Bradley, revealed a striking departure from the rigorous interrogation that characterised Yvette Cooper's tenure as chair between 2016 and 2021. Notably, Cooper, now the Home Secretary, faced a committee evidently less willing to challenge her authority, leading to an insipid performance that many stakeholders in Westminster might find concerning.

When Cooper previously led the committee, she was a relentless critic of home secretaries, demonstrating a distinctive ability to hold them to account. Her engagements with Amber Rudd, Sajid Javid, and Priti Patel were fraught with tension, as she navigated through their policies with a surgical precision that left no room for complacency. In contrast, the current committee, largely populated by Labour MPs from the 2024 intake, seemed reluctant to assert any similar level of scrutiny over Cooper, transforming what should have been a robust examination into a mere exercise in politeness. Critics might argue that this reluctance stems from an overarching loyalty to party leadership, raising questions about the committee's effectiveness in providing necessary oversight.

The session's atmosphere appeared almost congenial, underlined by moments that suggested more of a love-in than a critical inquiry. New MP Jake Richards, whose sister advises Cooper, and the other Labour MPs participated in what seemed a collection of soft questions, avoiding politically charged issues such as the government’s handling of small boat crossings—one of the most contentious topics currently dominating the national conversation. Cooper appeared at ease, engaging with her fellow committee members in a manner more reminiscent of a friendly conversation than a challenging debate.

This shift in dynamics may reflect a broader strategy within the Labour Party, as MPs are possibly cautious not to alienate the leadership or appear overly antagonistic. Karen Bradley’s leadership style has been described as gentle and unassuming, which could explain her failure to instigate a more rigorous line of questioning. Her background, which includes a stint as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, does not seem to have prepared her for the more combative nature of home affairs discussions.

Despite the committee's apparent shortcomings, there were fleeting moments of seriousness, such as the discussion surrounding an alarming incident involving Paul Doyle's alleged reckless driving into a crowd at a parade in Liverpool. However, even this topic did not lead to robust debate, as much of the session veered back towards local policing matters that lacked relevance to national concerns.

The session culminated in a somewhat farcical end, with discussions surrounding accommodation for migrants bypassed, and Cooper managing to dodge any extensive scrutiny of her department's failures. In what was described as a bravura performance, she effectively 'ran down the clock', avoiding hard questions while keeping the energy of the discussion rolling.

Meanwhile, external political dynamics continue to unfold, with Conservative leader Bob Seeley engaging in what has been termed a protracted and largely personality-driven leadership campaign. His recent remarks around migrant accommodation, which some might view as incendiary, starkly contrast with the genteel atmosphere of Cooper's committee meeting. This inconsistency in political engagement illustrates the diverse and often conflicting approaches being adopted across the benches in Parliament.

As Cooper settles into her role, the question remains whether this committee structure can evolve to fulfil its critical oversight function. Without a pivot back to the scrutiny that defined Cooper’s earlier days leading the committee, the risk is that vital government accountability continues to be sacrificed for the sake of party camaraderie.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace), [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yvette_Cooper), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Bradley)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37707700), [[6]](https://www.civilserviceworld.com/news/article/home-affairs-committee-to-get-new-chair-after-labour-party-reshuffles-top-team)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Bradley)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yvette_Cooper), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37707700)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/03/love-in-at-the-home-affairs-committee-as-yvette-cooper-runs-down-the-clock-john-crace> - In this article, John Crace critiques the Home Affairs Select Committee's recent session, highlighting the lack of rigorous questioning directed at Home Secretary Yvette Cooper. He contrasts this with Cooper's previous tenure as chair of the committee, where she was known for her tenacity and thorough scrutiny. The current committee, predominantly composed of Labour MPs from the 2024 intake, appears hesitant to challenge Cooper, leading to a session that lacked substantive interrogation. The piece also touches upon the committee's focus on less pressing issues, such as local policing, while avoiding more contentious topics like small boat crossings.
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yvette_Cooper> - Yvette Cooper is a British politician who has served as Home Secretary since July 2024. A member of the Labour Party, she has been the Member of Parliament for Pontefract, Castleford and Knottingley since 1997. Cooper has held various governmental roles, including Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in three departments under Prime Minister Tony Blair and Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in 2009. She chaired the Home Affairs Select Committee from 2016 to 2021 and returned to the frontbench as shadow home secretary in November 2021. Following Labour's victory in the 2024 general election, she was appointed Home Secretary by Prime Minister Keir Starmer.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Bradley> - Karen Bradley is a British Conservative Party politician who has been the Member of Parliament for Staffordshire Moorlands since 2010 and the Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee since 2024. She served as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from 2018 to 2019. Bradley was appointed to the Cameron-Clegg coalition as a Lord Commissioner of the Treasury in 2013, before being promoted to Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Preventing Abuse, Exploitation and Crime in 2014. During the formation of the May government in July 2016, she was appointed to the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, where she remained until being appointed Northern Ireland Secretary in January 2018, serving until her dismissal by new Prime Minister Boris Johnson in 2019.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37707700> - In this BBC News article, it is reported that MPs have elected Labour's Hilary Benn to lead a new cross-party select committee which will scrutinise Brexit. In other contests, Labour's Yvette Cooper was named as the chairwoman of the Home Affairs Committee. The role of select committees, which interview witnesses and produce reports to check the work of different areas of government, has increased in profile in recent years. Parties are allocated specific chairman positions according to their share of MPs in the Commons, with all members able to vote in the elections.
6. <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/news/article/home-affairs-committee-to-get-new-chair-after-labour-party-reshuffles-top-team> - This article discusses the appointment of Yvette Cooper as shadow home secretary in a significant reshuffle of Keir Starmer's top team. Cooper, a former minister, will step down as chair of parliament's Home Affairs Committee to return to the frontbench. The reshuffle signifies a departure from the Corbyn years under Starmer, with critics on the left likely to describe this appointment as a shift to the right. The reshuffle began in the middle of a speech by deputy leader Angela Rayner, who said she did not know the details of it, nor had she been consulted.
7. <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/news/100612/yvette-cooper-elected-chair-of-home-affairs-committee/> - This UK Parliament article reports on Yvette Cooper's election as Chair of the Home Affairs Committee. The election took place on 19 October 2016, with Cooper being elected in the third round of voting. Following her election, Cooper expressed her commitment to working with everyone on the Committee and across Parliament, highlighting the important work ahead for the Home Affairs Select Committee, especially in areas such as changing patterns of crime, community cohesion, security threats, and the implications of the Brexit deal on policing and immigration.