

**ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON POLITICAL LITERACY**  
**Minutes For Inaugural Meeting on 19.01.2021**

**Attended on the 19.02.2021 (Parliamentarians):** *Simon Fell MP (Co-Chair), Lord Iain McNicol (Co-Chair), Nickie Aiken MP (Co-Vice-Chair), Owen Thompson MP (Treasurer), Lord Chris Rennard (Secretary), Lord David Blunkett, Lord Andrew Lansley, Philip Dunne MP, Tim Loughton MP, Lord Simon Woolley, Ben Bradley MP.*

**Apologies from those who could not attend (Parliamentarians):** *Cat Smith MP (Co-Vice-Chair), Caroline Lucas MP, Helen Hayes MP, Tracey Crouch MP, Andrew Bowie MP, Christian Wakeford MP, Julie Marson MP, Layla Moran MP.*

**Attended on the 19.02.2021 (Secretariat):** *Matteo Bergamini, CEO (Shout Out UK), Olive Baring, Project and Communications Coordinator (Shout Out UK), Maddy Page, Communications Officer (Shout Out UK), Spencer Caminsky, Communications Officer (Shout Out UK), Ralitsa Raleva, Head of Policy and Stakeholder Relations (Shout Out UK).*

**Summary of Purpose, Voting Decisions and Attendance**

***Purpose of the APPG***

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Political Literacy will aim to provide an all party forum to discuss the current provision of citizenship and political education (in schools, further and higher education) and to explore how best to further strengthen political literacy education so that young people regardless of background, can play an informed, active role as citizens in our democracy. The key aim of this APPG will be to provide evidence for the importance of political literacy education in promoting youth participation in democratic life. The ultimate goal of this APPG will be to ensure that all young people become politically literate by the time they finish their secondary education.

On the 19th of January 2021, the APPG held its inaugural meeting.

**The APPG elected the following Parliamentarians as Officers:**

Co-chairs: Simon Fell MP, Lord Iain McNicol MP  
Vice chairs: Nickie Aiken MP, Cat Smith MP (absent)  
Treasurer: Owen Thompson MP  
Secretary: Lord Chris Rennard

**Detailed Minutes**

***Voting-in of Officers***

The Inaugural Meeting began with voting-in officers. Simon Fell MP and Lord Iain McNicol were put forward as co-chairs by Lord David Blunkett. His nomination was seconded by Lord Chris Rennard.

Simon Fell put forward Nickie Aiken MP to take the position of Vice Chair. The decision was seconded by Lord Iain McNicol. Simon Fell also put forward Cat Smith for Vice Chair. The decision was seconded by Lord Chris Rennard. Simon Fell then asked whether other members might be

willing to volunteer for a position - Lord Chris Rennard and Owen Thompson MP expressed a desire to be officers. Simon Fell then nominated Lord Chris Rennard as Secretary and Owen Thompson MP as Treasurer. They seconded each other's nominations.

### ***Opening statements***

Simon Fell MP stressed the importance of discussing politics at the current day and age, amidst an all-time low youth satisfaction with democracy and growing trust in democracy in countries with populist leaders. He briefly outlined the key question the APPG aims to address - how to make politics engaging and explainable to young people as a way to push against the forces that hinder democratic participation. He also mentioned that it is clear that young people are interested in politics and referenced a survey result from [Shout Out UK's recent annual report](#), according to which just over 70% of surveyed young people reported that they would like to see a GCSE in Politics. He then outlined that the group wants to map out what political literacy provision is currently available, how can it be strengthened and what more can we do to ensure young people are politically literate. He tasked the Secretariat with coordinating academic and civil society members to pursue further research into this to find out what works, what young people and teachers want. Simon Fell then read out a written statement by Cat Smith MP (absent from the meeting), who also stressed the importance of building young people's appreciation of democracy through political literacy.

Following this, Lord Iain McNicol delivered a statement, sharing the immense benefits of having studied Modern Studies in Scotland, which led him to become very interested in politics and in ultimately joining the Labour Party. What drew him to this APPG is that many people claim that politics does not matter, it does matter, especially now when across the world, democracy is under attack. He called for looking at best practice - looking at the evidence from Modern Studies in Scotland and conducting new research about what young people think about politics and how they acquire information about it. He also pointed out a statistic from a report by [the National Literacy Trust](#), which states that only 2-3% of people have the critical training to work through what information can be trusted and what is misinformation. More action, resource production and support for young people around this is needed, and having a cross-party coalition, supported by Shout Out UK is a great way to achieve this.

Nickie Aiken MP began by sharing her delight to be the Vice-Chair of the APPG. She thinks it's very important that Parliamentarians and society as a whole ensure that younger generations appreciate both the delight and the frustrations of democracy, while comparing it to other political systems across the world. Realising the younger generations perceive a large part of the world through social media, she worries that political discourse and political literacy have been lost along the way. She believes that we have a duty of care to young people to help them understand different political systems, why it is important to have an open debate, why it is important to discuss different topics and issues, and to respect people's different views. She also mentioned that we need to listen to young people and see the world through their eyes. She then called for expanding political literacy in partnership with young people, and for supporting parents, carers and other family members to help their young people participate in political discourse. As well as supporting the potential establishment of a GCSE in Politics, she emphasised the importance of giving families and older generations the confidence to challenge young people and for young people to challenge family members, and to have a proper debate about policy and issues in family environments.

Matteo Bergamini, CEO of Shout Out UK (The Secretariat), expressed his excitement to be working alongside a wonderful group of Parliamentarians, academics and third-sector organisations. He emphasised that young people are at the forefront of contemporary political and social causes and they have always cared about politics and the world around them.

### ***Young people's and teachers' statements***

The following young people and teachers gave statements about their experiences with this topic:

- Noon Abbas, 19
- Riddhi Kanetkar, 20
- Alexander Barrington Brown, 18
- Megan Caskie-Hefferman, 22
- Mrs Osmani, Ayesha Siddiqa Girls' School (written statement read by Simon Fell MP)
- Laura Clash, Orchard School (pre-recorded video statement)

### ***Case studies***

The APPG heard from the following sector stakeholders:

- Dr. James Weinberg, The Political Studies Association & The University of Sheffield
- Liz Moore, The Association of Citizenship Teaching (ACT)
- Harriet Andrews, The Politics Project

This was followed by an open Q&A session.

### ***Co-chairs' closing remarks***

Simon Fell MP began his closing remarks by saying that the people who have spoken today, both students, teachers and experts in the field, have demonstrated why the existence of the group is so important. He thanked the other officers and Shout Out UK and the young people, teachers and experts, who had given us all some important points to reflect on.

Lord Iain McNicol remarked that politics is not just about 'big government' about every level that affects people's lives. Getting involved does make a difference, and he congratulated the practical ideas put forward by the young people and teachers. He then remarked that there were over 140 participants joining in the inaugural meeting and encouraged people to get in touch with either him, Simon Fell or Shout Out UK, who will be working out a plan for the upcoming year, based on which the group can be held to account.