

**ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON POLITICAL
LITERACY Minutes For Annual General Meeting on
08.02.2022**

Attended on 08.02.2022 (Parliamentarians): *Simon Fell MP (Co-Chair), Lord Iain McNicol (Co-Chair), Cat Smith MP (Co-Vice-Chair), Lord Chris Rennard (Secretary), Lord David Blunkett, Philip Dunne MP (office in attendance), Afzal Khan MP (office in attendance), Tracey Crouch MP, Kate Green MP, Rachel Hopkins MP.*

Apologies from those who could not attend (Parliamentarians): *Nickie Aiken MP (Co-Vice-Chair), Owen Thompson MP (Treasurer), Caroline Lucas MP, Helen Hayes MP, Andrew Bowie MP, Christian Wakeford MP, Julie Marson MP, Layla Moran MP, Tim Loughton MP, Lord Simon Woolley, Ben Bradley MP, Lord Andrew Lansley, Ruth Jones MP, Kim Leadbeater MP, Marion Fellows MP, Flick Drummond MP.*

Attended on 08.02.2022 (Secretariat): *Matteo Bergamini, CEO (Shout Out UK), Spencer Caminsky, Head of Campaigns and Parliament Relations (Shout Out UK), Shima Langan, Communications Officer (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 8th of February 2022, the APPG held its Annual General Meeting.

The APPG elected the following Parliamentarians as Officers:

Co-chairs: Simon Fell MP, Lord Iain McNicol

Vice chairs: Nickie Aiken MP (absent), Kim Leadbeater MP (absent), Vicky Foxcroft MP

Secretary: Lord Chris Rennard

Detailed Minutes

Voting-in of Officers

The Annual General Meeting began with voting-in officers. Simon Fell MP put forward the slate of aforementioned Parliamentarians as Officers as a block, who were voted in

unanimously by the attending Parliamentarians. Simon Fell then asked whether other members might be willing to volunteer for a position, and no one put themselves forward.

Opening statements

Simon Fell MP discussed the successes of the past year as an APPG, and discussed the aims of the APPG in terms of bringing Political Literacy into the curriculum. He said that COVID-19 misinformation, particularly in the digital space, has only heightened the need for Political and Media Literacy. He said that those willing to take advantage of people's fears have an easy method and accessible target of doing so through the internet, to young people. He mentioned a statistic from a recent Ofcom report stating that 63% of people find it difficult to discern between what is real and fake online, and this lack of trust is worrying for democracy. He stressed the need to fight back against misinformation through Political and Media Literacy and this APPG was set up for that reason. Simon highlighted the impressive work of Shout Out UK, and James Weinberg and the rest of the APPG Academic Advisory Group, for holding conversations on this with the Department for Education, saying that the APPG has made much progress, there is much work to be done, and he is optimistic. He also highlighted Lord McNicol's good work in the media and podcasts getting the APPG's word out there, and thanked the APPG's supporters for standing with the Group as it grew.

Following this, Cat Smith MP reflected on her time with the APPG, and wider on her time as a Political Literacy advocate. Despite the difficult circumstances, Cat expressed how impressed she was with the first the APPG has had and the attention it has received. She noted that this issue comes up in her local constituency, and that the APPG has gotten cut-through on this issue that it has never received previously. She reflected on her time on the front bench in 2016, and the time she spent in schools. She praised Shout Out UK and the work they do for Political Literacy, and she reflected on an event she attended in 2017 on Political Literacy. She remembered how overwhelmed she was with the amount of young people there who spoke, and how they were passionate but didn't know how to make change, which is when she realised how important Political Literacy was. She reflected on the events of Capitol Hill on January 6th, in an effort to underline how fragile democracies are, and in particular British democracy. She highlighted an event she did with young women in the Labour Party recently, and how scared young women were in getting involved directly as a candidate, because they are concerned about making themselves vulnerable to personal attacks, which members of all sides of the aisle are receiving. Cat expressed concerns about this, and stressed the importance of allowing young people to make their own decisions about the ideologies they adopted, and challenging the vulgar language often used to describe politicians in the media. She expressed how pleased she was of her replacements of Kim Leadbeater MP and Tracey Crouch MP as Vice Chair, and committed to staying active and involved in the APPG's efforts, despite standing down as Vice Chair. She wished the new Vice Chairs good luck, and thanked Shout Out UK for their efforts with the APPG as well.

Matteo Bergamini, CEO of Shout Out UK (The Secretariat), thanks Cat Smith MP for the work she has done for Political Literacy and to all for their support. He discussed the importance of the Group today and how Politics and misinformation impacts our lives and our opinions,

and the silver lining of the current times in highlighting the need for this work. He reflected on how the pandemic highlighted how information can be manipulated, and critical thinking skills strengthens that democracy. He said that schools, PRUs and young people want to be taught these skills, and that call has never been stronger. He argued that now is the time for action, and said that as per James' and the AAG's research, the support for these issues from all parties is there. He reflected on the success of Political Literacy Day, where the APPG and Shout Out UK ran 7 events throughout the day with cross-party support, one of them featuring the Head of Education and Skills for the OECD. He equally discussed the endorsements from government departments that the APPG secured, and the PR the Group received throughout the year, both from international and local sources. He discussed the partnerships the APPG has made and the network built, and after a meeting with the DfE, the potential for creating a proof of concept for CPD for teachers in Political and Media Literacy, because of the lack of training currently being done for teachers in this area, as per the 'Missing Link' report. DfE are interested to know what good teacher training looks like, which is what the APPG will create for them - especially since teachers want this training

Finally, James Weinberg (Head of the Academic Advisory Group), discussed the importance of having adversity in times of difficulty, and Political and Media Literacy is part of this. He said that this was the reason for the creation of the AAG; the APPG's work should be evidence-based. He discussed that the Group is broad in expertise and over 30 strong, meeting 4-5 times over the course of the past month. He said that they all fed into the 'Missing Link' report, and the language to use around Political and Media Literacy. He discussed some of the crucial stats in the report that only 1/3 of secondary schools in England offer weekly lessons in Citizenship or politics broadly, and only 1% of teachers feel prepared to deliver politics in schools, despite 50% being asked to do so in some capacity. He stressed the importance of this step and working on solutions, and that we are working on research on the CPD proof of concept. He expressed how exciting it was to receive phone calls from teachers and the excitement from educational institutions about this Group, and the importance of the coalition.

Young people's statements

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

- Shaun Odili, 22
- Adrianna Nawrocka, 17
- Siyona Joshi, 16

Statement on the future of the APPG

The APPG heard from APPG Co-Chair Iain McNicol about the way ahead for the APPG. Lord McNicol started by defining Political Literacy, and the importance of citizen action and education in order to call ourselves our democracy. He then discussed his support for the amount of campaigns being run by young people, and praised young people for their action in doing so, and their interest in politics in general, dispelling any notions that young people don't care about the world around them - particularly given what we've seen through the work of the APPG and Shout Out UK. He also praised their tolerance, and willingness to challenge politicians on their ideas. He said that we must enable young

people to thrive. He argued that we are not doing enough to do so however, quoting a Centre for Democracy report that said that youth satisfaction with Democracy being at an all-time low. He said that this was in-part due to the lack of education that exists in terms of showing young people how to effectively engage, and how crucial this APPG is in making this a reality. He said that the APPG will move to a directive of actioning and accomplishing, with the support of civil society organisations and many other stakeholders. He committed on behalf of the members to continue to advocate for the APPG's work in Parliament, and the need to provide funding for teacher training. He noted that progress will be tracked in three APPG meetings, and stressed the importance of a hybrid meeting system whilst having these meetings in future. He equally promoted Political Literacy Day 2022, where we will celebrate our success, and thanked all for attending today's meeting.

Follow-Up Questions and Further Points

Tracey Crouch thanked the young people for their presentations, and wished that they stayed to speak with the Group. She echoed Cat's words about engaging with future MPs, and the time Tracey spent in her previous school, leading to her role as an MP. She discussed her concerns about not inspiring anyone to enter politics because of the toxic discourse public officials must face. She said that this is why the Group is so important, and that today's young people are more engaged in Politics than ever before. She said that there should be Votes for 16 at local level as in Germany, and that we should hear more from young people about the issues we face. She gave the example of her 16-year-old niece who was very well-versed on trans issues, as it is a normal part of her life, and that knowledge should be passed on to politicians from the next generation as part of this Group, in order to have a conversation.

Simon Fell echoed these points, saying how impressed he was discussing this with young people at his local school.

Tracey Crouch reflected on letters she has received from young people in relation to climate change, saying the young people should go to climate strikes in order to learn more about advocacy and activism, because young people need to learn that their voices need to be heard.

Cat Smith echoed these experiences and reflected on time that she spent at a school recently, sharing an anecdote of encouraging young people to engage themselves in an issue they cared about. She wanted to encourage young people to campaign and speak out, and that local and regional issues were important in our Political Education.

Tracey Crouch echoed Cat's words, and shared an anecdote of how she was treated by the media, and how they are misconceived by young people.

Co-chairs' closing remarks, final points

Simon Fell MP began his closing remarks by thanking all of the participants and members for attending and support the APPG. He stressed that there will be more young people involved in future sessions, and setting up sessions on making young people's voices better heard.

Lord McNicol said that all questions in the chat function that were left unanswered will be



followed up on in emails after the meeting, and the importance of expanding our coalition to local and regional organisations in future.

Matteo Bergamini then answered a question on how young people can get more involved, and the importance of teaching young people about local government as well as national.

Lord Iain McNicol thanked the three young people for speaking, and to Shout Out UK for their work on the APPG.