

## Minutes: British Council APPG AGM

4 March 2021, 10:00-11:00

**Attendees:** John Baron MP, Stephen Kinnock MP, Flick Drummond MP, Mark Logan MP, Roger Gale MP, Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP, Sarah Champion MP, Baroness Thornton, Lord Brennan, Lord Watson, Baroness Suttie, Baroness Bonham-Carter, Ben Yates, William Cowie, Denis McFadden, Kate Ewart Biggs (British Council), Charlie Walker (British Council) David Thompson (British Council), Lizzie Parker (British Council), Calum Mulligan (British Council)

**Apologies:** Wendy Chamberlain MP, Deidre Brock MP, Karen Bradley MP, Virendra Sharma MP, Baroness Northover, Baroness Hooper, Baroness Smith, Lord Judd, Lord Campbell, Baroness Grey-Thompson

### 1. Welcome

- 1.1 APPG Chair John Baron welcomed attendees and outlined the purpose of the meeting
- 1.2 John Baron ran through highlights of the British Council APPG work in the past year, with a focus on the Autumn report *Influence and the Integrated Review* and the work done by APPG members to support the British Council through the challenges of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

### 2. Election of Officers

- 2.1 The following officers were elected

Role	Name	Party
Chair & Registered Contact	John Baron MP	Conservative
Treasurer	Stephen Kinnock MP	Labour
Vice Chair (East Asia)	Mark Logan MP	Conservative
Vice Chair (South Asia)	Virendra Sharma MP	Labour
Vice Chair (MENA)	Flick Drummond MP	Conservative
Vice Chair (MENA)	Lord Brennan	Conservative
Vice Chair (Americas)	Karen Bradley MP	Conservative
Vice Chair (Latin America)	Baroness Bonham-Carter	Liberal Democrat
Vice Chair (SSA)	Roger Gale MP	Conservative
Vice Chair (SSA)	Baroness Northover	Liberal Democrat
Vice Chair (Europe)	Baroness Smith (of Newnham)	Liberal Democrat
Vice Chair (Wider Europe)	Baroness Suttie	Liberal Democrat
Vice Chair (Australia & New Zealand)	Lord Watson	Labour
Vice Chair (Youth)	Lloyd Russel-Moyle	Labour
Vice Chair (Social Enterprise)	Baroness Thornton	Labour
Vice Chair	Baroness Grey-Thompson	None/Crossbench

- 2.2 It was agreed that Vice Chairs would correspond to geographical regions and some key workstreams for Members. Those with a regional/geographic aspect to their work as Vice Chair would be offered regular updates with the relevant British Council Regional Directors and key Country Directors.

### **3. Income and expenditure**

- 3.1 APPG members agreed the previous year's accounts

### **4. Update from British Council Interim Chief Executive, Kate Ewart Biggs**

- 4.1 APPG Chair John Baron introduced Interim British Council Chief Executive, Kate Ewart-Biggs
- 4.2 Kate Ewart-Biggs outlined the challenges presented to the British Council by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.3 Kate Ewart-Biggs outlined the steps being taken by the British Council to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and to drive recovery
- 4.4 Kate Ewart-Biggs went on to provide an update on the British Council finances following the pandemic, the British Council spending review settlement and the process of transformation undertaken by the British Council in light of the pandemic

### **5. Q&A with British Council Chief Executive**

- 5.1 APPG Chair, John Baron, opened questions calling for the British Council to maintain its current geographical reach and footprint. Kate Ewart-Biggs talked of the benefits of the British Council global network, Charlie Walker (British Council Head of Global Network) added with details of hub approach in the Baltics.
- 5.2 Vice Chair Baroness Bonham-Carter praised the British Council digital innovations. Kate Ewart-Biggs discussed the strategic focus on digital for older learners, and face to face for young learners
- 5.3 APPG Treasurer Stephen Kinnock asked about the British Council work on Turing and the positive legacy of Erasmus+. Kate Ewart-Biggs discussed the British Council work on Turing and residual Erasmus+.
- 5.4 Vice Chair Roger Gale asked about the challenges of a digital shift in some parts of the world. Kate Ewart-Biggs talked about the importance of mobile technology, and Charlie Walker emphasised the reach of broadcast in some parts of the world
- 5.5 Vice Chair Lloyd Russell-Moyle asked about Turing coverage in schools. Kate Ewart-Biggs outlined that there is a ringfenced portion of Turing for schools, and highlighted wider British Council work in schools.
- 5.6 Lord Watson asked about the British Council work in Russia. Kate Ewart-Biggs outlined how the British Council operates from the Embassy, and Charlie talked about the new Country Director for Russia starting his post.

## 6. AOB

### **Adjournment Debate**

- 6.1 John Baron gave Members details of the Adjournment Debate he had secured on *The British Council and the Integrated Review*, taking place at 17:00 on 4 March, in which he intended to raise the importance of a soft power strategy in the Integrated Review and the British Council at least maintaining its current global footprint. Mr Baron encouraged APPG members to attend for the debate and make interventions.

### **Upcoming work of the APPG**

- 6.2 John Baron introduced David Thomson (British Council Head of Political Engagement) who briefly outlined plans for two forthcoming reports from the APPG:
- (a) Opportunities for Global Britain: a report detailing the UK's soft power opportunities around the world.
  - (b) International Experiences for Young People: a report exploring the opportunities for international experience and exposure for young people in the UK, which dovetails with an internal British Council upgrade in youth internationalism work.
- 6.3 The APPG agreed to proceeding with both reports

## 7. Close

- 7.1 The meeting closed with Members thanking Kate Ewart-Biggs for her contribution, and Mr Baron for his work as APPG Chair in the past 12 months.
- 7.2 Any members wishing further information or briefings were advised to contact David Thompson or others in the British Council External Relations team.

**ENDS**