



The Devolution

All-Party Parliamentary Group

Devolution APPG – Annual General Meeting

Thursday 20 May 2021, Via Zoom

In attendance:

Andrew Lewer MP (Chair), Lord Selkirk of Douglas, Naz Shah MP, Wendy Chamberlain MP, Lord Kerslake, Lord Foulkes of Cumnock, Lord Tyler, Lord Dubs, Baroness Eaton.

AGM and formal election of officers

Chair of the APPG, Andrew Lewer MP opened the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance. He explained the APPG was holding its Annual General Meeting today to re-elect its officers and reconstitute the APPG for the next year.

Lord Foulkes moved a motion to re-elect Andrew Lewer MP as Chair of the group, which was seconded by Baroness Eaton. The motion passed and Andrew Lewer MP was re-elected chair of the Devolution APPG. Andrew Lewer MP then proposed a number of MPs and Peers be elected as officers of the Group, which were agreed by the parliamentarians present. The following parliamentarians are vice-chairs and officers of the APPG:

Vice Chairs

- Jamie Wallis MP
- Lord Soley
- Lord Tyler
- Craig Williams MP
- Lord Foulkes of Cumnock
- Wayne David MP
- Baroness Eaton
- Lord Kerslake
- Lord Purvis
- Henry Smith MP

Officers

- Catherine West MP

Andrew Lewer MP asked if any other parliamentarians present wish to be a Vice Chair or Officer of the Group, but no one came forward. Andrew Lewer asked for parliamentarians present to confirm they are happy to vote in favour with the election of the Chair, Vice Chairs and Officers of the APPG, which they did.

Following this, Andrew Lewer approved the APPG's Income and Expenditure Statement for the reporting year 29 January 2020 – 20 May 2021 for benefits in kind received in the form of

secretariat services from Connect to the value of £35,000. Sponsored by the Local Government Association paying £35,000, to support the running of the Group fall under the following band: (£34,501-£36,000). The form will be published on the Devolution APPG's website shortly. This concluded the AGM.

Following a successful AGM, Andrew Lewer MP reflected on the success of the APPG over the past year. The Group held three in-depth sessions on topics including fiscal devolution and skills/green jobs. It also hosted a joint event on the reform of social care with the APPG on Adult Social Care and the APPG on Longevity.

The Group also held a successful inquiry into levelling up devolution. The inquiry was launched in October 2020 and had high levels of engagement, from key figures in local and national Government including Andy Burnham, Lord O'Neill and Shadow Secretary of State for Local Government, Steve Reed MP. Over five in-depth oral evidence sessions were conducted, and the inquiry received over 20 written evidence submissions. An expert panel conducted the evidence sessions to consider how central and local government can work together more effectively and this formed recommendations to Government through the publication of our inquiry report.

The inquiry report launch was high-profile, being covered by the Alex Forsyth at the BBC and featured during BBC Breakfast as well as Radio 4's Today Programme. The report and its recommendations have since been discussed in opinion pieces for a range of publications, including the Local Government Chronicle and Politics Home.

The Government are engaging with the report and recommendations, and Ministers are working with the Secretariat to secure appropriate dates for them to engage with the group regarding the recommendations. The Group's campaigning has been reflected in the Government's recent policy, such as the Levelling Up Taskforce.

Andrew Lewer MP then summarised the planned sessions for the APPG for the next year. These include a session on the Levelling Up White Paper and exploring ways in which the APPG's recommendations can be implemented. The Group will also look to hold sessions on the Congress of Europe and Local Authorities' potential to improve local economies and public health outcomes. The Group then discussed these priorities, and a number of parliamentarians made some helpful suggestions.

Lord Foulkes suggested a standalone session revisiting the conversations that took place for Lord Kerslake's Inquiry (2070 Commission), a year on from its final report. He suggested that Gordon Brown be invited to attend and speak to the Group and Andrew Lewer MP agreed it would be a great session to hold. Lord Kerslake also suggested that Neil O'Brien MP, the Government's advisor on Levelling Up is invited to speak to the session discussing the Levelling Up White Paper. He highlighted that the Government must recognise that Levelling Up cannot take place without devolution, which was widely agreed by the rest of the group. Finally, Baroness Eaton gave her support for the planned Congress of Europe session and was keen that colleagues from the Council of Europe, such as John Howell MP, were invited to attend and speak to the Group.

Andrew Lewer MP confirmed that all of the group's suggestions will be taken on board when confirming the group's forward plan but stressed this is subject to change based on parliamentary business and political developments expected throughout the year. Andrew Lewer MP thanked everyone for their time and participation, as well as thanking the Secretariat for their ongoing support. He then concluded the meeting.