

All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Rule of Law

DRAFT Minutes of meeting (formal meeting and inaugural election of officers)

3 June 2015, Room R, Portcullis House

Attendance:

Qualifying members: Lord Beecham, Joanna Cherry QC MP, Rt Hon David Davis MP, Lord Dubs, Rt Hon Sir Edward Garnier QC MP, Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP (Chair), Lord Hope of Craighead, Lord Judd, Lord Lester of Herne Hill QC, Lord Lisvane KCB DL, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, Lord Morris of Aberavon, Jesse Norman MP, Lord Ramsbotham GCB CBE, Andy Slaughter MP, Sir Keir Starmer MP, Baroness Stern CBE, Emily Thornberry MP

Others: Murray Hunt, Sir Jeffrey Jowell QC, Dr Lawrence McNamara (minutes), Nicole Piche, Emma Fenelon, Alex Horne

Apologies: Baroness Berridge, Baroness Butler-Sloss, Rt Hon Mark Field, Baroness Hamwee, Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town, Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots, Baroness Jay of Paddington, Rt Hon Lord Judge, Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws, Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Baroness Lister of Burtersett CBE, Lord Maclennan of Rogart, Lord Marks of Henley-on-Thames QC, Lord Norton of Louth, Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve CH CBE FBA, Lord Pannick QC, Lord Plant of Highfield, Baroness Prashar CBE, Virendra Sharma MP, Rt Hon Lord Woolf, Lord Wasserman

1. Welcome, addresses and formation of the APPG

Mr Grieve QC MP (in the Chair) welcomed all attendees and introduced Mr Murray Hunt (Legal Adviser to Joint Committee on Human Rights) and Professor Sir Jeffrey Jowell KCMG QC (Director of the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law) to address the meeting on the rationale and contribution of a new APPG on the Rule of Law.

Mr Hunt spoke to the need and value of 'mainstreaming' rule of discussions; while the rule of law is mentioned in committees and by those with legal backgrounds (and he referred to an unpublished background paper produced by the Bingham Centre), it is important that it appears more widely on the floor of the Houses and that non-lawyers are engaged in rule of law discussions. An APPG on the Rule of Law could strengthen parliamentary and public discussion of the rule of law in specific contexts.

Sir Jeffrey Jowell spoke to rule of law principles, highlighting the importance of the rule of law as a practical concept, and the value of an APPG in that regard.

Mr Grieve turned to the establishment of the group, noting that in the absence of disagreement it was the apparent attention of all attendees that the new APPG should be established. There was no disagreement. Mr Grieve asked qualifying members in attendance to sign the attendance sheet to assist in the formalities.

Mr Grieve then turned to the matters for formal consideration for registration.

2. Group's name

It was agreed that group's name should be: "All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Rule of Law".

3. Statement of purpose

It was agreed that the purpose of the group should be stated as: "To promote parliamentary and public discussion of the rule of law as a practical concept."

4. Category into which the Group falls

It was agreed the Group falls into the "subject group" category of APPGs. (The other categories are country-specific groups and social groups.)

5. Inaugural Election of Officers

Chair: Mr Grieve QC MP (Conservative) stood for election to the position of Chair. He was elected unopposed.

Co-Chair: It was agreed that a Co-Chair would be elected. Lord Pannick QC (Crossbench) stood for election to this post. He was elected unopposed. (Lord Pannick was not in attendance but had given prior notice of his willingness to stand for election as Co-Chair.)

Vice-Chairs: It was agreed that a number of officers would be elected and that these should aim to have a balance across parties, Houses and gender. All would hold the title of Vice-Chair. The following were nominated and elected unopposed. (Lord Woolf was not at the meeting but had given prior notice. Mr Lamb MP was not at the meeting but his willingness to stand was conveyed to the meeting by Lord Lester QC.)

Joanna Cherry QC MP (SNP)
Rt Hon Sir Edward Garnier QC MP (Conservative)
Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP (Liberal Democrat)
Jesse Norman MP (Conservative)
Keir Starmer MP (Labour)
Emily Thornberry MP (Labour)
Rt Hon Lord Woolf (Crossbench)

6. Secretariat

The Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law offered its services as Secretariat. This offer was accepted.

Ms Thornberry MP offered the Bingham Centre some desk space should it be needed.

7. Public enquiry point

It was agreed that a public inquiry point would be the following Bingham Centre staff member:

Ms Swee Leng Harris
Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law
Charles Clore House, 17 Russell Square, London WC1B 5JP
T +44 (0)20 7862 5151
E s.harris@binghamcentre.biicl.org

8. The Group's web address

The Bingham Centre offered to provide a web page within its web site. This offer was accepted.

9. Details of any benefits which the Group has received if the value exceeds £1,500.

With the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law (a not-for-profit organisation) as secretariat, the group would be receiving in-kind support which would require disclosure on the register of APPGs. The Centre indicated it will provide £13,501-15,000 of in-kind support in 2015.

10. First meeting of the APPG

It was agreed that the theme of the first meeting would be non-violent extremism and the rule of law. This was topical given the forthcoming Extremism Bill. After consideration of whether the meeting should be convened before or after the summer recess, it was agreed that the meeting should be held before the recess, and that it was not necessary to wait for the Extremism Bill to be published.

The suggested format for first meeting: 2-3 speakers speak for 5-10 minutes each followed by discussion, with speakers to cover a range of views. The Bingham Centre will liaise with the Chair to arrange a date and propose speakers.

11. Future meetings

It was agreed that there should be 3 or 4 meetings each year. The following were suggested as possible topics for future meetings:

- Legal professional privilege and the implication of the proposed communications data legislation
- The rule of law as it applies to international treaties to which the UK is a party.

12. Announcement of establishment of group

It was agreed that the announcement of the group's establishment would be timed to coincide with the Magna Carta anniversary and that the Bingham Centre would (in liaison with the Chair) arrange the announcement.

13. Any Other Business

Mr Norman MP noted that the group's establishment owed much to Lord Bingham and his work on the rule of law, and that Lord Bingham would have been proud that such an APPG was being established.

It was also noted that it was important that meetings of the APPG canvas a wide spectrum of views and that they engage non-lawyers.

Draft minutes: 4 June 2015