

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Whistleblowing

Annual General Meeting

17th June, 2021 at 11:00 am

Conducted over Zoom

Minutes

In Attendance: Mary Robinson MP
Baroness Kramer
Kevin Hollinrake MP
Baroness d'Souza
Baroness Masham
Lisa Cameron MP
Baroness Ludford

Secretariat Georgina Halford-Hall – Director of strategy and policy

Observer	Tessa Munt	WBUK
	Michael Hall	WBUK
	Joe Hackett	Office of Mary Robinson MP
	Roberta Kiroosingh	Office of Dr Lisa Cameron MP

1. Introduction

Mary Robinson opened the meeting and welcomed all those attending.

2. Apologies for absence

Lord Cromwell
Lord Berkeley
Philip Davies
Baroness Goudie
Stephen Hammond
Baroness Walmsley
Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

3. Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting on 25th February, 2020

Noted and approved unanimously.

4. Income and Expenditure Statement for 2020/21

Noted and approved unanimously.

3. Election of Officers

The following were elected unanimously:

Chair and Registered Contact	Mary Robinson MP	(Conservative)
Co-Chair	Baroness Kramer	(Liberal Democrat)
Vice-Chair	Lord Berkeley	(Labour)
Vice-Chair	Phillip Davies MP	(Conservative)
Vice-Chair	Kevin Hollinrake MP	(Conservative)
Vice-Chair	Lord Cromwell	(Cross-Bencher)
Vice-Chair	Lord Sharkey	(Liberal Democrat)
Vice-Chair	Neale Hanvey MP	(Alba)
Vice-Chair	Lord Triesman	(Labour)
Vice-Chair	Rosie Cooper MP	(Labour)
Vice-Chair	Lisa Cameron	(SNP)

4. Appointment of Secretariat

By unanimous agreement WhistleblowersUK was re-appointed as secretariat to the APPG. The Chair expressed the APPG's thanks to WhistleblowersUK and in particular to Georgina Halford-Hall for their outstanding contribution to the APPG's work. A vote of thanks was recorded.

5. Chair's Report

Mary Robinson made her report setting out the challenges and achievements faced by the APPG since the last AGM.

“This has been a difficult year for all of us, but it’s also been a year that has highlighted the importance of whistleblowing to our society. From furlough fraud and workplaces that are not COVID-secure, to the recent vindication of sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses, it is clearer than ever that those who report wrongdoing are doing a public service and need to be supported and protected.

As an APPG, we’ve been unable to meet as normal, and we’ve had to find different ways of carrying on our normal business. However, I believe we have been able not only to keep working hard, but also to achieve some progress towards reforming the law on whistleblowing.

We have replaced face to face meetings with held virtual meetings under Chatham House rules. Our meetings have been with whistleblowers and also with regulators. We have met or taken evidence from 32 regulators including the CQC, IOPC, FCA, and Police and Crime Commissioners, to name but a few. We have asked about and listened to their experiences with the current legal framework, their understanding of whistleblowing and how they deal with whistleblowing cases. We heard about regulatory gaps that need to be

closed, and that much needs to be done to raise awareness about what whistleblowing is, and who counts as a whistleblower.

The overwhelming feedback from the regulators and whistleblower evidence was that the legislation does not work well enough. This has only strengthened our belief that the system as it stands is inadequate and needs to be updated with an Office of the Whistleblower.

We have also held a number of virtual roundtables and webinars, on questions ranging from whistleblower rewards and blacklisting, to the Official Secrets Act and the NHS. Panelists included academics, specialists, lawyers, academics and colleagues from across Parliament. These events were well attended, over 300 members of the public took the opportunity to join the discussion through the Q&A.

In July last year, we also published our report 'Making Whistleblowing Work', which was researched and prepared by Greenwich University and our secretariat, WhistleblowersUK.

Our reports and wider efforts have generated press attention, bringing whistleblowing up the agenda. Newsnight, the Times, and the Telegraph are among the outlets that have reported on our APPG and our work.

In Parliament, I have raised the issue of whistleblowing law reform repeatedly, both in public and in private, with ministers from BEIS and other Departments, and I'm grateful for all those colleagues who have done the same. I was encouraged by Paul Scully's response to my most recent question in the Commons about this, where he spoke about considering the scope and timing of a review.

Our work on the development of a draft Bill to introduce an Office of the Whistleblower is ongoing. I will be asking members and colleagues from across Parliament to join me for a presentation on the Bill at a date to be agreed.

In the meantime, Baroness Kramer's draft Bill came second in the private members' bill ballot in the Lords and will receive its second reading on June 25th. In the last Parliament, Dr Philippa Whitford also put forward a private member's bill on whistleblowing, which was a great opportunity to discuss the inadequacy of the current law and highlight the growing cross-party calls for reform."

Mary concluded her report by extending her thanks to all of the officers, members and the secretariat for their support in raising whistleblowing across both houses and encouraged them to invite colleagues to join the APPG for what will be another busy year as we drive forward proposals for the Office of the Whistleblower.

6. Any Other Business

- Baroness Kramer advised that her Private Members Bill is not the full and extensive Bill that is being proposed by the APPG and that it will be withdrawn if the conversation develops to a point that Government adopt it. The purpose of the PMB is to get the discussion going.

- Date to be agreed and circulated to review the draft Bill being produced by the APPG.

Meeting End 1135