



Backbench Committee

Representations: Backbench Debates

Tuesday 12 Dec 2017

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 12 Dec 2017.

Watch the meeting

Members present: Ian Mearns (Chair); Bob Blackman; Robert Courts; Chris Davies; Patricia Gibson; Peter Kyle; Alex Sobel.

Questions 1-33

Witnesses

[\[I\]](#): Cheryl Gillan

[\[II\]](#): Fiona Bruce, Maria Caulfield, Sir Roger Gale, Mrs Cheryl Gillan and Steve Double

[\[III\]](#): Andrew Percy, Peter Kyle, Stephen Lloyd and Martin Docherty-Hughes

[\[IV\]](#): Martin Whitfield and Stephen Kerr

[\[V\]](#): Lucy Powell and Mr Andrew Mitchell

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]



Body

UserTrail

Info3

Info1

Info2

DocName

Page 2 of 14

PhoneNumber

Mrs Cheryl Gillan made representations.

Q1 **Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to this session of the Backbench Business Committee. This afternoon we will hear five applications. The first, which is from the right hon. Cheryl Gillan MP, is for a debate on autism. Cheryl, over to you.

Mrs Gillan: Thank you, Chair. I am here long in advance to ask for a three-hour debate on autism on the Floor of the House on 22 March; the following week is international autism awareness week. I hope to impress you enough to secure that date, so that we can highlight all the many issues surrounding autism.

We have had an exciting year in autism. I have just come from the National Autism Project, which has reached its conclusion after three years of study. It would be good to be able to highlight that. We have also had an education report from the all-party parliamentary group that will be launched officially in January. Next year, we start compulsory autism education in initial teacher training, for the first time ever, which is very important. We could also highlight the Autism Education Trust. We already have YOI Feltham accredited as an autism-friendly prison, and 20 other prisons are currently going through the accreditation process. We are clearly acknowledged in many quarters as a lead in the world, given the progress that we are making on autism, but we still have so far to go.

The APPG has a very broad membership. I sometimes claim that it is the largest APPG in the House of Commons, but I would have to double-check that; I like to think it is. I have already signed up 32 Members, without any hesitation. This issue affects every single Member of Parliament, whether they are from Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland or England, and I hope that we would have a good turnout.

The reason why I am applying for a debate the week before is that it gives people a chance, if they perhaps were not able to get into the debate, to highlight the issues surrounding autism in the following week—26 March to



Body
UserTrail
Info3

Info1
Info2

DocName
Page 3 of 14
PhoneNumber

2 April. I thought that it would be a good scene-setter if we had a major debate.

I am very willing to answer any questions. I am here on my own only because I have so many people who are interested that it would be invidious to ask any one of them, but there is good cross-party support, I am pleased to say.

Chair: Thank you very much. Bob will start the questions.

Q2 **Bob Blackman:** Cheryl, that was a very good application, and from our perspective it is always good to see an early application. I have just one question. You have made the originally suggested three-hour length of time 90 minutes. You appear to have 16 or 17 speakers. That will not really allow them any time to speak on the subject because, allowing for Front Benchers, there will be literally a couple of minutes each by the time you have introduced the debate. Given the subject, is there a particular reason why you have decided to go for 90 minutes, not three hours?

Mrs Gillan: I have revised that and asked for three hours, because 32 Members—I am very willing to leave the list of Members with you—have now shown an interest. I am keen to secure a three-hour debate; I think that that would do the subject justice.

Q3 **Patricia Gibson:** May I just say to you that my name is not down, but I always speak in autism debates? I have attended, I think, two previous autism debates in the Chamber, and they are very heavily subscribed. It is an issue that a lot of people care about, so I think that even with three hours, you might be struggling.

Mrs Gillan: It is a pity we cannot have the entire day on it, but I leave that to you; it is in your gift!

Q4 **Robert Courts:** I am very sympathetic to the subject matter: my wife is a music therapist and many of her clients are autistic. I make that declaration, as it were, at the start. I just want to clarify this point: is it a substantive motion or a general debate? You have ticked the general debate box, but a substantive motion is laid out.

Mrs Gillan: It is a general debate. Indeed, this is very difficult. I was trying to put together a text that explained the full range of issues; in fact, I have not included half of what needs to be discussed—for example, data collection and so on.

Q5 **Robert Courts:** Would you prefer a substantive motion or a general debate?

Mrs Gillan: Having talked to many of the people who have subscribed to



Body
UserTrail
Info3

Info1
Info2

DocName
Page 4 of 14
PhoneNumber

the debate, if the Committee would not mind me going for it, a general debate is really what I would like, because then we would not restrict the subject matter, which I think is important.

Chair: Thank you very much. That is entirely in order, Cheryl. Given the fact that it is an early application and you have the names, if you want to amend a substantive motion between now and then, it would be entirely in order. If you could just let our Clerk have sight of that and the list of names that you have as well.

Mrs Gillan: I am grateful for your advice.

Fiona Bruce, Maria Caulfield, Sir Roger Gale, Mrs Cheryl Gillan and Steve Double made representations.

Chair: Next up we have Fiona Bruce on strengthening families. Good afternoon, Fiona, and welcome. I would just ask that people are careful, because the microphones in this room and the room next door are very sensitive. I witnessed a very unfortunate incident in the Education Committee where the Clerk of the Committee kicked the microphone and nearly killed the sound engineer. Fiona, over to you.

Fiona Bruce: This is a request for a three-hour debate in the main Chamber on an issue that has considerable cross-party support, as you will see. The lead Members are from different parties. I actually have, apart from my colleagues here today, over 60 Members of Parliament who are supporting this issue in different ways. The majority of those have signed up to this document called "A Manifesto to Strengthen Families". The Committee has a copy of that. One member of the Committee has signed up to that, but we have blacked out his name for the purposes of impartiality. Perhaps I should also say that there are about 10 Members—I will give you the list—who would have liked to be here today, but unfortunately could not attend.

Why are we requesting this debate? This is an issue which impacts so many other areas that Members of this House are concerned about. For example, we believe that if we can strengthen family life for young children, we can head off at an early stage, through early intervention, many of the mental health issues, which many young people are struggling with. The issue of loneliness in old age, right at the other end of the spectrum, is an acute problem in our society. Again, if we can help people build stronger family relationships, we believe we can actually avert that problem. There is also the problem that young people have now of how to form healthy sexual relationships. We very much feel that including in the personal, social and health and economic education curriculum discussion of how to form these healthy relationships in early life will help young people develop relationships in adulthood that they will be able to



Body

UserTrail

Info3

Info1

Info2

DocName

Page 5 of 14

PhoneNumber

sustain. Just some specific areas we would want to touch on are real issues, for example, strengthening prisoners' family life, and I am delighted that Sam Gyimah, the Minister for Prisons and Probation, has said that he is willing to implement all 21 recommendations of the Farmer report, which is about strengthening prisoners' family life, and we believe there is much that can be discussed and debated there.

I will let some of my colleagues speak. I just want to make two final points. The issue of family hubs is one of the key points we would like to discuss. There are approximately 1,000 children's centres across the country, many of which to date have limited their engagement to families with children under the age of five. We believe that if that could be extended to young people up to the age of 19, and helped families on a much broader basis, we could actually support many more people in our communities who are looking for support. Finally, there has been one debate on this issue recently in the House of Lords on 2 November, led by my colleague in the Lords, Lord Farmer, who was the lead Member on this manifesto. I was the Commons lead Member. That debate was considerably over-subscribed, so I think there is great interest in this subject.

Q6 **Chair:** Would anyone like to add anything?

Maria Caulfield: Can I add that the role in helping prisoners and strengthening families is key, because we know that if families are supported and maintain links with inmates, we can reduce reoffending by 39%. So there is a lot of scope: it is not just about strengthening day-to-day families. In particular, it would be key to discuss the work that Lord Farmer has done on looking after inmates and those recommendations in the Commons.

Sir Roger Gale: Although all of us here today are from one political party, there is huge cross-party support for this. We know that. It is not a party political issue. Across the House, the family unit is recognised as the bedrock of society. Anecdotally, I represent a constituency that has a phenomenally large number of looked-after children, placed there by mainly inner London boroughs because we are within easy reach of London. That is bad news, and we feel very strongly that the family unit, particularly the extended family unit, needs underscoring. This is one way of raising the profile of an issue that affects every constituency in the country.

Steve Double: I endorse everything that has been said. This subject cuts across so many different issues and Government Departments, and is central to tackling a lot of the issues around social mobility and other things. If we put some attention on to strengthening families, we will



Body

UserTrail

Info3

Info1

Info2

DocName

Page 6 of 14

PhoneNumber

make good progress in lots of areas. I think there is a lot of support for this.

Mrs Gillan: I am certainly very supportive of Fiona. I think this is subject matter that would not necessarily be raised by any Government in any debate, and therefore the only forum through which we can make this bid is you. I also know that every single MP finds in their surgeries that they are often not dealing with just one person, but with families, family break-up and family issues; therefore, it would be good if this was made the subject of a Back-Bench debate because it would appeal to a lot of people who would be able to talk about many issues.

Q7 **Chris Davies:** Fiona, congratulations on such a well put-together and well-supported application. This is quite a wide-ranging debate, and you state in the application that the issue often falls between different Departments' responsibilities. Which Department would you envisage answering this debate?

Fiona Bruce: That is a very good question. Up to now, DWP has often taken a lead on this. For example, it has looked to help strengthen troubled families through the troubled families initiative. So it might be DWP, but you have absolutely hit the nail on the head. Our manifesto, with 18 policies, straddles half a dozen or more Departments, and one of the things that we want to say is that we believe that the machinery of government should be addressed so that there is one clear lead Cabinet Minister to draw all this together and look at how we can strengthen family life in this nation. That is a very good question, and I do not have the absolute answer, but as you can see, there is definitely—Cheryl is whispering in my ear.

Mrs Gillan: I thought it may be an opportunity for a Cabinet Office Minister to come and answer the debate and pull all the strands together cross-departmentally.

Fiona Bruce: That is excellent and absolutely right. One of the things we have been pressing Government for is to appoint a senior Minister, ideally from the Cabinet, to do just this.

Q8 **Bob Blackman:** Fiona, you have obviously got sufficient speakers to warrant the debate; however, listed on the application, notwithstanding the three Labour Members who are lead Members, we do not see any other Labour Members or opposition Members from other political parties. I just wonder whether you have got other people to speak.

Fiona Bruce: Jon Cruddas is very sympathetic.

Q9 **Bob Blackman:** Forgive me, it is not a case of you knowing and communicating that to us; we need to see a list of speakers. That is



Body

UserTrail

Info3

Info1

Info2

DocName

Page 7 of 14

PhoneNumber

because you are competing against other bids that will have speakers from both sides to get a balanced debate, and we are in the course of rationing time effectively, so we can operate only on what is before us. If you could supply us with extra speakers from other political parties, that would be terribly helpful and helpful to your application.

Fiona Bruce: I certainly can do that. By which date?

Q10 **Chair:** That pre-empts my next question: is there a particular time sensitivity in hosting this debate? Is there a particular memorial day or celebration day that this would fall in line with, or is it just waiting for a slot?

Fiona Bruce: Waiting for a slot, but ideally reasonably early in the new year.

Q11 **Chair:** Okay. I would caution that we do not have any time until the second week back and that is already allocated, so probably it will be the second half of January.

Fiona Bruce: That is not a problem.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. We will move swiftly on.

Andrew Percy, Peter Kyle, Stephen Lloyd and Martin Docherty-Hughes made representations.

Andrew Percy: Thank you, Chair. I will start by saying that this evening is the start of Hanukkah, so chag sameach. At Hanukkah, it is traditional to give gifts, and we are seeking the gift of a one-and-a-half-hour debate in the Chamber—that's your second-night gift to us. The third- night gift to us is the week before Holocaust Memorial Day, if at all possible.

This year has been another in which anti-Semitism has very much been in the spotlight. I have a couple of statistics that underline how important it is to secure this debate. Community Security Trust, which many Members will know very well, recorded 767 anti-Semitic incidents in the first six months of the year, which was a 30% increase on the year before and a record for the first six months of any year. Throughout this year, a number of political activists have made comments that are deeply anti-Semitic and concerning. We have had some confusion on Zionism—misrepresenting the effects of the holocaust and its importance to the Zionist movement as a result. We have seen hatred on the far right, particularly in Charlottesville in the US and the French presidential candidate on the far right denied the Vel' d'Hiv round-up.

We have seen increases in anti-Semitism on the far left and on the far right in the last year, and even in our own general election, as others have



Body
UserTrail
Info3

Info1
Info2

DocName
Page 8 of 14
PhoneNumber

reported. That tells those who know the Jewish community well—I know Bob does—that it feels very nervous in the UK at the moment, so this is a really important debate for reassuring that community that the holocaust is not something that will ever be forgotten as more and more survivors sadly pass on every year. Also, it is important in educating others on many of the issues faced by that community, in the context of the holocaust.

There is strong support for this debate. Last year, 21 Members contributed to the debate. You can see that there is cross-party representation here. If you can grant us one and half hours in the Chamber, there will be no problem in finding speakers in what is a really important debate, especially in the light of some of the incidents that we have seen in the last year.

Q12 **Chair:** Can I ask why 90 minutes as opposed to a three-hour application?

Andrew Percy: If you would like to grant us a three-hour application, even better. We sought the 90-minute debate but if three hours are available we would most certainly take three hours.

Peter Kyle: Can I say, Chair, that I secured the debate last year. I applied for an hour and a half and you upgraded it to three. As you see, we had 21 speakers and we still did not have enough time for that debate. It is a very popular debate to speak in and it is one where people make a lot of very heartfelt and well-thought-through speeches. The quality of debate was exceptional.

Q13 **Bob Blackman:** My point is that with 21 speakers, if you had 90 minutes, you would literally get two minutes each, plus the Front-Bench spokespersons and so on. That does not allow proper debate. Given that you have a good range of speakers from all parties here, clearly that is a three-hour application. But the application is yours. It is not for us to amend; it is up to you to apply for the debate and say what you want. I think you are hearing that you will get a very sympathetic view if you ask for three hours.

Andrew Percy: Did I say one and a half? I meant three hours. I apologise for the error; it was a slip of the tongue.

Q14 **Bob Blackman:** The other issue is timing. You have asked effectively, for 18 January, which would be the Thursday before. Given that 25 January is the day itself, I presume that other events will be going on on that day and so the 25 January would not be a good day to have the debate.

Stephen Lloyd: There will be more events going on in that later week—that's right.

Q15 **Bob Blackman:** Exactly, so this really is timebound to 18 January, isn't it?



Body
UserTrail
Info3

Info1
Info2

DocName
Page 9 of 14
PhoneNumber

Andrew Percy: Definitely. That would be our preference.

- Q16 **Patricia Gibson:** Much of what I was going to say has already been said. I participated in both previous Holocaust Memorial Day debates, and you are right: the debates have been excellent and very heavily subscribed. Ninety minutes would reduce speakers to two minutes each. As you have set out, with every year that passes, these kinds of things become more and more important, so I would certainly be hopeful that you would amend your application to a minimum of three hours. I know I said that about another debate, but I think that even three hours will be a struggle. There will be huge interest across the House.

Andrew Percy: Consider it amended. We will make the necessary amendments.

Chair: When I am negotiating with the Leader of the House and Government Whips for time allocation, I will take Patricia in with me.

Bob Blackman: You certainly want protected time.

- Q17 **Chair:** Very much so. Just to clarify: you want to avoid the 25th.

Andrew Percy: Yes, I think avoiding the day itself would be better, just because other things are going on on that day. Our preference is the week before.

Chair: Thank you very much. Next up is Mr Martin Whitfield.

Martin Whitfield and **Stephen Kerr** made representations.

- Q18 **Chair:** Good afternoon, Martin. Your application is on the role of banks and their responsibilities to the communities they serve.

Martin Whitfield: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the Backbench Business Committee. This is my first application for a Backbench Business debate and I am quite disappointed that it is on such a serious matter. The application is for a three-hour debate on the responsibilities of banks to the communities in which they are based and which they serve. This was initially prompted by the recent announcement from RBS on bank closures in my constituency. I have spoken to various people. In framing the terms of the debate, when I spoke with colleagues from across the Chamber, there was a feeling that a very narrow debate just decrying a business choice might not be the most successful way to allow the airing of the growing concern that I sense across the House, including from those who have supported the application.

Banks are an essential part of our communities, along with post offices, the police force and a number of other areas, and they serve a job that goes beyond just taking in and distributing money. There have been huge



changes in business practice in banks over the past 20 years, but I question whether there has been an equal change in, or an equal understanding of, the responsibilities that banks have to our communities. In agreeing to support the application, a number of people said that their interest lies in raising the fact that banks within communities serve a lot of other benefits through schooling, monetary education and other aspects, but that they are seeing the removal of branches and the removal of direct contact for a great group of people, particularly those who struggle financially or who are older in life. There was enormous interest. The purpose behind my application changed from the immediate one of bank closures to a much broader and, I think, more genuine discussion that needs to be had about how banks serve our communities and how communities serve our banks.

Stephen Kerr: I want to support Martin's application. The recent set of announcements from Royal Bank of Scotland and Bank of Scotland come on top of a series of cuts in the number of high street and community-based bank branches. As Martin eloquently described, that has a major impact on the elderly and disabled people who use those branches, and a very serious impact on businesses, which still handle a lot of cash. The whole discussion around the future of retail banking—what it looks like and what its purpose is—would be a very good use of parliamentary time.

Q19 **Patricia Gibson:** I think this will be a very heavily subscribed debate. There will be 259 closures. I know that does not mean 259 constituencies are affected, because mine will lose three more branches, but I think everyone who has a constituency interest will want to be part of the debate. Given the gravity of the situation and the anger and sense of betrayal out there about a bank that is, in essence, owned by the taxpayer, I am curious about why you have asked for Westminster Hall rather than the gravity of the Chamber.

Martin Whitfield: The purpose of requesting Westminster Hall was that discussing whether we wanted to talk just about closures or about other aspects of banking led us to request a general debate rather than a debate on a specific motion. Having decided on a general debate, it seemed that Westminster Hall was the more appropriate venue. As we are all aware, there is a lot of pressure on time everywhere in the Palace, and we chose Westminster Hall to try to maximise our potential for success.

Q20 **Bob Blackman:** For a three-hour debate we would normally expect to see 15 speakers. You have 10 or 11. It would be helpful to add some extras.

Martin Whitfield: I would be able to provide an extra—

Q21 **Bob Blackman:** One of the reasons I suggest that that might be quite



Body

UserTrail

Info3

Info1

Info2

DocName

Page 11 of 14

PhoneNumber

important for your application is that if we grant a three-hour Westminster Hall debate, it is going to be on a Thursday afternoon. A lot of colleagues—particularly those from the place that is most affected by this issue, Scotland—will be going back to their constituencies and therefore may not want to wait on a Thursday afternoon. I know the debate is important, but we will probably all be on a one-line Whip, so there will be a temptation to leave.

Martin Whitfield: With that information, I can reassure myself and then reassure the Committee with a list of speakers who understand when their availability would be required to fulfil the debate.

Q22 **Patricia Gibson:** If I may stick my neck out on behalf of my colleagues, I think you would get a strong presence from Scotland.

Stephen Kerr: I think that is probably the least of the concerns.

Q23 **Chris Davies:** I agree fully—Wales is affected by this as well. As Bob said, Thursday afternoon probably isn't going to be the best time, so, just as the last application was amended, would you like to amend your application before you go to ensure that we have the opportunity to look at granting a Chamber debate on a different day? In so doing, would you also add me to your list of speakers?

Martin Whitfield: With that inducement, I would be more than happy to amend the application that is before you and, similarly, undertake to provide you with a substantial list of people who are interested in participating in the debate.

Chair: I am afraid that my colleagues are dangling a non-existent Chamber-time tree in front of you.

Q24 **Patricia Gibson:** Although Thursday afternoon is not an ideal time, I think a lot of people would have enough motivation to stay. I would like my name added, too.

Stephen Kerr: I seriously don't think that needs to be an issue.

Martin Whitfield: Yes. Time is always crucial, but opportunities sometimes come along that mean time takes secondary importance, and a lot of business constituents would like their voices expressed on this matter.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed.

Lucy Powell and **Andrew Mitchell** made representations.

Q25 **Chair:** Next and last, we have Lucy Powell and Andrew Mitchell with an application about joint enterprise.



Body

UserTrail

Info3

Info1

Info2

DocName

Page 12 of 14

PhoneNumber

Lucy Powell: Last but not least, we hope. Thank you very much for allowing us to come here today and apply for this debate. For those who may not be totally familiar with the issues around joint enterprise, you may remember a few years ago there was a build-up in campaigning and there were some notable documentaries on television. There was widespread campaigning across the country and in the House—Andrew and others were involved very much at that time—around some of the injustices in the use of joint enterprise to sentence and put to prison a whole group of people. Some of them may or may not have been at the scene of the crime, particularly around murder cases, but because they were associates and involved in some other smaller way in crimes that were committed—some were not involved at all—they were found guilty under joint enterprise and were given mandatory life sentences.

That campaign came to a head nearly two years ago with a Supreme Court ruling. The Supreme Court found that the law had taken a wrong turn many years previously and that joint enterprise had been used incorrectly and disproportionately in many cases. Campaigners and everybody involved at the time saw that as a huge victory and thought that, as a consequence of that Supreme Court ruling, the practice of the law and case law and how this device was being used by the courts would change significantly and that some of the old cases would be brought before the Court of Appeal and be reheard. However, what has happened in the intervening two years is that nothing has in fact changed. We have seen the scale and scope of the cases brought under joint enterprise staying exactly the same as before the Supreme Court ruling. No case has successfully been brought before the Court of Appeal.

JENGBA, which is the grassroots campaign, which led all that campaigning and works with many families who have been involved, politicians and others, has recently relaunched its campaign. Andrew Mitchell, myself, Bob Neill and David Lammy are the lead members but many of the other names listed have been supporting the relaunch of that campaign to say that Parliament now needs to take a view and bring to life the Supreme Court ruling and to make it have some effect.

That is why we have brought the motion before you today. It is a votable motion and we would like to debate it on the Floor of the House. We have added some names since we put the application in. I wanted to get it in before Christmas but there are other people I know who would be interested as well. Is there anything you would like to add, Andrew?

Mr Mitchell: Lucy has put it extremely well, Mr Chairman. There is a lot of concern about this, principally I think because the British judicial system shows itself extremely slow to take remedial action. For my part, if I knew that someone was in jail who should not be, I would want to get them out within hours. This process has already taken more than a year.



Body

UserTrail

Info3

Info1

Info2

DocName

Page 13 of 14

PhoneNumber

There is a lot of concern throughout the House, to the extent that Stephen Pound and I went to visit one of his constituents who is in jail in Cambridgeshire to see for ourselves the effect on him and his family. I know the family quite well. The concern extends certainly to the Chairman of the Select Committee, who is very much with us today in asking you to grant this debate. I just endorse everything that Lucy has said.

Chair: Thank you. Questions, please. Bob.

Q26 **Bob Blackman:** I am looking at the motion that you have put as a draft. You have called on the Government to review the use of joint enterprise. Given that you have a Supreme Court judgment, has anything changed in the law at all following that judgment, or has it just been left in abeyance?

Lucy Powell: There has been a CPS consultation on their guidance on the use of it. We are waiting for the outcome of that consultation, but in practice, no, nothing has actually changed. One of the reasons that I am here is that there has been a significant case in my own constituency where a large number of young people have received mandatory life sentences, many of whom were not at the scene at the time.

There has been a lot of academic research into this, and most of the people in prison under charges of joint enterprise are black and ethnic minority because the prosecution relies very heavily on developing gang narratives. Gang associations are absolutely critical to those prosecutions being successful. There is a lower bar evidentially for gang association when you bring forward charges under joint enterprise. That has been the problem with it, and that is why the Supreme Court—

Q27 **Bob Blackman:** How many people in the UK are affected?

Lucy Powell: Hundreds. It is hard, because not every case is explicitly brought under joint enterprise. It might be something you find out later, so it is a bit of a murky area. Certainly, Manchester Metropolitan University carried out research and spoke to several hundred prisoners, many of whom face mandatory life sentences for murder when they either were not at the scene or were involved in a much smaller way than being a murderer.

Mr Mitchell: The basic answer to your question is no. This is an egregious example of the justice system not being able to proceed with the speed and urgency that I believe Parliament would require from it.

Lucy Powell: Something we thought in terms of timing was that February will be two years since the Supreme Court ruling, and the campaigners are keen to build up to that time, so we thought that might be good timing.



Body

UserTrail

Info3

Info1

Info2

DocName

Page 14 of 14

PhoneNumber

Q28 **Chair:** Are there any cases pending that might make elements of a debate fall foul of the sub judice rule?

Lucy Powell: We would encourage colleagues to talk not about specific cases but about the generalities of it. JENGBA, in all its literature and the leaflet from its relaunch recently, is always keen not to specify one case or another. There is plenty of research and general evidence that can be brought to a debate.

Q29 **Chair:** In terms of party balance, Lucy, the application seems to be fairly heavy on Labour Members but fairly light on Conservative party Members.

Mr Mitchell: There have been some reinforcements from the right flank.

Lucy Powell: Yes. There is also quality there. Since we put the application in, Peter Bottomley has also added his name. We have got two lead Members from the Conservatives, two other Conservatives and others there. JENGBA has connections with many MPs from the Liberal Democrats and, I think, the SNP too. It is just that we were keen, knowing that you have pressures—

Q30 **Chair:** I don't think it applies in Scotland.

Lucy Powell: I think there might be some sympathies with it. Certainly, Vince Cable has done a lot of work with JENGBA.

Q31 **Robert Courts:** As this is slightly in vogue in this session, I would simply add that I will add my name to it.

Lucy Powell: Fantastic. Thank you.

Robert Courts: This is my practice area, so I would also add some more support there.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Anyone else, please? In that case, thank you very much for your application.