



House of Commons
Women and Equalities
Committee

**Appointment of the
Chair of the Social
Mobility Commission:
Alun Francis OBE**

Seventh Report of Session 2022–23

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 25 October 2023*

HC 1806

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Women and Equalities Committee

The Women and Equalities Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

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[Elliot Colburn MP](#) (Conservative, Carshalton and Wallington)

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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Lizzie Arnold (Senior Media and Communications Officer), James Clarke (Committee Specialist), Chloë Cockett (Senior Committee Specialist), Mark Earl (Safeguarding and Witness Support Officer), Matthew Eaton (Committee Specialist), Kieran England (Inquiry Manager), Michelle Garratty (Committee Operations Manager), Roberta Guerrina (Parliamentary Academic Fellow), Phil Jones (Clerk), Jack Smith (Committee Operations Officer), Charlotte Swift (Second Clerk) and Hennie Ward (Media and Communications Officer)

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Contents

Appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission	3
The pre-appointment hearing process	3
The Social Mobility Commission	3
The statutory functions of the SMC	4
Appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and members of the SMC	4
Selection process and job description	5
The Government's preferred candidate: Alun Francis OBE	7
The pre-appointment hearing	7
Conclusion	8
Appendix 1: Correspondence from the Government	9
Letter dated 1 June from the Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP, Minister for Women and Equalities, to the Chair of the Committee	9
Appendix 2: Selection process for a new Chair of the Social Mobility Commission	10
Appendix 3: Person specification and eligibility criteria for the most recent competition, 2021	11
Appendix 4: Preferred candidate's CV	12
Appendix 5: Questionnaire for the preferred candidate, 2023	14
Formal minutes	16
List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament	17

Appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission

The pre-appointment hearing process

1. This Report follows our pre-appointment hearing with Alun Francis OBE, the Government's preferred candidate for the post of Chair of the Social Mobility Commission (SMC). The hearing was held on 25 October 2023. The role of Chair of the SMC is one of two ministerial appointments to which the Women and Equalities Committee may undertake formal scrutiny, the other is Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

2. Our guidelines for conducting pre-appointment hearings are set out by the Liaison Committee, a House of Commons Committee made up of select committee Chairs. The guidelines include the following purposes and objectives:

- “**scrutiny of the quality of ministerial decision-making**, which is a proper part of ministerial accountability to Parliament;
- providing **public reassurance**, in addition to the processes of the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments, that those appointed to key public offices have been selected on merit;¹
- providing public evidence of the **independence of mind of the candidate**; and
- **enhancing the appointee's legitimacy** in undertaking his or her function, including providing the public with an insight into the candidate's views on the policy issues related to the role.”²

While Select Committees' observations on the suitability of preferred candidates are not binding on the Government, “it is expected that the appointing minister will consider any relevant observations made by a committee before deciding whether to proceed with an appointment”.³

The Social Mobility Commission

3. Government sponsorship of the Social Mobility Commission passed from the Department for Education to the Cabinet Office's Equality Hub on 1 April 2021.⁴ The Secretary of State for Business and Trade, the Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP, in her dual role as Minister for Women and Equalities and ministerial head of the Cabinet Office's Equality Hub, is the SMC's ministerial sponsor and is responsible for appointing its Chair.

1 See “[The Commissioner for Public Appointments](#)”, accessed 30 September 2021

2 Liaison Committee, Third Report of Session 2017–19, [Pre-Appointment Hearings](#), HC 2307, Annex: Revised Guidelines for Select Committees carrying out pre-appointment hearings, para 3

3 Ibid., para 5

4 “[The Social Mobility Commission joins Cabinet Office](#)”, GOV.UK press release, 1 April 2021

The statutory functions of the SMC

4. Originally established as the Child Poverty Commission by the Child Poverty Act 2010 (now known as the Life Chances Act 2010),⁵ then re-titled the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission following the Welfare Reform Act 2012,⁶ the SMC is an independent statutory body, which assumed its current name following the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

5. The 2016 Act sets out the SMC's statutory duties, which include:

- Promoting social mobility in England;
- Providing advice, on request, to ministers about improving social mobility in England;
- Publishing an annual report before the end of each financial year, "setting out its views on the progress made towards improving social mobility in the United Kingdom"; and
- Carrying out "any other activity relating to improving social mobility in England or Northern Ireland", as directed by a minister.⁷

Appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and members of the SMC

6. The responsible minister is required to appoint a Chair and any other members (Commissioners) of the Commission for terms of no longer than five years. They may also appoint one of the Commissioners as Deputy Chair. The responsible minister can reappoint the Chair, Deputy Chair and Commissioners, whether or not to the same office, at the end of their terms. The minister also determines SMC members' pay, allowances and expenses.⁸

7. The last three SMC Chairs have resigned before the end of their respective terms: in December 2017 the Rt Hon Alan Milburn, former Labour MP for Darlington (1992–2010) and Secretary of State for Health (1999–2003) resigned, alongside his three fellow Commissioners;⁹ his successor, Dame Martina Milburn DCVO CBE, Group Chief Executive of The Prince's Trust, resigned from the SMC in April 2020, less than two years into her five-year term;¹⁰ and her successor, Katharine Birbalsingh CBE, Headmistress and co-founder of Michaela Community School, resigned from the SMC in January 2023, 14 months into her five-year term.¹¹

5 Child Poverty Act 2010, [section 8](#); [Schedule 1](#). The short title of the 2010 Act was amended by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, [section 7](#).

6 Welfare Reform Act 2012, [sections 145–6](#); [Schedule 13](#)

7 Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, [section 6](#)

8 Child Poverty Act 2010, [Schedule 1 \(as amended\)](#)

9 See, "[The government is unable to commit to the social mobility challenge](#)", *The Guardian*, 2 December 2017

10 [Letter of resignation dated 29 April 2020 from Dame Martina Milburn DCVO, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, to the Prime Minister](#)

11 [Letter of resignation dated 6 January 2023 from Katharine Birbalsingh CBE, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, to the Minister for Women and Equalities](#)

8. Ms Birbalsingh was appointed by the then Minister for Women and Equalities, Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP on 10 November 2021.¹² Although we noted her “several major strengths, including a track record of enhancing the life chances of disadvantaged young people through education [...] and a forceful character”, we highlighted that her “relatively narrow field of experience in secondary education” meant that she would require support by “a wide range of fellow Commissioners with diverse backgrounds, knowledge and experience across all relevant areas of social policy and sectors of the economy”, and by a Deputy Chair.¹³ Alun Francis, who had applied for the role of Chair in the same open competition as Ms Birbalsingh, was appointed Deputy Chair to support Ms Birbalsingh in her role.¹⁴

9. In resigning, Ms Birbalsingh expressed that she had become increasingly aware that her “notoriety puts the SMC in jeopardy”.¹⁵ She wrote to the Minister for Women and Equalities recommending that Alun Francis succeed her, saying that he “deserves... and ought to be Chair” and that he is a “genius at social mobility”.¹⁶

10. Since Ms Birbalsingh’s resignation in January 2023, Alun Francis has acted as Interim Chair. The Minister for Women and Equalities, Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP said she was confident that “the Commission under Alun Francis will continue to champion and improve social mobility”,¹⁷ and that the appointment of Mr Francis as Chair “will help ensure stability and continuity in the Commission”.¹⁸

11. There are currently seven Commissioners. The most recent appointee, Rt Hon Baroness Stowell of Beeston MBE, was appointed by the Minister for Women and Equalities on 26 June 2023 for a term of four years.¹⁹ The remaining six Commissioners were appointed by then Minister for Women and Equalities, Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, on 1 September 2022, also for terms of four years.²⁰ They are: Dr Raghav Ali OBE, Resham Kotecha, Matthew Goodwin, Ryan Henson, Parminder Kohli and Rt Hon Rob Wilson.²¹

Selection process and job description

12. Whereas the outgoing Chair was selected after a formal recruitment process, the Minister for Women and Equalities, Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP has directly appointed her preferred candidate, Alun Francis to the role. A written explanation from the Cabinet Office Equality Hub can be found in Appendix B. To summarise:

12 [“Birbalsingh to be appointed as chair of Social Mobility Commission”](#), Equality Hub/SMC press release, 10 October 2021

13 Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of Session 2021–22, [Appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission: Katharine Birbalsingh CBE](#), HC 782, Para 23

14 Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of Session 2021–22, [Appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission: Katharine Birbalsingh CBE](#), HC 782, Para 23

15 [Letter of resignation dated 6 January 2023 from Katharine Birbalsingh CBE, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, to the Minister for Women and Equalities](#)

16 Ibid.

17 [Letter dated 6 January 2023 from Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP, the Minister for Women and Equalities to Katharine Birbalsingh CBE, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission](#)

18 See Appendix 1

19 [“Chair of the Social Mobility Commission appointed”](#), Equality Hub/SMC press release, 26 June 2026

20 [“Seven new Social Mobility Commissioners appointed”](#), Equality Hub/SMC press release, 1 September 2022

21 Ibid.

- Citing “exceptional circumstances” following the resignation of the previous Chair before the end of her term, the Minister for Women and Equalities selected a preferred candidate without a competition.
- Mr Francis was found to be appointable as Chair in the most recent competition which recruited the previous Chair.
- There is concern that another competition “could create uncertainty about the Board’s direction and compromise the progress of the SMC.”
- The Commissioner for Public Appointments approved the direct appointment on 11 May 2023 and following the PM’s approval, it was announced on 26 June 2023.

13. The new SMC Chair will be appointed to work for four days per month (48 days per year), lasting until 31 October 2025. The Chair will be remunerated at £350 per day, plus any legitimate travel and subsistence expenses.

14. The last open competition for Chair of the Social Mobility Commission was launched on 30 April 2021.²² The role was described as leading the SMC in “promoting social mobility both within and outside Government” and overseeing “work to strengthen the evidence base and improve public understanding of how opportunity is created and made accessible to all.”²³ It also set out that the appointee would “lead the Commission in realising a more defined role in national life and launching a more clearly defined framework for assessing the impact of public policy on social mobility.”²⁴ This would include:

- “the establishment of headline metrics through which the Commission can consistently measure the UK’s progress and inform public understanding; and
- a refocusing of the Commission’s work around the ‘three E’s’ as priority areas: employment; education; and enterprise.

As such, the SMC and its new Chair would have ‘a crucial role to play in the realisation of the Government’s levelling-up agenda’.²⁵

15. In addition to this, “the new Chair would be expected to provide effective leadership in relation to:

- advocating the social mobility agenda and shaping the debate about equality;
- demonstrating what ‘good’ looks like, and challenging key institutions;
- raising the profile of the Social Mobility Commission and social mobility by being a public spokesperson for the Commission;
- providing strategic leadership of the Commissioners and Secretariat in setting the overall direction, policy and plans for the Commission;

22 [“Recruitment starts for new Social Mobility Commission Chair”](#), Equality Hub/SMC press release, 30 April 2021

23 Ibid.

24 See Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of Session 2021–22, [Appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission: Katharine Birbalsingh CBE](#), HC 782, Para 15

25 Ibid.

- working collaboratively with Ministers, Parliament and other strategic partners; and
- overseeing work to strengthen the evidence base and publish key reports, including the Commission's Annual Report [...]²⁶

16. The person specification and eligibility criteria for the last competition can be found in Appendix C. As the Cabinet Office has confirmed that the role description has not changed, we referred to this criteria to inform our assessment of the suitability of Mr Francis for the role.²⁷

The Government's preferred candidate: Alun Francis OBE

17. Alun Francis is the Principal and Chief Executive of Blackpool and The Fylde College, an award-winning further education college that offers degrees, T Levels, apprenticeships and diplomas to school leavers and adults and is a Centre of Excellence for World Skills.²⁸ His career has included a range of public services, local government, area-based regeneration, youth work and education, including primary, secondary and higher education.²⁹ He was appointed Deputy Chair of the Social Mobility Commission in October 2021 and has served as Interim Chair since January 2023. Mr Francis received an Order of the British Empire for services to education in the 2021 New Year's Honours List.³⁰

The pre-appointment hearing

18. In oral evidence on 25 October, we questioned Alun Francis about his appointment to the role. Topics covered during the session included:

- His intentions for the role, how he will split his time between his positions as Chair of the Social Mobility Commission and Principal and Chief Executive of Blackpool and The Fylde College, and whether he has sufficient capacity to carry out the role of Chair effectively;
- The lessons he takes for his own leadership style from the tenure and resignation of his predecessor, and how he sees his relationship with the Government developing;
- Whether the Commission has sufficient resources and powers to successfully drive forward the social mobility agenda;
- The independence and impartiality of the Commission;
- His current assessment of social mobility in the UK and his thoughts on changes he would like to see to improve social mobility; and

26 Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of Session 2021–22, [Appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission: Katharine Birbalsingh CBE](#), HC 782, Para 16

27 Correspondence from Cabinet Office to Committee staff

28 See "[Blackpool and The Fylde College](#)", Accessed October 2023

29 Ibid.

30 See [Alun Francis OBE - GOV.UK](#), Accessed October 2023

- His confidence that he will be able to achieve results, and how we should judge the success of his tenure.

Conclusion

19. **Alun Francis is a pragmatic and judicious choice for the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission given his expertise and range of professional experience, and that he has already served as Deputy Chair and Interim Chair. As noted by the Minister for Women and Equalities, the appointment of Mr Francis mitigates concerns around the stability and continuity of the Commission. Mr Francis is knowledgeable on matters of social mobility and has an impressive understanding of social mobility data. Mr Francis recognises the importance of political impartiality and has demonstrated his commitment to evidence-based strategies and recommendations. We find that Alun Francis meets the criteria for Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, we endorse his appointment and wish him well in the role.**

20. **We also wish to take this opportunity to place on record our thanks to Ms Birbalsingh, for her service in the position.**

Appendix 1: Correspondence from the Government

Letter dated 1 June from the Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP, Minister for Women and Equalities, to the Chair of the Committee

Dear Caroline,

Chair of the Social Mobility Commission (SMC)

I am pleased to confirm that I have selected Alun Francis as my preferred candidate for Chair of the Social Mobility Commission. I am confident that Alun's skills and experience as SMC's Deputy Chair will allow the SMC to take forward its important work. His announcement as the preferred Chair candidate, will help ensure stability and continuity in the Commission.

I will also be announcing the appointment of Baroness Stowell to the SMC in the role of Commissioner. I am confident that Baroness Stowell's skills and experience, especially as a former Chair of the Charity Commission, will be of great value to the SMC.

I look forward to receiving your report following Alun's pre-appointment hearing.

Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP, Secretary of State for Business and Trade, President of the Board of Trade and Minister for Women and Equalities

Appendix 2: Selection process for a new Chair of the Social Mobility Commission

On 6 January, following Katharine Birbalsingh's resignation as Social Mobility Commission (SMC) Chair, the Minister for Women and Equalities ('the Minister') wrote to the Commissioner for Public Appointments ('the Commissioner') to inform him of her decision to appoint Alun Francis as interim Chair of the SMC using Section 3.3 of the Governance Code for Public Appointments ('the Code') which allows Ministers to make direct appointments in exceptional circumstances.

The Minister wanted to appoint Alun as the Government's preferred candidate for the permanent role through direct appointment, again using Section 3.3 of the Code, which states that, in exceptional cases, Ministers may decide to appoint a candidate without a competition.

The Minister wrote to the Commissioner for Public Appointments explaining the justification for the direct appointment, and a proposed term length (which is until the end of his current term with the SMC on 31 October 2025).

There was a strong case for directly appointing Alun substantively:

- Alun was found appointable as Chair in the open competition which recruited Katharine Birbalsingh in 2021. Section 7.7 of the Code allows a candidate found appointable for one competition, be appointed to another suitably similar one, within 12 months. Katharine's resignation on 6 January puts us only 2 months outside of this 12 month window.
- Another competition could create uncertainty about the Board's direction and could compromise the progress of the SMC in delivering the Board's vision and workplan to improve social mobility across the UK.

The Minister also expressed an interest in appointing Alun as substantive Chair at the 1 March 2023 WESC hearing.³¹ The Commissioner for Public Appointments approved the direct appointment on 11 May and following the PM's approval, it was announced on 26 June that Alun would be the Government's preferred candidate for Chair of the SMC.

Cabinet Office Equality Hub, 15th September 2023

Appendix 3: Person specification and eligibility criteria for the most recent competition, 2021

“Candidates should be able to demonstrate the following essential selection criteria:

- a strong understanding of and demonstrable commitment to social mobility with the ability to think strategically about cross-cutting issues in, for example, housing, education, or family support;
- a commitment to exercising impartial and independent judgement, drawing sound conclusions that differentiate and weigh up competing arguments which are capable of justification under close scrutiny;
- the ability to lead a high-profile organisation, including ability to chair the board and provide effective challenge and support to the organisation;
- outstanding relationship-building skills, with the ability to command respect, build networks quickly and work with and through others to achieve objectives;
- an understanding of a political landscape in Great Britain and an ability to develop a strong and credible relationship with Ministers and senior Whitehall officials;
- excellent communication skills, including the ability to operate effectively and comfortably as an ambassador for the organisation;
- a demonstrated understanding of and engagement with the critical economic and cultural divides that have come to the fore in modern Britain—between graduates and non-graduates; between the metropolitan cities and the countryside and towns; and between the nationally or internationally mobile and those more rooted in place and tradition—and the importance this has in developing public policies that serve those seen as being left behind;
- the ability to lead and develop the Commission with a diverse membership that represents often-competing priorities;
- the ability to understand and interpret financial information and to provide effective challenge on the regularity and propriety of the SMC’s spend and business activities;
- high standards of integrity, commitment to public service values, and an understanding of the principles and practices of corporate governance”.³²

32 Women and Equalities Committee, [Appointment of the Chair of the SMC: Katharine Birbalsingh](#), 29 October 2021, p 12

Appendix 4: Preferred candidate's CV

Nov 2021–present: Deputy Chair, Social Mobility Commission

Sep 2021–present: Chair, Oldham Economic Review

August 2023–present: Principal and Chief Executive, Blackpool and The Fylde College, Ashfield Rd, Bispham

A £57m turnover college, delivering technical education through 16-18, apprenticeships, adult programmes, higher education and commercial contracts. It is rated as 'Good' by Ofsted and has a Gold TEF assessment.

Feb 2010–August 2023: Principal and Chief Executive of The Oldham College, Rochdale Rd, Oldham

A £32m turnover college, delivering technical education through 16-18 programmes, apprenticeships, adult, and higher education. It is rated as 'Good' by Ofsted and has a Silver TEF assessment. Under my leadership the College won a variety of national prizes and awards.

July 2007–February 2010: Assistant Director Education, Transforming Learning, Oldham Council

I led on the development and delivery of a £235m Building Schools for the Future and Academies programme, and the transformation programme in relation to secondary education.

Feb 2005–Aug 2007: Head of Services for Young People, Stockport Council

I led on restructuring education and children services, through Every Child Matters, with particular responsibility for managing Connexions, Youth Service, Education Welfare Services, and the Youth Offending Team.

July 2002–Feb 2005: Director, Greater Manchester Connexions

I was a member of the senior team which set up and delivered the new Connexions service across Greater Manchester, with lead responsibility for working with the Learning and Skills Council, local Connexions partnerships, youth engagement, youth offending, youth work, voluntary sector, Education Business Links, Enterprise, Communications, Quality assurance and commissioning. I also led on a number of innovative national projects.

Feb 2000–July 2002: Senior Regeneration Officer, New East Manchester/ New Deal for Communities

Delivery of social programme component of East Manchester regeneration masterplan, including delivery of New Deal of Communities and Single Regeneration Budget Programmes around education, training, youth and health. Within Manchester it was a hugely significant programme which laid the foundation for the wider regeneration of East Manchester which is now evident with the investment around the Etihad Campus.

July 1999–Feb 2000: Head of Arts and Community Development, Stockport Council

I led on community and arts programmes, including 10 community centres, a variety of arts venues and a community theatre.

July 1995–July 1999: Manchester City Council–Regeneration Officer

I led on various regeneration programmes, including A6 Single Regeneration and European funding programmes, with responsibility for education, employment, community economic development, health, youth and crime programmes. I also worked within the Council’s voluntary sector grants team.

October 1993–July 1995: Sessional Lecturer, University of Salford

Teaching undergraduate courses in history, social science and politics.

October 1992 to July 1995: Sessional Lecturer, Liverpool John Moores University

Teaching undergraduate courses in history, social science and politics.

October 1992 to March 1993: Sessional Lecturer, University of Central Lancashire

Teaching undergraduate courses in history, social science and politics.

Articles and references

<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/essays/50965/a-very-british-school>

<https://unherd.com/thepost/social-mobility-alexander-hamilton-style/>

<https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/rethinking-social-mobility-for-the-levelling-up-era/>

<https://www.aoc.co.uk/news-campaigns-parliament/news-views/aoc-blogs/an-improvement-plan-for-oldhams-local-economy-alun-francis-and-andy-westwood>

<https://oerb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/LevellingUpOldhamFullReportFinal.pdf>

<https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/why-white-paper-has-focus-structure-fe>

Appendix 5: Questionnaire for the preferred candidate, 2023

(1) What specific skills and expertise will you bring to the role?

I have worked in a senior leadership position in further education for fourteen years, and in various urban regeneration and provision/projects to address disadvantage for nearly thirty years. I have a very wide experience across a whole range of public services, as well as a lot of engagement with the challenges around economic development and public private partnerships. I have decent academic skills, and a good knowledge of the policy and academic debates about social mobility, as well as a strong view about how social mobility has, or does, help different groups in different places. I have previous experience of chairing and leading work of a similar kind to the Social Mobility Commission, most recently in the form of the Oldham Economic Review, which was published in 2022. I have experience of leading and managing a complex organisation, and have worked in both public and arms length organisations, and understand the issues around governance and effective management.

(2) Do you currently or potentially have any business, financial or other non-pecuniary interests or commitments, that might give rise to the perception of a conflict of interest? How do you intend to resolve any potential conflicts of interests if you are appointed?

I do not have any other interests, financial or otherwise, outside of my employment at Blackpool and the Fylde College and my role with the Lancashire Colleges Group (which is a partnership of colleges. There may be a perceived general conflict of interest in terms of any issues relating to further education, but these are managed within the Commission by the checks and balance of having a wider Commissioner team, who are not from a further education background—and by the overall governance issues within the Commission. In a broad sense, however, the fact that I work within further education should be a strength for the Commission, as further education does offer a unique perspective on many issues to do with disadvantaged communities and the economy, and definitely offers a challenge to conventional views of social mobility.

(3) If appointed what professional or voluntary work commitments will you continue to undertake, or do you intend to take on, alongside your new role? How will you reconcile these with your new role?

I will only be undertaking my duties as Principal and Chief Executive of Blackpool and the Fylde College, and will not be seeking or intending to take any other voluntary or professional roles apart from my work with the Commission.

(4) Have you ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality? If so, how will you demonstrate your political impartiality in the role?

No. I am politically impartial. I am interested in policy, but not particularly interested in politics. Throughout my career I have worked very positively with people from all political backgrounds and parties, and do not regard myself as partisan or tribal in any sense. In the

end, the evidence is the highest authority when it comes to analysing and understanding social mobility or any other policy area—and should be the basis on which to build consensus among people who might otherwise have very different views and perceptions.

(5) Do you intend to serve your full term of office?

Yes. The role is challenging and difficult, but it is important for me, and for the sector I work in, that I honour my commitment to completing a full term.

(6) How do you assess the public profile and reputation of the Social Mobility Commission?

The Commission has a unique role in the sense that there are many organisations working and researching social mobility, but only one which has the responsibility to turn the evidence into usable advice for government. It is important that this evidence is marshalled and presented in a way which encourages an accurate, evidence-based assessment of social mobility and the potential to improve it. The Commission has had a number of changes of direction and leadership in the past, and has, I think, struggled to make recommendations which have had demonstrable impact in terms of policy. This has been the subject of some criticism in the past—some of it fair and some not.

The Commission's role is challenging not least because of the size of the task, the complexity of the evidence base and the wide policy terrain for it to influence. However, it is my belief that by assessing the evidence, and seeking to sharpen the focus on people and places whose opportunities are genuinely more limited, the Commission can increase its impact. To do this, it must protect its role as the impartial collator of the evidence, and continue to exert its influence, and give its support to initiatives which can bolster initiatives to improve social mobility. Social mobility is a hugely important issue in terms of understanding how fair our society and economy is, and is important to have an independent Commission dedicated to presenting the evidence and influencing policy where it can. There are times when this will involve exploring some challenging issues, and part of the role of the Commission is to encourage debate on these issues, in a constructive way. And this will be something that I hope the Commission will be able to do in due course.

(7) What do you think are the key relationships that you will have to manage in your role? Do you have any concerns about these relationships?

The key relationships are with the Women and Equalities Select Committee, the Minister for Equalities, the Cabinet Office and associated partners and stakeholders, the wider academic community, the voluntary and community sector, public agencies—including but not confined to education providers - and private employers. And there is also a key set of relationships within the Commission, between Commissioners, and with the team employed by the Commission. All of these relationships bring their challenges, but I do not have any particular concerns about them, apart from rising to the challenge of managing them well.

Formal minutes

Wednesday 25 October

Members present:

Caroline Nokes, in the Chair

Elliot Colburn

Jackie Doyle-Price

Carolyn Harris

Lia Nici

Kate Osborne

Kirsten Oswald

Appointment of the Chair of Social Mobility Commission

Draft Report (*Appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission: Alun Francis OBE*) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 20 read and agreed to.

Papers were appended to the Report as Appendices 1 to 5.

Resolved, That the Report be the Seventh Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Wednesday 8 November 2023 at 9.30 am

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Menopause and the Workplace	HC 91
2nd	The rights of cohabiting partners	HC 92
3rd	Black maternal health	HC 94
4th	Equality and the UK asylum process	HC 998
5th	Attitudes towards women and girls in educational settings	HC 331
6th	So-called honour-based abuse	HC 831
1st Special	Ethnicity pay gap reporting: Government response to the Committee's fourth report of session 2021–22	HC 110
2nd Special	Equality in the heart of democracy: A gender sensitive House of Commons: responses to the Committee's fifth report of session 2021–22	HC 417
3rd Special	The rights of cohabiting partners: Government response to the Committee's second report	HC 766
4th Special	Menopause and the workplace: Government response to the Committee's first report	HC 1060
5th Special	Black maternal health: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1611
6th Special	So-called honour-based abuse: Government response to the Committee's Sixth Report	HC 1821
7th Special	Equality and the UK asylum process: Government response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1825

Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Levelling Up and equality: a new framework for change	HC 702
2nd	Appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission: Katharine Birbalsingh CBE	HC 782
3rd	Reform of the Gender Recognition Act	HC 977
4th	Ethnicity pay gap reporting	HC 998
5th	Equality in the heart of democracy: A gender sensitive House of Commons	HC 131

Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: interim Report on temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act	HC 386
2nd	Appointment of the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission	HC 966
3rd	Unequal impact? Coronavirus and BAME people	HC 384
4th	Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: full Report	HC 1050
5th	Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact	HC 385
6th	Changing the perfect picture: an inquiry into body image	HC 274