

Minutes

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Cancer

Officers meeting

Tuesday 3 November 2020, 2.00-3.00pm, virtual meeting via Zoom meeting.
Chaired by Tonia Antoniazzi MP, APPGC Chair.

Attendees

Tonia Antoniazzi MP
Henry Smith MP
Nicola Richards MP
Grahame Morris MP
Baroness Walmsley

Andy McGuinness	Secretariat, APPG on Cancer
Rebekka Smiddy	Secretariat, APPG on Cancer
Emma Stevenson	Secretariat, APPG on Cancer
Professor Pat Price	Action Radiotherapy
Peter Carroll	Secretariat, APPG on Radiotherapy
Daniel Laing	Secretariat, APPG on Radiotherapy
Hannah Winter	
Alexandra Ming	Dods Group

Apologies

Lord Rennard
John Baron MP
Tim Farron MP

Minutes

1. Welcome and Apologies (3 mins)

The Chair thanked the Officers and auditors for joining the meeting, and read out apologies received.

The Chair outlined the agenda for the meeting.

2. Minutes from previous meeting – 11 February (2 mins)

The Chair then ran through the Minutes of the previous Officers Meeting – the AGM, 11 February.

There were no objections to the Minutes from Officers present, and no objections made to the Chair or Secretariat prior to the meeting.

3. Update on Activity of the APPGC in 2020 (5 mins)

The Chair updated the group on the progress of the joint letter to the Secretary of State, sent in May, and confirmed that with Tim Farron (Chair of the APPG on Radiotherapy) and Grahame Morris, had met with the Secretary of State a few weeks prior to discuss the backlog and recovery of services.

The Chair informed the group that she had met with people with cancer via Macmillan Cancer Support's virtual lobby day in the summer, and in her position as Chair was invited to talk to Cancer Research UK's Ambassadors, as part of their 'Summer of Campaigning' event series.

The Chair notified the group of a written commitment from the Minister Jo Churchill to meet with the APPG, and confirmed that the Secretariat was following up with her office to try and secure a date in the near future.

The Chair thanked all Officers, stakeholders and auditors present for their support over the last few months, and highlighted the need to continue to keep the pressure on, to ensure cancer and cancer recovery do not fall off the political agenda.

4. COVID and Cancer

(35 mins)

Professor Pat Price and the Secretariat of the APPG on Radiotherapy updated members about their activities.

Pat outlined research from Action Radiotherapy which estimates the backlog is 100,000 people, at a time when we are already seeing cancellations of cancer operations in Liverpool

She highlighted that they are looking for a commitment from the Government about how to catch up with cancer services. She notified the group that the APPG believe the Government don't know exactly what the backlog is.

Andy McGuinness echoed these points. He stated that Macmillan Cancer Support also sees the misunderstanding of what the backlog is as a big issue. Namely, a lack of understanding that until NHS is outperforming itself before COVID, the backlog will in fact continue to grow.

Peter Carroll informed members about a conversation with Tim Farron (Chair of the APPG on Radiotherapy) before the meeting. He confirmed that Tim is very frustrated at the situation, and that he feels despite positive feedback from the Secretary of State, that very little is being done to address the issues.

Peter and Daniel added that they believe it is essential for APPGs to join together, especially with the Spending Review coming up.

Rebekka Smiddy updated members about Macmillan Cancer Support's recent activity, including the findings of their new report: 'The Forgotten C'.

She highlighted that the report finds there are currently 50,000 missing diagnoses in the UK, and that the backlog will take 18 months to clear given current rates of progress.

Rebekka also identified the upcoming publication of the Cancer Recovery Plan in coming weeks as a key area of focus.

Henry Smith MP gave his apologies.

Tonia Antoniazzi MP outlined the need for APPGs to think about what they can do now and between the Spending Review in November. She invited members to supply suggestions.

Peter Carroll highlighted the need to get cut-through, and suggested publishing an emergency statement from chairs of cancer and relevant APPGs.

Grahame Morris MP said that he was frustrated with the lack of response from Government.

Professor Pat Price stated that there was a need for key players to do something urgently to escalate the issue.

Rebekka Smiddy suggested that Officers could apply for a Backbench Business Debate on cancer services, and highlighted the upcoming Health & Social Care Departmental Oral Questions session, as an opportunity for members to raise the issue in the Chamber.

[ACTION] Secretariat, APPG on Cancer, to circulate Oral Questions fielded from the APPG Stakeholder Group to Officers ahead of tabling deadline for Health & Social Care Departmental Questions.

The Chair stated that she believed a joint letter from Officers and Chairs of cancer APPGs would be an appropriate course of action.

Baroness Walmsley notified members of her role as co-Chair of the APPG on Health, and highlighted that her co-Chair Mary Glendon MP, would likely also be interested in signing any joint letters.

[ACTION]: Secretariat, APPG on Cancer, to draft a joint letter to the Secretary of State, and circulate to the APPG on Radiotherapy and Officers for signoff.

The Chair asked members if they had any further suggestions for escalating their calls.

Baroness Walmsley asked members if they thought it would be appropriate to feature the letter and highlight the APPGs calls in a letter to the editor of the Times.

Peter Carroll confirmed that he knew the editor and that the APPG on Radiotherapy could facilitate this.

[ACTION] Following receipt of a draft of the joint letter to the Secretary of State, the Secretariat of the APPG on Radiotherapy are to draft a letter to the editor of the Times.

Baroness Walmsley gave her apologies.

Nicola Richards MP gave her apologies and offered to do anything she could to support the APPG.

Professor Pat Price stated the importance of engaging with people with lived experience in raising the issue, and highlighted the 370k signatures their petition has received so far.

Grahame Morris MP, confirmed that he had previously served on the Petitions Committee, and that he knew the committee clerk. He asked if members thought it is possible to ask for a heat map of signatories' constituencies.

Grahame also highlighted that very little time is being allocated for Backbench Business Debates, and that key opportunities to raise the issues in Parliament will be in covid statements.

Tonia Antoniazzi MP confirmed that whenever she, Grahame Morris or Tim Farron get the opportunity, they raise the issue with the Secretary of State, and that this has previously resulted in Tim securing a meeting with the Minister.

Professor Pat Price asked the group if Jeremy Hunt, Chair of the Health & Social Care Select Committee, could be approached to escalate the issue.

Andy McGuinness updated the group that Macmillan Cancer Support had met with Jeremy a few weeks prior. He confirmed that he is a big advocate for the cancer community, and said the backlog is a key priority, and sees weekly testing as the key strategy for increasing capacity in NHS.

Andy agreed that Jeremy would be worth contacting and notified the group that he had utilised Macmillan Cancer Support's research into the backlog in the media.

Tonia Antoniazzi MP agreed with this suggestion, and asked the group whether they thought it a good idea to write a joint letter to Jeremy, to ask the Select Committee to look into the effect of covid on cancer services.

Grahame Morris MP, said that he believed other Officers and Chairs would co-sign a letter to Jeremy Hunt, to try and ensure we can try and get things moving.

All Officers present agreed to write to Jeremy Hunt, with no objections.

[ACTION] Secretariat, APPG on Cancer, to draft a joint letter from Officers to Jeremy Hunt, and circulate for signoff by Officers.

The Secretariat notified the group about their hopes to conduct an inquiry into cancer and covid.

Rebekka Smiddy outlined that this would seek to include personal testimonies, and address the backlog, restoration and review the progress of recovery plans. She stated that the APPG would seek to hold oral evidence sessions for each of these topics, ideally with case studies of people with cancer and professionals.

Rebekka confirmed that there would be an open call to the sector to submit evidence early next year, and that the Secretariat would hope to launch the report with media work and perhaps a roundtable event with the Minister.

The Secretariat of the APPG on Radiotherapy asked if it would be possible to bring forward the inquiry to November/December 2020, and offered their assistance to facilitate this.

Andy McGuinness thanked them for this offer. He notified the group that the inquiry had initially been planned for Q4, but needed to be pushed back into 2021 due to the ongoing 'Change Process' taking place at Macmillan. He did, however, confirm that the Secretariat would take this away and regroup with the Chair to discuss capacity.

6. AOB

(5 mins)

The Chair summarised the agreed actions:

1. Secretariat, APPG on Cancer, to draft a joint letter to The Secretary of State, and circulate for signoff by Officers.
2. Secretariat, APPG on Radiotherapy, to draft letter to the Times, to accompany the joint letter.
3. Secretariat, APPG on Cancer, to draft a joint letter to the Chair of the Health & Social Care Select Committee, and circulate for signoff by Officers.
4. Secretariat, APPG on Cancer, to circulate Oral Questions fielded from the APPG Stakeholder Group to Officers ahead of tabling deadline for Health & Social Care Departmental Questions.

The Chair thanked all Officers, stakeholders and auditors present for their time.