



## **AGENDA**

### **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Cats (APGOCATS) Inaugural Meeting 5pm-6pm, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Room T, Portcullis House**

#### **Attendees**

- Sheryll Murray MP (Chair)
- The Rt Hon The Lord Black of Brentwood
- Patricia Gibson MP
- The Rt Hon The Lord Goddard of Stockport
- Henry Smith MP
- Stefan Blakiston Moore (Cats Protection)
- Jacqui Cuff (Cats Protection)
- Bob Davidson (Office of Sheryll Murray MP)
- Scott Fryer (Battersea)
- Deborah McSkimming (BVA)
- Ben Parker (Battersea)
- Sam Pooke (Lexington Communications, representing Mars Petcare)
- Becky Thwaites (Blue Cross)

#### **Apologies**

- Rosie Cooper MP
- Caroline Lucas MP
- Layla Moran MP
- Claire Bessant – International Cat Care
- Vicki Betton – PDSA
- Helena Cotton – British Veterinary Association
- Steve Crow – Governing Council of the Cat Fancy
- Megan Knowles-Bacon – British Veterinary Association
- Mandy Ryan – British Veterinary Association

<b>Item</b>	<b>Lead Speaker</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>1. Welcome and opening remarks</b>	Chair	5.00pm - 5.05pm
- Sheryll Murray MP welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked the previous Chair and the secretariat for their work.		
<b>2. AGM &amp; reporting</b>	Ben Parker – <i>Battersea</i>	5.05pm - 5.15pm
- <u>Election of Officers</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sheryll Murray MP elected to position of Chair</li> <li>○ Lord Goddard of Stockport re-elected to the position of Vice-Chair</li> <li>○ Lord Black of Brentwood re-elected to the position of Vice-Chair</li> <li>○ Patricia Gibson MP re-elected to position of Vice-Chair</li> </ul>		
- <u>Officers elected in absentia</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Steve Reed MP re-elected to the position of Co-Chair</li> <li>○ Layla Moran MP re-elected to position of Treasurer</li> </ul>		
- <u>Group finances and correspondence</u>		

- Ben Parker confirmed that the group had not received money or gifts in kind to a level which would require an income and expenditure statement to be produced and Battersea will circulate information to the group.
- The group has not received any correspondence since the last meeting.
- New members
  - The group discussed which MPs might be interested in joining as members moving forward. It was suggested that Sir Roger Gale MP and Bob Blackman MP be added as new members, to which the group agreed.
  - **Action: Secretariat to make approaches to the offices of these MPs to add as members.**
- Group management
  - The group reappointed Battersea and Cats Protection to the role of Secretariat. Sheryll Murray MP proposed that Blue Cross join and the group approved this.
  - **Action: Battersea, Blue Cross and Cats Protection will ensure data protection agreements will be updated to reflect this.**
  - **Action: Battersea to update the APGOCATs website to add new officers and full list of those who have agreed to become members.**

### 3. A short policy review of the group's previous work & policy update

Jacqui Cuff – *Cats Protection* 5.15pm - 5.25pm

- Letter to Minister
  - A letter was sent to the Minister responsible for animal welfare (Lord Goldsmith) from the group in the previous Parliament (Sept 2019). Subject to the reshuffle, the group agreed we should consider writing to the Minister again to invite to the launch of the Loneliness Report (see below).
- Compulsory microchipping for cats
  - DEFRA has consulted on this issue. Blue Cross and Cats Protection stated they are in contact with DEFRA on this issue and believe that there will be further progress on this soon.
  - Deborah McSkimming raised concerns from the BVA relating to regulatory issues with the implementation of compulsory dog microchipping and the need to ensure that vets are not expected to enforce.
  - Jacqui Cuff agreed that vets should not have to be enforcers and stated they were not expected to do so for dogs.
  - Patricia Gibson MP highlighted this issue is devolved. There was a discussion about encouraging Scotland to make similar changes in the future.
  - **Action: Lord Black of Brentwood will discuss with Cats Protection regarding tabling an Oral Question in the Lords on this issue.**
- Sentencing
  - Chris Loder MP is bringing back the Animal Welfare Sentencing Bill to Parliament as a Private Member's Bill with Government backing. This Bill will raise the maximum sentences for animal cruelty offences. A discussion about the passage of the Bill took place.
  - **Action: Lord Goddard of Stockport stated he would be willing to help take the Bill through the Lords if needed. Battersea will discuss this with Chris Loder MP and get back to APGOCATs and Lord Goddard on the outcome.**

- Housing
  - The Government has announced changes to model tenancy clauses to make properties more pet-friendly.
  - Sam Pooke added that Mars Petcare had done some work with Brighton council on tenancy/pet issues and conducted a survey around how much extra tenants are willing to pay for their pets.
  - Jacqui Cuff discussed issues that had arisen as a result of changes to the Tenant Fees Act. The changes prevent landlords charging extra fees/deposit to allow pets in their properties. A test case is currently in the courts looking at whether it is unfair to charge extra rent.
  - **Action: The group will write to the Secretary of State for Housing, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, to highlight the forthcoming report on the positive impact of supporting pet-friendly properties and to welcome the Government moving to develop a new model tenancy agreement. (Cats Protection)**
  - **Action: Sam will update the group on the research when available.**
  
- Third party sales
  - Jacqui Cuff reminded the group that the ban on third party sales will come into effect on the 6th April. Whilst this is mainly focused on puppy sales it will also help cats. DEFRA will be doing some social media to promote this. APGOCATs building a social media presence for group to help promote.
  - **Action: Battersea to investigate setting up Twitter account for APGOCATs.**
  - **Action: Priority when promoting DEFRA campaign re online kitten sales is to signpost to the kitten checklist.**

#### 4. Loneliness Report

Scott Fryer - Battersea

5.25pm - 5.40pm

- The report on loneliness was the major piece of work the group focused on over the last year. Jacqui Cuff and Scott Fryer updated the group on the core findings of the draft report.
- Becky Thwaites discussed Blue Cross' *Link in the Chain* report that looks at similar issues. This report can be found [online here](#).
- Scott Fryer highlighted the importance of this work given that pets have not mentioned in the Government's Loneliness Strategy to date.
- Stefan Blakiston Moore discussed Loneliness Awareness Week, which runs from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> June and is organised by the Marmalade Trust, as a potential date for the report to be published. The Marmalade Trust will have a project manager in place in April to organise the week.
- Sheryll Murray MP suggested holding a Parliamentary launch event during Loneliness Week to promote the report.
- Discussion took place around the importance of cross-departmental work with this report given the wide range of issues covered, including housing and social prescribing. This needs to be considered for media release and invites to launch event.
- Sam Pooke said Mars Petcare would be happy to help with promoting the report.
- Jacqui Cuff discussed media release for the report and highlighted importance of case studies – something we should discuss with other APPGs.

- **Action: It was agreed that the secretariat will meet (Blue Cross to arrange) and update the Loneliness Report in light of the new Blue Cross research. Updated report to be signed off by the Group prior to launch.**
- **Action: Blue Cross to draft a letter to the Chairs of the APPGs on Loneliness and Older People to suggest future link up and investigate interest in joining for formal launch of report work later in the year.**
- **Action: Group to write to Minister leading the Loneliness Strategy (following expected reshuffle) to flag work of the APPG and assess possible follow-up options. (Cats Protection)**
- **Action: Group agreed to prepare report for publication during Loneliness Awareness Week. Cats Protection to continue to liaise with the Marmalade Trust about launch of report during Loneliness Week.**

**5. Priorities for the year ahead**      Chair/Jacqui Cuff – *Cats Protection*      5.40pm - 5.50pm

- Agreed main focus for the time being will be on the Loneliness report
- Discussion around compulsory microchipping and continuing to monitor the situation with the DEFRA consultation.
  - **Action: Agreed that APGOCATS may take further action if progress stalls on cat microchipping**

**6. AOB**      Chair      5.50pm - 5.55pm

- Patricia Gibson MP asked about the possibility of having cats on the Parliamentary estate.
- Scott Fryer explained this had been looked at before, but there was concern about cat welfare on the estate and the use of poison for vermin control
- Sheryll Murray MP and Lord Black suggested that this is something that should be looked at again by House authorities once the restoration work was further progressed.

**7. Concluding remarks and actions**      Chair      5.55pm-6.00pm

- Sheryll Murray MP thanked everyone for attending.
- Highlighted that the next meeting would likely be the Loneliness Report launch in June this year.