

LATER LIFE AMBITIONS MEETING WITH DEBBIE ABRAHAMS MP (WORK AND PENSIONS CTTEE CHAIR)

PORTCULLIS HOUSE, LONDON – 11 MARCH 2025

ATTENDEES

- Debbie Abrahams MP (Lab, Oldham East and Saddleworth), Chair of the House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee
- Djuna Thurley, House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee Pensions Specialist
- Sally Tsoukaris, General Secretary of the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
- David Luxton, Deputy General Secretary of the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
- Steve Wilcock, Deputy Chief Executive of the National Association of Retired Police Officers
- Matthew Boyd, Account Manager at Connect

NOTES

- Djuna Thurley expressed a particular interest in older people's commissioners.
- Both Debbie Abrahams and Djuna Thurley were aware of Later Life Ambitions beforehand.
 - Djuna Thurley in particular had good knowledge of the *Pensioners' Manifesto* and commented that she uses the partner organisations' websites as a research resource.
- Djuna Thurley noted the Scottish Parliament is looking into digital exclusion.
- The Spending Review was discussed.
- The Work and Pensions Committee inquiry into pensioner poverty was discussed.
 - Debbie Abrahams noted it was held partly in response to the Government's handling of changes to the Winter Fuel Payment.
 - Other motivations included cost factors around energy.
 - The inquiry should be seen as something of an impact assessment, highlighting who will be most affected by pensioner poverty (namely the self-employed and minority groups).
 - The committee will make its recommendations to the Government before summer recess.
- Debbie Abrahams raised the issue of pension adequacy.
- She also commented on the growing number of people in the private rented sector.
- She further commented on how most working individuals are ignorant of pensions and that education work must be undertaken to alter this.
- On the economy, she commented that the UK is in a "fiscal pickle" and that it will be challenging for the Government to address all the issues facing older people.
- On the possibility of the State Pension age being raised, she commented that as a select committee chair, she has not been privy to any Government decisions.
 - She expressed concern over the possibility of the age being increased, particularly given flatlining life expectancy.
- A discussion was had on health and social care
 - A particular focus was on drawing attention to the contribution of unpaid carers – and the savings they make for the state.
 - On the Casey Review, Debbie Abrahams commented that she hopes it will build and/or add to the evidence.
 - She expressed a hope that the review will make "bold proposals" to the Government in the process.
 - Even if it did, she said she does not believe any proposals would come to fruition before 15 years.
- The matter of police survivors' pensions was discussed.
 - Debbie Abrahams and Djuna Thurley requested material on this.

- Both were invited to the 26 March event in support of NARPO's survivors' pensions campaign; Debbie Abrahams will try to attend while Djuna Thurley is unavailable.
 - Djuna Thurley will however pass on the invitation to a House of Commons Library researcher, whom she said will try to attend the event.
- Digital exclusion was considered.
 - Debbie Abrahams stated that while she supports efficiencies, she does not support the digital-first policy.

ACTIONS [*All completed*]

- Connect to share case studies of the work of the older people's commissioners in Wales and Northern Ireland with Djuna Thurley.
- Connect to provide information from NARPO on the survivors' pensions issue and campaign.