1. Citizenship and civic engagement matter because there is currently a clear and present challenge to the cohesiveness of communities within the UK (as well as in other liberal democratic nation states) which is beginning to crystallise into an increasingly polarised and occasionally violent narrative. Whether Islamist, nationalist, far right, far left, religious fundamentalist, Europhobe/Europhile or militant environmentalist the shattering of social ‘consensus’ into multi-facetted, single issue and increasingly intolerant ‘tribalism’ is in my view the single most urgent issue of our day.

However here needs to be a distinction made between active citizenship/civic engagement/ empowerment on the one hand and identity/allegiance to the nation/nationalism/patriotism on the other. This is I believe, critical to the rest of this enquiry and my responses to it below.

The first, active citizenship, has the potential to bring communities together - the second, patriotism though more superficially appealing and linked to grand institutions of power (the military, Royal Family, Departments of State) as well as sport and international prestige, has the potential to split them apart. The two concepts need to be balanced in the public/political narrative in the media, in academic study and in any legislative proposals emerging from this committee’s work.

The concept of ‘Britain’/‘Britishness’ needs to be exemplified rather than imposed in some sort of promotional branding campaign. This was the essence of the Citizenship Education programmes originally taught in English schools as part of the revamped national curriculum in the early 2000’s. Students learned about politics and communities by actively engaging in political and community-based activities and (in the case of GCSE Cit St) were assessed on this. I use the past tense here because to an extent this element has been lost in the most recent iteration of the GCSE qualification (more on this below).

At a societal level the difference between thinking about Citizenship as empowered engagement on the one hand or integration on the other can be exemplified in the very different interpretations of nation building and patriotism adopted by say Australia and USA (integration) on one hand and Germany and Canada (engagement) on the other.

The question of identity is key here. We need to assess honestly the ways in which people in this country identify themselves and thus assess the extent to which ‘Britishness’ as opposed to say, ‘Welshness’ or ‘ being Black/minority/Ethnic’ or ‘European’ or ‘Muslim/Christian/Hindu’ is more prominent in people’s view of themselves and thus their attitudes and values. My sense is that today this will vary according to three factors – age, urbanity/rurality and whether born and raised in England, one of the other three UK jurisdictions or another country.

2/3/4. Taking Qs 2- 4 together, my overall response is: social cohesion and engagement cannot and should not be structurally or legislatively contrived. They must, and can, emerge from structural changes to or prioritisation of the opportunities to engage with the political and legislative process at local, regional and national level. Examples of this could be:

- making more use of web-based platforms as a way of encouraging ‘direct democracy’ at all three levels across all age ranges.
- prioritising (through the schools accountability framework, increased funding, better training) and moving to the centre of the educational process Citizenship Education as well as PSHE (Personal Social Health and Economic) education
making local government more relevant and effective by returning some powers surrendered to Westminster and requiring a much greater degree of local civic engagement by residents if they want a say in how funds are spent in their communities.

5. The centrality of Citizenship Education and PSHE in encouraging greater social cohesion, greater resilience and aspiration among young people and a thoughtful national narrative about Britishness and what a nation should be, cannot be over emphasised. **In my 35 years in the education profession, this is the single most self-evident fact I have learned.** It is my view that many of the social, personal and health problems faced by young people and indeed entire communities today are the consequence of our neglect of these two areas of the curriculum over many decades. It is also my clear view that the present epidemic of online exploitation of children and young people be it sexual or radicalising, could have been ameliorated - and could yet be - if the central importance of Citizenship (and PSHE) had not been lost/written out of the educational agenda after 2010.

Citizenship and PSHE – like-minded colleagues and I refer to these collectively as the Curriculum for Life (C4L) – should be at the core of the curriculum at every key stage and into FE and HE also - albeit via different, stage-appropriate delivery models. **It is pleasing to see progress being made in this respect with Relationships and Sex Education/PSHE, and a similar if not speedier rethink is now needed for Citizenship Education.**

There should be no exemptions – and I think herein lies the single greatest challenge to this entire enquiry. This is because the educational landscape in England now is a highly complex free market comprising among others, local authority maintained schools, academies old and new, free schools, studio schools, UTC’s, faith schools of varying levels of orthodoxy and supplementary schools such as Sunday schools and madrassas. To require that Citizenship Education be made compulsory in all these would require an act of political will not seen since the ‘comprehensivisation’ programme of the early 1960’s. This is precisely why I believe it should be undertaken. The message would be crystal clear – we need to completely re-think what schools are for in this country, how we measure their performance, how we train our teachers and what we value most as educational outcomes for our children and young people.

Because of the focus on English and Maths as the key performance indicators over the last twenty five years or so and the consequent allocation of resources, training places, funding and time to these two subjects by school leaders and policy makers, current delivery of Citizenship Education is ‘patchy’. This means that there are examples (two quoted below) of excellent practice with clearly positive outcomes for pupils/students, but overall delivery is a matter of ‘hit and miss’ in terms of whether a particular school leadership team chooses to prioritise Citizenship Education in its curriculum and thus nationally delivery of the subject is well short of the mark.

The Citizenship KS3 and 4 syllabus/programme of study needs to be refocussed on active engagement and empowerment as it was in 2007. The current, dry, ‘civics’ based approach – despite some positive amendments being made following discussions with ACT (the Association for Citizenship Teaching - with which organisation I have worked for over ten years). The course lacks appeal and most importantly the method by which this will be assessed from next year – ie a single written terminal exam, is entirely inappropriate for a subject of this nature and importance. If we want children and young people to model the democratic and engaged behaviours we want to see in them as adults, then credit should be given to them for doing so as part of the assessment process in schools.
Of equal significance is the current use of the Ofsted framework and its requirement that schools evidence the extent to which they prepare pupils for life in ‘modern Britain’ as part of SMSC (social moral spiritual and cultural) development. However, inspections are brief, often pressured events which do not always show ‘typicality’. They are also infrequent and seen as a ‘threat’ by many schools. A more useful and productive approach would be to reintroduce Ofsted subject surveys or something very similar. These were less formal and voluntary (though I would suggest they should be a level of compulsion now), focussed on one element of the school’s delivery, resulted in a letter not an inspection report (which could only be published with the school’s consent) outlining the survey findings and were more collegiate in nature than inspections. This is what HMI used to do more of twenty five years ago, often in collaboration with local authority advisers and school leaders, and it could be a way of more positively engaging with school leaders and governing bodies in helping them reframe their thinking about Citizenship Education.

I would re-emphasise though that this process would have to occur once the above mentioned national level rethink had taken place and was being implemented, funded and properly managed.

6. The NCS as it stands is – a. patchy in its management and delivery at local level, b. apparently focussed on an interpretation of ‘good citizenship as chiefly volunteering and team building, c. often confused therefore with ‘Character Education’ which is an entirely separate concept. d. highly selectively offered.

It seems to be a youth service based offering rather than an educational one and as such I think is misnamed. The offer is valuable but it is not ‘Citizenship’ as defined above. NCS should thus either be re sold as a national youth service or redesigned as ‘active Citizenship post 16’ and delivered by teachers and/or specifically trained youth workers.

7/8. The combination of a greater focus on Citizenship as an academic subject and also Citizenship as an active process in the school and community should be enough to begin to shift attitudes and values ‘on the ground’ at local, regional and national level. This assumes that the above mentioned recommendations have been implemented and that there is a clear and consistent message from government at both national and local level, that ‘what you think and what you do matter to us all’. The learning taking place in schools can and should be cascaded out into the local communities in which they are located. There should be such a level of communication, collaboration and coordination between school and community that the distinction between the two effectively disappears.

(Third sector organisations have an important supporting role to play but cannot be the lead bodies as this approach is fraught with problems of consistency, quality of delivery and the negative associations with the now failed ‘Big Society’ approach.)

The values which schools promote (often as ‘British Values’) are those of any liberal, democratic, inclusive, respectful and just society. Thus heads often tell me that the ‘British Values’ which I am training their teachers to discuss in class are those of their entire school community. The term can therefore be defined as ‘those values to which British society subscribes’ as opposed to values to which are uniquely British - which they are not. They are exemplified in legislation such as the Single Equalities Act and the various laws regarding hate speech and discriminatory behaviour as well as in the existence of a free press, an independent judiciary and devolved legislative bodies across the UK. Some of these values can be a challenge to some religious and ‘sub-cultural’ perspectives and this is where much highly focussed and well-resourced groundwork will have to be done if the approach described above is to gain any traction. This is particularly important.
when we consider the challenge to radicalising narratives implicit in these values. For example, equality of treatment before the law in terms of gender, race and sexual identity in particular presents an existential threat to the values held by some religious fundamentalists as well as those on the far right.

9/10. Taking 9 and 10 together, communities and groups feel left behind because there are left behind. Acknowledging this needs to be our starting point if any meaningful progress is to be made.

The present political process at local and national level is not a. accessible to many of communities and b. is not seen as relevant or receptive to their concerns.

In part both of these obstacles could be overcome in the medium to long term by implementing the re-think of Citizenship education both in and out of the school environment already described. More needs to happen in terms of adult education for what might be called ‘political and economic literacy’. When adult or community education was a part of local authority provision it was in general well accessed and competently delivered, especially when this was done by trained teachers. Losing it has come at a cost.

All voices need to be heard but this needs to happen in safe spaces, in properly managed discussions, in local groups in which it becomes self-evident to all that even at local level a democratic process is the only fair and equitable way of ‘pleasing most of the people most of the time’. The key challenge here will be getting results on the ground that matter to the groups around the table – again at both local and national level. With results will come buy-in. Without them, the status quo and societal fragmentation will prevail.

The reconciliation of ‘diversity’ with ‘integration’ will come from this process as more people realise that in a pluralist liberal democracy there need be no contradiction between the two. A strong democracy can accommodate both respect for difference and a sense of belonging to a larger whole – but only if all people have access to the decision making process and see evidence of progress on the ground.

11. Free ESOL classes for adults and, crucially, high quality, fully funded ESOL support in classrooms, is vital if newcomers are to have any real access to all of what has been described above.

The so called ‘Citizenship Test’ would be largely redundant if the measures described in my responses above were to be properly implemented.

12. ACT/Home Office ‘Building Resilience’ projects (in which I was involved in an advisory capacity) for example - https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/immigration-and-protest-case-study-dover-2016-act-building-resilience-project


Stoke Damerel Community College, Plymouth (‘Modern Britain’ as a curriculum area) - https://www.sdcc.net/2-uncategorised/1081-modern-britain-council-meets-for-first-time

The Five Nations Network (for which I am England Lead) - see especially St Eunan’s primary school, Glasgow – Pupil Voice in a deprived area: http://www.fivenations.net/workshop-and-seminar-resources-2017.html

‘No More Boys’ and Girls’ (BBC TV August 2017) showing the power of a coherent, properly planned and resourced teaching programme to change fundamental attitudes and values in a relatively short time frame.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/proginfo/2017/33/no-more-boys-and-girls
These examples show that the seeds of the changes we want to see are already present - but they are thinly scattered across random parts of the country in an ad hoc manner. We need a national rethink of how we broadcast them more widely and a thought-through preparation of the ground in which we wish them to take root. Placing citizenship education in schools and communities at the very centre of what we see as the purpose of education is the key to making this happen.

30 August 2017