Mr Christopher Norris – written evidence (CCE0051)

Media, publishing and social entrepreneur

1. Citizenship means belonging to a place – through birth, marriage or conscious choice (after a registration period) and agreeing to a set of social values that characterise the best of British character.

   Civic engagement implies an individual’s active integration into their local community beyond the scope of his/her immediate and extended family, participating in shared cultural and social experiences.

   In the 21st century, civic engagement embraces and reflects online activity and behaviour.

   Individuals have multiple identities: family; peer-group; cultural; religious; personal interest groups; local; regional; national and international. These identities are held in dynamic balance all the time and – along with personality, character and moral outlook – make up the individual personas that we present to the world.

2. The most easily agreed set of British values is the ever-evolving bedrock of the law.

   The purpose of politics is to influence and shape the law towards reflecting, rewarding and amplifying best practice in social and public behaviour.

   We need to write a personality statement of what it means to be British, a set of shared values that every law-abiding can agree. For example, the best of British character is law-abiding, tolerant, hard-working, fair-minded, good-natured, loyal, generous, sociable, charitable and outward-looking.

   Society needs to showcase best civic practice and reward outstanding behaviour.

3. Society must build trust between our various communities. This needs a deep review assessment of everyone’s needs, culture and ambition.

   Equal opportunities need to be engrained in everything we do, not just paid lip service. We need to address and root out all aspects of life in Britain that prevent social mobility: everyone in the UK deserves the same chance to shine so that citizens succeed on merit, not on nepotism, class or financial wealth.

   Politics need to define methods and procedures for ensuring equal opportunities and meritocracy across all communities in Britain. Punitive sanctions need to be available and enforced – and seen to be enforced – to ensure everyone has an equal chance to succeed in life by reaching their goals and achieving their ambitions.

4. We need to encourage citizens to vote. The following suggestions are some of the changes that need to be made:

   - People must be allowed to vote at 16: the age of consent is the time when an individual’s personal choices are directly affected by politics.
• Introduce proportional representation for all elections
• Enshrine a Bill of Rights into UK law
• Create a culture that explains the benefits of voting: give reasons why voting makes a positive difference on everyone’s lives
• Conduct research into why people don’t vote and act on the report’s findings
• Develop secure ways of voting electronically
• Ensure robust security of the voting process
• Design ways to provide instant factual feedback to political claims (i.e. to reduce ‘fake news’ by presenting the truth or falsehood of political statements in real time)
• Educate students to understand the importance of politics to their lives
• Reform the House of Lords: create a second elected chamber of regional representatives to deal with long-term social issues beyond the life cycle of the House of Commons.

5. Good citizenship needs to be taught from birth (including during ante-natal classes for parents). Such teaching would have no exemptions: whilst everyone would have to participate such training would be framed as fun and relevant.

The education system needs an overhaul. League tables based on academic achievement perpetuate class and wealth bias. The curriculum needs to address the needs of wider society in terms of how productive citizens behave. The importance of universal suffrage is vital to student’s understanding of what it means to be an adult and an active participant in civic society.

6. This question is the first time I have come across the National Citizen Service. The programme looks fabulous. I would be relaxed about making the scheme compulsory, for 15-17 year-olds and – in an age-appropriate version - for newly naturalised citizens.

7. Central and devolved government create holistic environments where civic engagement can flourish; local government run individual schemes and programmes within these environments. Examples of best local practice can be shared and taken up nationally.

8. The civic ‘personality statement’ (see question 2) needs to be enforced so that everyone buys into a shared set of values. Championing of best practice will reduce the impact and attraction of groups with views and beliefs that condone and encourage violence against society’s civic values.

9. Human nature dictates that we all compare ourselves negatively with other people. As a society, we need to create an education system that encourages social and civic engagement and reduces the fear of the unknown.

We need to impose zero tolerance of racist, sexist, culturally intolerant and class-based statements, policies and behaviour, both online and in the real world.

We need the media to be more socially engaged. We need voices from all parts of society to have real power in the media.

We need to devise punitive sanctions that can be imposed on any rogue media that perpetuate stereotypes, bias and intolerance in the pursuit of higher ratings or increased circulation figures that do not impact the freedom of the press.
There is a world of difference between ‘free speech’ and ‘hate speech’.

10. Citizenship and social cohesion are two sides of the same coin. No one joins a club if they don’t like the rules. Society need zero tolerance institutional and individual racism, sexism, bullying and class-based prejudice.

11. Proficiency in English is important, but new citizens need to feel like they have a positive stake in their communities. Any testing procedure needs to avoid creating ‘us and them’ scenarios; the system needs to expand the definition of ‘us’.

12. We need to encourage local participation in community projects with real purpose and social-cohesion impacts (e.g. via CrowdPatch, the not-for-profit crowdfunding platform for social entrepreneurs)

We need to publish and broadcast positive news stories that showcase the best of the British character

We need to expand the voices we spotlight and promote positive role models who are succeeding in the public sphere:

- **Business**
  - EMpower role models – annual rankings for top 100 ethnic-minority executives
  - Black British Business Awards
  - Asian Business Awards

- **Culture**
  - MOBO Awards – music
  - British Urban Film Festival – film
  - BEFFTA Awards – creative arts, media and entertainment industries

- **Sport** (here are a few examples)
  - Football – Ryan Bertrand; Chris Smalling; Dele Ali; Jesse Lingard; Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain; Raheem Sterling; Daniel Sturridge; Jermaine Defoe; Marcus Rashford; Danny Welbeck
  - Cricket – Haseeb Hameed; Moeen Ali; Chris Jordan; Isa Guha; Heather Knight; Anya Shrubsole; Natalie Sciver
  - Rugby – Courtney Lawes; Maro Itoje; Marland Yarde; Billy Vunipola; Maka Vunipola; Anthony Watson; Nick Isiekwe; Sarah Hunter; Deborah Fleming

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