My submission comes from the personal experience of disengagement from politics amongst many of the people I came into contact with as a resident in towns and cities across South Lancashire, Greater Manchester and North Wales. I know or have met people with as wide a range of political hues as is possible but everywhere, without exception, there are swathes of people who have opted out. I commonly hear expressions such as "I don't understand what they do and they don't act in my interests anyway" or "I'm voting for X because X will win anyway and I might as well vote for the winner" or "I'm not voting at all because it makes no difference".

Arguments for fptp, local representation, is given the lie in two ways obvious to me at least.
1. The claim that the winning party represents a majority is in almost every case incorrect. Those not choosing the winner may be divided but they are by far the majority and are thus unrepresented. This is becoming more evident as politics appears to be polarising away from the centre ground.
2. MPs are often parachuted into safe seats, selected by a small coterie of local party members and activists. They may have views miles away from the majority of the constituency but this is not material. The duly selected member is then safe in the sense that they can't be dismissed except on very narrow criteria, performance not being among them. Some 60% or more conservative members are neither from their constituency and not resident in any meaningful way there. The same is apparently true for the Labour party although on a smaller scale. This is not legitimate representation, although it clearly serves the status quo.

There is a disconnect between people's daily lives and the actions of those in Parliament, in either house. Far from working together, current and increasing levels of inequality divide communities, and this has been brought into sharp relief by brexit and by the wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The recent attacks arose from alienation, dispossession and lack of representation. It's a bit difficult to feel part of a community when you depend on it to feed you via charitable giving, even though you may well have one or even more minimally paid jobs. This employment leads to a feeling of helplessness and worthlessness because so many jobs are unimaginative, lead to no betterment of their lives and provide no sense of contributing to something bigger than themselves. People in this context are ripe for further exploitation and recruitment by those who offer a false sense of belonging through corrupted interpretations of religious texts.

Ceremony may have its place for some people but citizenship is not innate, it has to be learned. How can a young person choose a local councillor or a national representative except on the basis of what is taught either at school, which is minimal to nothing or at home which as easily also be nothing?

The middle classes may well say we talk to our children; many do, and a substantial number don't. Even where political conversations take place, how many families are "staunch" whatever and simply pass this down. That isn't education or preparation for responsibility but indoctrination and potentially the transmission of prejudice. What about the many millions of families where the parents simply don't have the ability or interest to discuss how they're governed? Awarding the right to vote does not confer the ability to choose
what is in their best interests and simply makes them vulnerable to extremely biased press and political snake oil salesmen.

I have tried to find evidence of teaching civic responsibility in schools and have found precious little. I believe there is a new short course in Wales with elements of political education but none, as far as I know, in the rest of the UK. It would bear examination. It seems pointless, to me, to lower the age of enfranchisement without outlining at least the basics of what makes a Conservative, Labour or LibDem etc. party member and how local and national policy is formulated. There are lots of models all over the world for this.

Pupils ought to be able identify how laws are created, how scrutinisation and voting occurs, how amendments are tabled and how the parliamentary version of debate takes place and how and why it differs from other forms of debate. They ought to know what mps do when they are not in parliament and ought to be introduced to their local member as a matter of course.

Local politicians where I live are often re-elected unopposed because there's little confidence in local politicians to be able effect change and improve to their lives so no-one stands. The council appears to be supervising cuts imposed by parliament at present and the talk is of more to come. At the same time there are some pretty fancy claims for expenses that seem hard to justify given the current constraints.

In my constituency, the local/parish/community councillors are almost never elected. There seems to be a system for co-opting friends, relatives or acquaintances. No one has any idea of what is done because meetings are carried out in Welsh, a language not everyone understands, and requests for minutes in English are met with blank refusals. So much then, for local democracy. Is it any wonder people disengage?

I believe our country is at a crossroads, as indeed, is much of the western world. Since 2007/8 western economies have dithered on the edge of catastrophe but, at the same time, personal fortunes have grown among the privileged.

David Cameron claimed that we were all in it together but I have difficulty in understanding what he meant by this. There appears to be a ruling elite directing the flow of money and resources ever upwards. That they pay no or little tax is a matter of record and this situation is apparently accepted by parliament, at least, little to nothing has been done to redress the situation. These people appear to be above parliamentary rule. They either ignore parliament or use it to further their ends, taking more and more of whatever productivity the country is able to manage and giving nothing back.

At the other end there are people who do not get by. The current government appears obsessed by the desire to end social care for their fellow citizens and fling vulnerable people into the laissez faire capitalist free market they themselves do very well from. The trouble is that not everyone has the advantages that the relatively well to do have. They didn't attend private schools or have cramers to get them into Oxbridge and the higher end of professional life.

Instead they are pushed into relying on zhc and gig work, contribute little in national insurance, although their precarious existence makes them more vulnerable to ill-health. The new exploitation of pretend self-employment simply means the employer doesn't pay
the employers contribution to national insurance. This wheeze simply means the NHS and will grind more quickly to a halt and pensions will shrink, which is a political choice and not what very many voters expected to be done in their name. The false claim, that the NHS receives more than ever funding, hides the fact that much of the money is now trousered by very rich shareholders, something else that many voters are not aware is being done in their name.

None of what I write can be news but I write in the hope that something might start to move in what appears to be the moribund corridors of Parliament. If nothing is done to reset the system it risks imploding with civil unrest and suffering the likely outcome. Your committee might want to consider finding ways to act rather than remaining the Popular Front or the People's Front.