



APPG Theatre Officer Meeting

8 December 2020, 14.00-14.40, Microsoft Teams

In attendance:

- Giles Watling MP (Chair)
- Tracy Brabin MP
- Lord Bob Kerslake
- Baroness Hamwee
- Andrew Lewer MP
- Stephen Metcalfe MP
- Nickie Aiken's office (via David)
- Hannah Gagen, UK Theatre/ SOLT (Secretariat)
- Dan Russell (Giles' Office)

Apologies

- Matt Western MP
- Baroness Whitaker

Agenda Item 1: Theatre APPG – first year in review: successes / improvements needed

GW was noted that the APPG had success in being part of the sector achieving the £1.57bn, though voiced concern about the slow disbursement of funds. He raised the issue that freelancers still continue to suffer. BH noted the gaps are still there for freelancers, saying that the theatre sector isn't just losing talent from the sector, but also from London.

BK said how vital the APPG on theatre is but said it had become even more essential over the last year during COVID-19, allowing representation of theatre in meetings such as that with Oliver Dowden. BK also noted that sometimes there is low turnout from parliamentarians to evidence sessions. He suggested that one reason could be that the Group has not been able to engage them in theatre visits / interactive sessions due to COVID-19.

It was agreed that COVID-19 meant that important issues the APPG had wanted to cover hadn't had as much airtime as the Group wanted. These were as follows:

- Freelancer issues were raised, but the Group could have done more in terms of suggesting policy solutions. This should be looked at in 2021.
- Diversity and Inclusion, BLM – Covid's impact on underrepresented parts of theatre sector. TB noted Doreen Lawrence's Report and suggested that the Theatre APPG, Performer's Alliance APPG, and the Creative Diversity APPG could work together on an overview of the impact on audience / workforce.
- Theatre's impact on its local community – exploring more about the work theatre does off stage.
- The environment and sustainability. TB noted that she would be happy to work with Luke Pollard MP on this agenda.

The Group reviewed what could have been done better and to look at in 2021

- Covid-19 has proven difficult for getting people together and getting hold of people (AL).
- Theatre APPG could do more joint work with other APPGs.
- TB suggested the APPG do a weekly email to Officers (and further afield?) of that week's parliamentary business relevant to the theatre sector. It could also include useful suggested tweets. HG said this was possible – but would need the support of DR to do this.
- Can HG circulate Regularly to the Group what digital performances there, so that they can look at a list and decide what they can watch.

Agenda item 2: APPG Officers

All Officers present agreed to be officers again next year. The date of the AGM was noted and reminded to the Group.

Representation of the Group was discussed. More representation from MPs and Lords is needed from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where possible. The Group's make-up in terms of diversity was also noted. Officers were asked to think about who might be good to join the Group.

Agenda Item 3: Visits

COVID-19 has meant visits to theatres for the Group have not been able to take place. The work of theatres who have delivered work in the community was also noted.

Sheffield will be the first area the Theatre APPG visits as soon as restrictions are lifted, and a visit becomes possible. TB also suggested Holbeck, Northern Broadstairs, Huddersfield.

HG said that she would see if a virtual visit could be arranged for January to a theatre.

Agenda Item 4: AOB

SM asked if there were campaigns to help the sector / audiences return. The various schemes such as Sunak Seats and Seat out to Help Out were mentioned.

A return to theatre campaign was discussed and the APPG's role in this. HG mentioned SOLT / UKT has a regional marketing COVID groups and that they were in discussions on a 'comeback campaign' and would keep them posted.