



Summer Recess

The London and Walsall Offices will be closed from Monday 31 July 2017 to Tuesday 5 September 2017 owing to the Summer Recess and staff annual leave. You can contact me in the usual way. I wish you all an enjoyable and restful summer.

Valerie visits LoCal Homes Factory



I was delighted to visit LoCal Homes Factory with Chris Handy, Chief Executive of Caldmore Accord, Alan Yates (Executive Director of Regeneration), John Bedford (Director of Project Development). The factory uses low carbon timber frames and a range of innovative techniques to build homes that are energy efficient and affordable in Walsall South. In 2012 I visited the first low carbon timber home development in Darlaston. I am pleased to hear that Accord Group are continuing to manufacture around 200 environmentally friendly homes each year, creating a number of vital jobs for local people. Given the housing shortage crisis, it is vital that we see more factories like LoCal Homes building homes across the UK.

St Matthew's Community Day



On 1 July I attended St Matthew's Community Day, an annual event hosted by St Matthew's Church to bring together the community and families of Walsall. I met with Reverend Jim Trood, the vicar of St Matthew's Church, and Patti Lane. I watched performances in the Church from Blue Coat Schools, visited arts and craft stalls, and spoke with local community groups including



Well Wishers, Walsall Friends of Earth and New Life. I thanked our local firefighters who work hard to keep our communities safe whilst facing the Tories' pay cuts.

Valerie speaks at Unity in the Community Rally



I was pleased to speak at the Unity in the Community Rally on 1 July. We came together in solidarity at The Crossing at St Paul's, sending a powerful message to English Defence League protesters who seek to divide us by hatred. It is important for us all to unite to show our solidarity among all the communities in Walsall. If one community is attacked, we are all attacked. We must remain strong against hate, racism, and all forms of division. Walsall is and will always be a diverse and inclusive society, that doesn't just tolerate difference, but celebrates it.

Support for musicians post-Brexit

I signed a Musicians' Union pledge in Parliament to ensure professional performers and musicians in Walsall South are not adversely affected post-Brexit. This in terms of funding, copyright and healthcare arrangements, but in particular the ease of travelling across post-Brexit Europe. With the UK's departure from the EU on the horizon, now is a particularly important time to commit to ensuring these talents have a voice in the political process.



Business Questions 6 July



I called for the Leader of the House to schedule a debate on tuition fees, state pensions and the Finance Bill. Since Parliament returned after the election, the Government have made a number of U-turns. Everything in their manifesto has been dropped; there is no policy. The Government have scrapped their plans to have a vote on the Hunting Act 2004, to axe free school meals, extend grammar schools, end the triple lock on pensions and means-test the winter fuel allowance. What is left? Oh yes, "strong and stable"—I think that is another U-turn.

Launch of the new Gamma Camera at Manor Hospital

I visited Walsall Manor Hospital to launch the new state of the art Gamma Camera on 7 July. The new camera will help in the treatment of cancer and other conditions. Richard Kirby, the Chief Executive of Walsall Healthcare Trust, representatives of Walsall's League of Friends, and staff from the imaging unit were also present. The new Gamma Camera is a modern up-to-date diagnostic tool that will provide clinicians with more information. This will lead to more accurate diagnoses and an improved service to patients. My constituents, particularly those with cancer who currently have to travel to other hospitals for their examination, will now be able to receive a modern examination here at Walsall Manor.



Business Questions 13 July



I asked the Leader of the House again for a debate on the statutory instrument on tuition fees that means university students now face a 6.1% interest rate on their loans. I asked why the Government are refusing to schedule debates. The Opposition Labour Party have not been granted an Opposition day since 25 January 2017. We are in a Parliamentary democracy, the people have given their consent to be governed, to enable MPs to form a Government, pass legislation, and hold Ministers to account. The Opposition Labour Party have not been allowed to do that. It is a time of critical importance to this country, and the clock is ticking.

Standing Order No. 24 (SO24)

Standing Order No. 24 (SO24) is a rule that allows an MP to ask the Speaker to allow time for an emergency debate on a particular topic. Mr Speaker granted three SO24s to Labour MPs in this Parliamentary session. An SO24 was granted to Diana Johnson MP on contaminated blood, to myself on the scheduling of Parliamentary Business, and to Angela Rayner MP on tuition fees.

Valerie granted an emergency debate on the Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

I called for an emergency debate on the lack of Parliamentary business under the rules of SO24. The emergency debate was granted and held on 17 July in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, myself and Chief Whip Nick Brown. The Prime Minister said that “through debate and discussion – the hallmarks of our Parliamentary democracy – ideas can be clarified and improved and a better way forward found”. Since the General Election there have been just four debates on Government legislation, a total of just under 13 hours for MPs to have their say.



Contaminated blood

The Government’s announcement of an inquiry into the NHS contaminated blood scandal is long overdue. It has been over 45 years since people were first infected with hepatitis and HIV from NHS-supplied contaminated blood and blood products, which caused 2,400 deaths. I attended the emergency debate in Parliament on 11 July and I have previously spoken in the House on this issue as there has been a victim of contaminated blood in Walsall South. Those affected have a right to know what went wrong and why. The Dept of Health will lead the inquiry which has raised a number of concerns rather than an independent inquiry. The inquiry needs to deliver full disclosure of documents relating to the disaster, through a process managed by the victims. Anyone affected by this should give evidence to the inquiry.

Meeting with Whitehall Junior School Council

On 14 July I met with Whitehall Junior School Council – a group of elected children across the pupils’ community, with each class having a School Council representative. We discussed various issues including my role as Shadow Leader of the House, the closure of South Walsall Library, Walsall’s air quality, the importance of the New Art Gallery and green spaces. I handed out certificates and badges to the School Council who had great success in improving their school meals by undertaking a survey and implementing their findings. I hope they will continue the hard work.



Valerie visits the Bus Library at Old Church Primary School

When I attended the Summer Reading Challenge event in Parliament, I requested books to give to Old Church Primary School for their new Bus Library. I delivered the books on 14 July and I was welcomed by the Head Teacher Ms Clacy and the children. It was the school’s ‘Party on the Playground’ day. Old Church Primary School received an ‘Outstanding’ grade from their SIAMS inspection in June. On 17 July the Education Secretary announced £1.3bn in funding for schools and failed to mention funding for primary schools in her statement. I will continue to call on Government to provide extra funding for all schools.



Business Questions 20 July



It is the last day of Parliament before Summer Recess and the Leader of the House has finally granted an Opposition day in September. However the Tories do not want to debate major policy issues; they would rather discuss the leadership crisis than debate or appoint to their Select Committees. I called for a debate on the NHS and the Government deficit. I paid tribute to some notable women who passed away recently including Simone Veil (Former EU Parliament President and

Holocaust Survivor), Sheila Michaels (Promoted the title Ms.), Maryam Mirzakhani (Prize Winning Mathlete) and Mary Turner (Lifelong Trade Unionist).

News in Brief

- On 13 July the Government published the Great Repeal Bill. The Bill will (i) Repeal the European Communities Act 1972, the historic law that took Britain into the EU (ii) Convert all EU law into UK law (iii) Create the necessary powers for MPs to change these laws once Britain has left the EU. Parliament will amend, repeal and improve the Bill in a series of debates and votes in September.
 - The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport made a statement to the House on 20 July on the proposed merger between Fox and Sky. The consultation closed on 14 July and the Secretary of State is reviewing the evidence. A decision is expected within the coming weeks.
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