



Debates on HMRC Walsall Office



There were two debates on HMRC "Building our Future" plans. On 29 April 2016, there was a backbench debate and I was pleased to secure an Adjournment Debate on the 10 May 2016 on the plans to bring forward the closure of the Walsall office. HMRC initially informed staff that the Walsall office would close in March 2017, but on the 4 May they made the decision to bring forward the closure to the 20th June 2016.

We need to retain our local tax offices with local staff who have information about the local economy and stop the relocation of the Walsall Office until an equality impact assessment has been done. HMRC failed to follow Cabinet Office redundancy protocols by ignoring evidence of increased journey times for Walsall staff, denying trade union representation in 1-to-1 discussions with staff about whether they could practically travel to Birmingham; failing to carry out an equality impact assessment for the closure and refusing to offer staff the opportunity to move to sites other than Birmingham. The majority of the employees are women and most have worked in the Walsall office for 15 years and some for over 30 years. Staff have been given only six weeks to reorganise their lives and their caring responsibilities. I am still waiting for the Government's response to the petition I presented against the closure. HMRC must reduce the tax gap, not the workforce.

Valerie meets Junior Doctors and calls on Jeremy Hunt to negotiate



I asked a series of questions about the Junior Doctors' contract. On 18 April 2016 I asked for an update on any legal action against the DoH, and on whether the DoH will be defending it. I was told there are two cases ongoing, and the Government are defending them vigorously. In my view, the DoH should negotiate with the Junior Doctors.

During Business questions, on 21 April 2016 I asked for an urgent debate on the junior doctor's contract. The SoS said that he was defending two legal cases against him. I said, now would be a good time to suspend the imposition of the contract. After all, the Secretary of State is not above the law." Chris Grayling responded by saying that Department of Health have put in extensive efforts to resolve the dispute. On 25 April 2016, ahead of the 48-hour Junior Doctors Strike, I met with Junior Doctors waiting for Jeremy Hunt outside DoH. I said that his position is about ideology, not about the NHS. If he cares about the NHS, will he hear the will of the House, contact the BMA straight after this statement and negotiate. Interestingly, the SoS has not used the front entrance to Richmond House.

Sunday Politics BBC West Midlands



I was a guest on BBC Sunday Politics West Midlands on 17 April 2016. Topics for discussion were the Panama Papers and Steel. I pointed out that the UK is harmed when tax is hidden away in offshore accounts. The wealthy benefit from complicated tax laws which has accommodated tax avoidance. Steel is a crucial sector in our economy. In my view, the Government must do more to protect the industry while British steel struggles to compete with cheap Chinese steel. In Walsall South, the Tata Steel plant at Darlaston must be saved otherwise a further 60 specialist jobs may be lost.

Valerie asks about the Steel Industry at Defence questions



During Defence questions, on 18 April 2016, I asked "what defence spending the Minister can guarantee for the steel industry given that the procurement rules allow for community benefit." The Minister responded saying that the Government have undertaken a new set of procurement guidelines for steel, implemented through the Ministry of Defence.

Vaisakhi festival



Vaisakhi festival took place on 17 April 2016 to celebrate the founding of the Sikh community known as the Khalsa. The procession started at the Gurdwara in Caldmore and went along Caldmore Street, West Bromwich Road and past the Gurdwara on Wellington Street in Pleck. There were hundreds of participants.

Valerie speaks to Emmanuel School



Twice in one week I met with young students from Emmanuel School. On 19 April 2016, I spoke to children in Parliament. At the Education centre I explained my role and work as an MP-helping constituents and holding the Government to account. Later in the week, I visited Emmanuel School and we discussed the pros and cons of the EU Referendum.

Votes won in the House of Commons



In the House there were two important debates on 20 April 2016. I signed both motions and both were passed. The first motion recognised the deplorable crimes against minorities, and the majority Muslim populations in Iraq and Syria, and called for perpetrators to be held accountable. Ayes: 278 Noes: 0. The second motion concerned the continued use of vellum for printing Acts of Parliament and other important historical documents. Ayes: 119 Noes:38.

Valerie visits Walsall Town Centre



Many traders at the Walsall market are being affected by anti-social behaviour, a recent incident led to £60 worth of make-up stolen from a stall. I invited the Police and Crime Commissioner to speak with stall holders. We discussed increasing the police presence at peak times to allow shopkeepers and traders to carry out business without any interruptions from anti-social behavior.

Valerie backs calls to save the NHS bursary



At the Opposition Day debate on 4 May 2016, I voted for the motion to ask the Government to keep NHS bursaries for student nurses and midwives. In November 2015, the Chancellor announced that bursaries for student nurses and midwives will be scrapped from 2017. The University of Wolverhampton's Walsall campus train hundreds of nurses every year, removing bursaries is likely to have an adverse effect on the number of nursing applicants and a knock on effect of qualified staff for hospitals.

Celebration of University of Wolverhampton's contribution to healthcare



I joined Vice-Chancellor Geoff Layer and Lord Swaraj Paul, other MPs and guests to celebrate the University of Wolverhampton's contribution to healthcare on 11 May 2016. The University are educating and training the region's nurses, midwives, health visitors, paramedics, pharmacists related medical and healthcare professionals, making the University of Wolverhampton one of the leading healthcare education providers in the region. The University could provide more bursaries for nurses.

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee



The EFRA Select Committee of which I am a member published a report on Air Quality in April, and in May, on the CAP. We recommended the Government publish a comprehensive strategy to improve air quality and report to the House annually. The Committee visited the Somerset Levels and Moors on 12 May 2016. The residents who suffered under the floods were also present and made their concerns known that the communication between the Environmental Agency and what happened to the water on their land was not disseminated to villages.

Events in the House



At Anglesey Day, on 19 April 2016, I was pleased to meet small business in the food industry as I am a member of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. There were many success stories. On 25 April 2016, I attended the Woodland Trust Reception to hear about the Woodland Trust's vision for the Government-led 25 year environment plan. I met the new CEO Baroness Young.



Register by 7th June for the EU Referendum on 23 June 2016



I will be voting to Remain in the EU: for security, peace, the economy and sustainability. 67% of manufacturing jobs in the West Midlands are linked to exports to the EU. Over 3 million British jobs depend on our EU membership, providing growth and investment for our country.

News in Brief

Oral questions

- Justice Questions on 26 April 2016, I asked the Minister if there will be access to justice for those who do not meet the residence test following Supreme Court judge's ruling the residency test for civil legal aid unlawful. The Minister did not explain why the Government are not applying a proper impact assessment on their policies.

Written Questions

- Post Office Card Accounts: I have received letters from constituent who have been told by DWP that they must switch their Post Office Card Account to bank accounts. The Minister responded saying that there are no plans to change the provision and they will remain in place until November 2021.
 - HM Land Registry: The Government plan to privatise the HM Land Registry In 2014, 91% of respondents disagreed with the motion that land registration services could be better delivered outside of government. I asked BIS: what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the privatisation of the Land Registry on the effectiveness of its service. The Minister responded by saying that privatization would only proceed if the Government is convinced that land registry would provide a continued appropriate level of service.
 - **Chairing Debates in Westminster Hall**
As an elected member of the Panel of Chairs, I chaired Westminster Hall debates during April and May on the procedure for debating and voting on Private Members' Bills, Unaccompanied Children and Compensation for residents on the Upgrade of Great Northern Great Eastern railway.
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