



Happy Christmas

I would like to wish you all a very peaceful Christmas and all good wishes for the New Year. The London and Walsall Offices will be closed from 22 December 2016 and will reopen on 5 January 2017. If you need to contact me, you can leave a message by telephoning 020 7219 7176 or 01922 635835. You can also send an email to valerie.vaz.mp@parliament.uk including your full name, address and telephone number as well as any reference numbers relating to your case. Calls and emails will be dealt with after 5 January 2016.

Business Questions 1 December 2016

As Shadow Leader of the House, I called for the end of reassessments of people with long-term conditions who are receiving personal independence payments. I called for more funding in UK science and sought assurance that the Government would carry out their promise of £2 billion funding injection into the sector. The Government are not the Government for education as the number of part-time students in higher education is declining and I requested an urgent debate regarding the comprehensive economic and trade agreement, something which was promised by the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union.



Valerie visits local Tesco for its 'Neighbourhood Food Collection'



I supported Tesco on Littleton Street Walsall on Friday 2 December 2016, for its ninth 'neighbourhood food collection', and donated a basket of food. The photo above is of me with Tesco staff members Hamel and Emma, volunteers Lawrence Wragg and Andy Heap, and Paul Kirby from The Trussell Trust food bank. Those who need it can collect the food when they present vouchers given to them by either social services, job centres, advice agencies, GP's and even the police. I am concerned that the number of people using the Great Barr foodbank has risen from 400 in 2013 to 3000 today. A Trussell Trust survey found that 89% of foodbanks reported benefit sanctions as an issue driving foodbank use.

Singing for Jo Cox



I was one of a group of MPs from across the parties who took part in the recording of a unique single initiated by parliamentary rock band MP4 as a tribute to the late MP Jo Cox. I encourage everyone to buy the single. Sales from the song, a cover of the Rolling Stones Classic 'You Can't Always Get What You Want' will raise funds for the launch of Jo Cox Foundation established after her death. The single is available on iTunes



Business Questions 8 December 2016

I asked for a response from the Prime Minister to the letter to her signed by 75 organisations requesting tariff-free access to the single market and a competent reliable workforce. I called for a debate on the effects of Brexit on farmers. In 2014, the UK exported £12.8 billion of products to the EU, which was approximately 73% of our total agri-food exports. I also called for a debate on the Casey Review, a report on opportunity and integration, and asked the Leader of the House to ensure that the Government restore grants to local authorities, so that libraries, community facilities, the provision of skills training, and prevention work with families are not cut. I requested a debate on protecting the Human Rights Act, and supported the calls for the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British national imprisoned in Iran.



Opposition debate on Homelessness

HM Opposition Labour Party held an opposition day debate on homelessness on 14 December 2016. The motion included: 'that this House notes that homelessness is lower now than at its peak in 2003-04; further notes that England has a strong safety net, and that the provision of temporary accommodation means no family with a child ever has to be without a roof over their heads... and notes that one of the best ways to tackle homelessness is by increasing the housing supply...' The motion was lost by: Ayes: 230 Noes: 289. In Walsall, there are 338 statutory homelessness cases, 2,213 'prevention and relief' cases, and roughly 7 rough sleepers, although this figure is frequently much higher as it is difficult to determine a precise figure. This Christmas 120,000 children will be homeless throughout the UK – the highest level recorded since 2007.

Air Quality



I am alarmed that there have been three recent reports on air quality highlighting the Government's failings and inaction on air quality. A report by The Environmental Audit Select Committee European found that the West Midlands is in breach of legal air pollution limits. The Government have written to Walsall MBC to say that Walsall has one or more Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), an area where national objectives on air quality are not being met. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published a draft for consultation 'Air pollution: outdoor air quality and health' in December which recommends that Councils redesign speed bumps and consider 20-mph zones in residential areas. This would be particularly effective on Walstead Road where the large speed bumps do not work. Walsall MBC should consider the recommendation of 20 mph zones in residential areas, which would reduce the need for speed bumps that appear to be a cause of air pollution.

Business Questions 15 December 2016

At Business Questions, I highlighted the issue of debates on leaving the EU and its effect on young people. I reminded the House that not only did 28% of the UK population not vote, but 75% of 18 to 24 year olds voted Remain, meaning we need to find a way forward that encompasses everybody's view. I highlighted the importance of shaping our exit of the EU to ensure that jobs, the economy and living standards do not drop. Additionally, I expressed my disappointment over the Government's proposed living wage of £7.50 per hour, and suggested basing the figure on the cost of living/ real living wage which is £8.45.



Valerie opens new stand at Darlaston Town F.C.



It was a great pleasure to open Darlaston Town F.C's new spectator stand on 17 December 2016. The club raised more than £6,500 for the development itself and benefited from a £15,288 grant from the Premier League Football Stadium Improvement Fund. The club constitutes an important part of Darlaston and Bentley's sporting infrastructure and I'm delighted that local fans can now watch their club from the comfort and safety of a brilliant new facility. Community football stadia, such as the one at the Paycare Ground, importantly allow families the opportunity to go and watch games together.

Valerie attends the CPA Conference

The 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was held in London from 11- 17 December 2016. The picture shows the UK delegation (l) Dr Rupa Huq MP, and (r) Baroness Berridge. On 17 December 2016 I attended the meeting of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. Noraini Ahmed MP, Malaysia, was elected chair of the CWP.



Great Barr Hall

I welcome the news that Great Barr Hall has now been removed from the Historic England's register of buildings at risk. Local residents and I want to protect the Green Belt and historic parkland and buildings.

News in Brief

During the 2016 Parliamentary Session I have:

- had contact with 5,832 constituents which includes policy and casework
- responded to 4917 policy issues
- dealt with 915 casework issues
- held 22 constituency surgeries
- spoken in the Chamber on 165 occasions
- spoken as Shadow Leader of the House at 9 Business Questions
- been granted 2 Adjournment Debates: 'Student Loan Repayments' and 'HMRC Office Closure (Walsall)'
- tabled 45 Written Parliamentary Questions and signed 77 Early Day Motions.

Cases and Policy Information

