



Supreme Court Judgement

On 24 January the Supreme Court decided that Parliament should have a say on the triggering of Article 50. HM Opposition Labour Party whilst respecting the result of the Referendum - in Walsall South 63% voted to leave - have used the Bill to table amendments to ensure the protection of the economy, jobs, workers' rights, environmental and social protections, security and tariff free access to the single market.

BBC Sunday Politics



I was a guest on BBC Sunday Politics West Midlands on Sunday 15 January. One of the topics of discussion was Garden Villages; I am disappointed that the combined bid from Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall was unsuccessful in bidding for garden village/town status. On the NHS, I pointed out that it is experiencing the largest financial squeeze in its history and £4.6 billion has been cut from social care provision. I mentioned that the clinicians who work in A&E have said that what is required to deal with this crisis is for

the Government to look at more staff, more funding and a flow of patients. The Unite leadership election was also discussed. The programme is available to watch on BBC iPlayer until 15 February.

Valerie calls for action on air quality in Walsall

There have been three recent reports on poor air quality in the UK. The Environmental Audit Select Committee report named 38 out of 43 areas across the UK that are in breach of legal air pollution limits, including the West Midlands. 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. Walsall MBC should consider the recommendation of the NICE guidelines of 20 mph zones in residential areas, which would reduce the need for speed bumps that appear to be a cause of air pollution.

Opposition Day debate on NHS and social care funding

HM Opposition Labour Party used the Opposition day debate on 11 January to draw attention to the crisis in the NHS. The motion was: "That this House supports NHS England's four-hour standard, which sets out that a minimum of 95 per cent of all patients to A&E will be treated within four hours; notes the widespread public and medical professional support for this standard; further notes that £4.6 billion has been cut from the social care budget since 2010 and that NHS funding will fall per head of population in 2018-19 and 2019-20; and calls on the Government to bring forward extra funding now for social care to help hospitals cope this winter, and to pledge a new improved funding settlement for the NHS and social care in the March 2017 Budget." I voted in favour of the motion, but the motion was lost by: Ayes: 209 Noes: 295.



Business Questions 12 January

I raised with the Leader of the House, the issue of extending time for Foreign and Commonwealth Office questions, clarification on the NHS's waiting time target, and two Procedure Committee reports, one on Private Members Bills and the other which recommended the use of Welsh at Westminster in the Welsh Grand Committee. On Brexit, I called for the Leader to consider a review of what each Department (Department for Exiting the European Union [DExEU], Department for International Trade and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office) does.



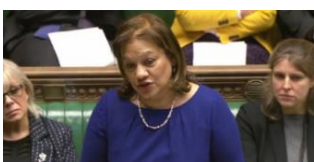
Valerie signs Holocaust Educational Trust Book of Commitment

I signed the Holocaust Educational Trust's Book of Commitment on 16 January to honour those who were murdered during the Holocaust and pay tribute to the extraordinary Holocaust survivors who work tirelessly to educate young people. The theme for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day on Friday 27 January was 'How can life go on?'. Holocaust Memorial Day is an important opportunity for people from Walsall South and across the country to reflect on the tragic events of the Holocaust. As the Holocaust moves from living history, to just history, it becomes ever more important that we take the time to remember the victims and also pay tribute to the survivors.



Business Questions 19 January

I raised with the Leader of the House the significant contributions of Backbench MPs and the great work that is done across the House. I cannot understand why the Prime Minister refused to come and tell the House of her 12-point plan for Brexit. In her speech at Lancaster House, the Prime Minister talked of a global Britain, yet she plans to take the UK out of the Single Market. The Prime Minister also said that she wants the UK to continue to be the best place for science and innovation, forgetting that in 2013 the UK received €8.8 billion for research and development. I called for the Article 50 Bill not to be a one-line Bill. I also called on the House to remember Martin Luther King Day and Holocaust Memorial Day.



Valerie meets with the Speaker of Burma



It was a pleasure to attend a dinner on 23 January hosted by the Speaker, Rt Hon John Bercow MP (centre), in honour of the Burmese Speaker Win Myint (right). Win Myint was appointed Speaker on 1 February 2016 and is a member of the National League for Democracy (NLD) political party in Burma. I was greeted by Members of the Burmese delegation including MPs and senior officials. Since my election, I have visited Burma with Mr Speaker, and raised issues around Burma on numerous occasions in the House.

Valerie endorses Appointment of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

I spoke in the Chamber on 24 January to endorse the appointment of Robert Fredrick Behrens CBE to the offices of Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Health Service Commissioner for England. The Ombudsman's role is to investigate complaints that individuals have been treated unfairly or have received poor service from government departments, other public organisations and the NHS in England. Cases must be referred to the Ombudsman by an MP.



Valerie delivers a talk and Q&A at the Teachers' Institute



I met with 65 teachers at the Parliamentary Education Centre on 24 January for the Teachers' Institute, two of the teachers that attended were from Barr Beacon School. I talked about my new role as Shadow Leader of the House in holding Government to account in its overall management of the House, my constituency work, how laws are made and the importance of teaching citizenship in class. The Teachers' Institute is open to all teachers and is a unique opportunity for teachers wanting to immerse themselves in Parliament and politics over the course of a week at Westminster.

Ten Minute Rule Motion to regulate Industrial Action

On Tuesday 24 January I voted to oppose the Ten Minute Rule Motion moved by Chris Philp MP to bring in the Industrial Action (Protection of Critical National Services) Bill to regulate industrial action. The Bill proposed would restrict the rights of people in the workplace. The motion was lost with Ayes: 127 Noes: 206. The Government is not addressing the crisis in our national services. On 3 January, Labour MPs protested against rail fare increases, yet the Government did not address people's right to a reasonable fare when travelling to work. On 8 January, the Prime Minister dismissed the humanitarian crisis in our hospitals as "overblown".



Westminster Hall Debate on Restoration and Renewal



As Shadow Leader of the House, I spoke at the Westminster Hall debate on the Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster on Wednesday 25 January. The Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster has published a report on 'Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster'. On 15 December 2016 I asked the Leader of the House for a debate on this report. In his response he said he will announce the date of the debate "as soon as possible". The House has not yet debated the report.

Business Questions 26 January

I called again for the Leader of the House to confirm the date the House will rise for summer recess. I called for the white paper on the UK's exit from the EU to be published before the Committee stage—in the coming two weeks. I called for the Leader to ensure time to debate the Government's alternative terminology; we call it the single market, they call it a free trade agreement; we call it the customs union, they call it a customs agreement. I called for a debate on two reports: the NAO's recent report on HMRC's failed contract with Concentrix and the Climate Change Risk Assessment report which highlighted urgent priorities. I also raised the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and asked the House to celebrate the consecration of the first woman bishop in Wales, Canon Joanna Penberthy.



European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill

Parliament has begun debating the Government's Bill on Exiting the European Union. Article 50 is the procedure that is used under the Lisbon Treaty to start the process of leaving the EU and enacts the result of the referendum. It was a democratic vote, decided by 51.9% - 48.1% to leave the EU. It is for this reason that I will be voting to trigger Article 50 to give effect to the referendum result. HM Opposition Labour Party have tabled a series of amendments to the Bill which should minimise the impact of the vote on jobs and workers' rights, the economy and security, seeking to preserve the advances we have made whilst establishing a new mutually beneficial relationship with the EU. During the 2 years the Government has for negotiations, Labour will work to mitigate any damage to the UK's interests and represent the views of all whatever your referendum vote.