

View from the House

In the House MPs marked the celebration of International Women's Day, 8 March, with a debate. IWD was first suggested in 1909 but it was not until 1911 that the day was marked throughout the world.

It was good to see all parties represented and some men too. It is easy to forget that women were not allowed a vote, hold property or to enter the professions. Today more needs to be done to create a more equal society. In my speech I highlighted that Cranfield Institute of Management found that 89% of the FTSE 350 have no women executives. Involving more women is the engine for growth, widening the pool of talent for the benefit of the country.

More work needs to be done with women in science: Only 5.3% or 1 in 20 of all working women are employed in Science Engineering and Technology compared to 31.3% for all working men.

Locally, the Moxley Infant School site controversy developed apace. I am astonished that the Council thought they could do a behind closed doors deal with the Probation Service to sell the land for a bail hostel, and that I have had to step in to find out what was really going on and let local residents know.

The Council has now done a rapid u-turn and announced they have decided to sell the site with a development brief for residential purposes. The Probation Trust has confirmed to me that the Council will not now sell them the land.

Local people had every right to be angry and will want to know how long the Council had been in discussions about closing the probation hostel in Aldridge, and moving it to Moxley.

In the Commons there was an opposition debate on the Health Bill. To date there have been almost 2000 amendments to the Bill. This is bad legislation and it should be withdrawn. In the debate I highlighted the comparison with the utilities. I have published on my website the shareholders of the companies -none accountable to the British taxpayer.

Moreover, the Government lost their appeal not to publish the Risk Register. The transition risk register would allow us to see what risks this Bill will take with the NHS and the serious problems it could cause. None of this was put before the electorate at the last election. If it was such a good idea why hide it from us.

Valerie Vaz

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