

View from the House

The New Art Gallery is considered by many not only to be the centre of an outstanding collection of art work, in the Garman Ryan Collection but also as a place where communities can promote their activities from a Diwali festival to a Samaritans event.

So I was delighted that the Gallery had returned to Sunday openings. I was opposed to the closure as were so many of you and this paper also helped in raising awareness of the "Never on a Sunday" policy. The results speak for themselves. Gallery visits on Sunday are up by 1,400 a month and the Gallery expects this to be 20,000 a year.

Other good news is that the Gallery is now one of four to be shortlisted for hosting the Turner Prize in 2015. Thank you for signing my e-petition and to the gallery staff who have worked for a return to Sunday openings and preparing for the Turner Prize visit. Walsall has its collective fingers crossed.

It was good to see so many of you at the Remembrance Day processions and the wreath laying. And it was significant for me as one of my first campaigns was to have a memorial to Noor Inayat Khan, one of Winston Churchill's Special operative executives. She was one of only three women. Despite being questioned she never gave in and was executed by the Nazis. Her last word was "Liberté".

The University of London, my university, were generous in agreeing to my request to place the memorial on their land in Gordon Square. The campaign was supported by MPs from all parties. The beautiful sculpture by Karen Newman was unveiled by the Princess Royal and is worth a visit.

Social care is rapidly becoming a priority. As a member of the Health Select Committee, I went to Sweden and Denmark to look at their system. Our report earlier this year recommended an integrated care system between health, housing and social care. It was good to hear too that other countries are looking at the system in Torbay.

At Prime Minister's Questions I raised the disparity of leave, pay and allowance between adoptive parents and parents whose children are born to them. The Deputy Prime Minister responded saying the Government will take action soon to equalise the rights of adoptive parents. I am delighted that this inequality highlighted in my 10 minute rule bill last session will be addressed.

Valerie Vaz
25 November 2012.