

## **View from the House**

In February, I contacted schools in Walsall South with an opportunity to showcase their IT Skills in a competition organised by the Parliamentary IT Committee.

So I was delighted when two of our schools in Walsall South - Chuckery Primary School and Palfrey Junior School – had reached the West Midlands regional finals of the national schools' IT competition 'Make IT Happy'. The competition challenged 9-11 year olds to create an IT project demonstrating their use of technology to connect with others.

And the West Midlands regional winner was our very own Class 10 of Palfrey Junior School. The final will be in the Houses of Parliament on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011. The Staff and children should be very proud of their achievement and of their stunning entry.

I had an opportunity, before recess, to raise the parking issues which are the cause of frustration for many of you when visiting the Town Centre. Many people in Walsall are finding the council's approach to parking restrictions and enforcement extremely stressful.

I was contacted by a number of business owners on Ablewell Street, some of whom reported a 50 percent drop in trade since charges were introduced for on-street parking outside their shops and services.

At the end of the debate, I presented the petition, supported by more than 700 business owners and customers of Ablewell Street, opposing the new rules and asking for an amnesty of at least 30 minutes to allow people to park and visit the businesses for free.

But Walsall MBC have misunderstood the mood of people and are considering introducing a half hour parking amnesty in car parks, but not for on-street parking.

This misses the point. There are two issues. Roadside parking which should be free for a limited time and car parks. People will only enjoy the town centre if they can linger, to shop or for appointments rather than be harassed back to their cars for fear of a £50 fine- as much for a speeding fine. Government guidance on Parking Policy and Enforcement states that parking fines should not be used to raise revenue.

Or implement a scheme where you pay only for the time you have spent. This is your town. Let the Council know your views as they are having a review. If street parking and car parks are empty, shops closing, and enforcement officer patrolling like sharks, the policy is not right.

Valerie Vaz MP

6 June 2011