

## View from the House

Parliament was recalled for the second time this year following the rioting and looting around the country. MPs from all sides agreed that the causes were complex but all condemned the behaviour. Some MPs saw extensive destruction in their constituencies. Birmingham witnessed the tragic death of three young men while West Bromwich and Wolverhampton also suffered.

I am grateful to the West Midlands Police for their hard work especially because Walsall was not directly affected. Joint work between the local authority and the police ensured that the Town Centre was protected.

Now is not the time for the Government to be taking risks and cutting police numbers in the West Midlands. So I am concerned that following the Government's 20% cuts to policing, West Midlands Police is reported to be losing 1,000 police officers and over 1,000 police staff over the next four years.

I introduced my second Bill to Parliament under the Ten Minute Rule procedure. The *Adoption (Leave, Pay and Allowance Arrangements) Bill* attempts to equalise the law between parents who adopt and other parents.

I identified 3 areas where there are inequalities in the statutory entitlements. First, pregnant women are entitled to 52 weeks' maternity leave irrespective of their length of service with their employer but adoptive parents must have 26 weeks of service before they are eligible for adoption leave; the first 6 weeks of Statutory Maternity Pay are paid at a higher rate than the first 6 weeks of Statutory Adoption Pay and there is no equivalent of Maternity Allowance, available to self-employed mothers, for self-employed adopters.

The Government's plans to relax the planning rules to make it easier for developers to build housing on land that is currently set aside for industry could have serious consequences for Walsall. The future growth of the local economy depends on the ability of our manufacturers to expand. They need more industrial land to be available to them. There is enough potential housing land in the area.

Before the recess, the Health Select Committee, of which I am a member, published reports into Complaints and Litigation and other bodies.

Next week, the Health and Social Care Bill returns for the Report Stage. Despite the pause in the progress of the Bill, the Government announced even more complex changes to the organisation of the health service. There are no figures on the cost, how it will work in practice or evidence for the reorganisation. I remain opposed to the Bill.

Valerie Vaz  
29 August 2011