

View From the House

The end of term saw Parliament sitting for an extra day to debate the events surrounding News International's activities. Whilst there was no vote, the debate gave Parliament and the public a chance to find out the latest position on the Inquiry which will look at the relationship between the media, the police and politicians. Constituents wrote to me to express concerns that one proprietor should not be able to have such control of the media.

Worryingly, the most recent GDP growth figures showed only a small increase of 0.2%. This comes at a time when there is more volatility on the world's stock markets. The Labour leadership and other experts continue to emphasize that economic growth should be the aim, and public spending has a role to play. However, the government is placing its emphasis on cutting public sector jobs and expenditure.

People on lower incomes are bearing the brunt of the cuts. Some constituents are having to pay for their social care from their disability allowances. This seems to be hurting the very people who need society's help.

There was some good news this month. Doreen Laban and Julie Bosley came to see me at the Surgery last year. They were campaigning on behalf of the residents of Kings Hill following the removal of the 639 bus. Having presented the petition to Parliament, lobbied Centro and wrote to all the local bus operators, I am pleased to say that Centro and National Express agreed to reinstate the new 38 bus which now runs along the route of the former 639. It was extremely gratifying to see people using the service.

With the news that TJ Hughes has closed down in the Town Centre, Mary Portas, appointed by the Government, is looking into why High Streets have so many empty shops. One of the reasons given for the failure of the High Street is parking restrictions. This supports the Ablewell Street traders position who are calling for a 30 minute amnesty having had the 2 hour free parking removed. In my view Councils should not be using unnecessary parking charges and fines to boost the traffic enforcement budget.

Lynn Hughes, a local artist, donated a drawing to celebrate Walsall Samaritan's Awareness day. I was privileged to unveil it at the New Art Gallery and to meet the volunteers who give up their time to help people- our local heroes.

Valerie Vaz MP

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