

View from the House

One of the most controversial Bills going through Parliament ,the Health and Social Care Bill, is now being debated in the Committee stage in the House of Lords. It is concerning that the Lords have had more time to debate it than we had in the Commons.

Disturbingly, Andrew Lansley is still withholding publication of the 'strategic risk register'- the document outlining the potential risks of the NHS organisation - despite the fact he has been ordered to do by the Information Commissioner. Many of you have written to me to ask for it to be published. Both as a member of the Select Committee and as an MP, I have written to the Secretary of State.

In my view, the document should be made public as soon as possible, so that Parliament is in possession of all the information whilst the Bill is being debated, not afterwards when it is too late. The Secretary of State in a reply to the Select Committee Chair said he has to consult across the Departments and Counsel whether to appeal. Further delay only strengthens peoples' suspicions.

Still on health, the Health Select Committee, published its report into Public Health. The report highlights several important concerns about the future of public health, including the 'Health Premium'. This appears to target resources away from those areas that face the greatest public health challenges. With the advisory group on obesity being disbanded and the involvement of fast food companies, and drinks manufacturers in developing public health policy this should be reconsidered. The Health Secretary's 'nudging' strategy to tackle obesity and alcohol abuse will not solve a rapidly growing problem for society.

Locally, there were concerns that the newly restored 38 bus service that was supposed to stop in the grounds of the Manor Hospital was now stopping some distance away on Bridgeman Street. A red route outside the Hospital on Pleck Road prevented the buses stopping near to the Hospital. I wrote to National Express West Midlands and the Manor Hospital and now the 38 will stop on the Hospital site from January 2012.

On Remembrance Sunday it was good to see so many people of all ages, religions and cultures in Walsall Town Centre and at Darlaston Cenotaph honouring those who fought and died in all the wars. The events were a moving reminder of the sacrifices men and women have made so that we can all live in peace.

Valerie Vaz
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