

View from the House

Since the “Bedroom Tax” became law, I have opposed this unfair and insidious piece of legislation. It has caused uncertainty, distress and forced people to find extra money when they have nothing extra. So I was pleased to be a co-sponsor of the Affordable Homes Bill presented by Andrew George MP on the 5th September and the Government was defeated.

I have seen so many of you at my surgery about this issue. I have had to make the argument that some spare bedrooms are needed for carers, returning student children, the size of the “extra “ bedroom, the length of time people have lived in their home and the lack of available smaller homes. Many people have accepted that they could downsize but this could have been done with a discussion and a managed move. And while the cost to the public purse has to be monitored, how can a policy be fair if it asks the less well off to pay extra. Moreover the Government, despite being told when the Bill was going through Parliament, that this would cause hardship and was unfair in the end had to come up with extra money. So there are no savings there.

Those who were not exempt but in my view should have been, were children visiting a divorced or separated parent, couples who use separate bedrooms because of illness or disability, or disabled adults to store medical equipment. And of course that spare bedroom which was too small to fit a single bed and then open and close the door- that was not exempt.

Andrew George MP’s bill set out exemptions which would reduce the number of people affected. These were where the taxpayer has funded modifications to the home of a person with a disability, or where a family has lived in a home for more than three years. In any event HM Opposition Labour Party has promised to repeal the Bedroom Tax in its entirety.

And some good news- Bronze Cricket Club have finally had the big switch on. This is a great tribute to their former Chairman the late Bert Chambers who was a member of Bronze CC for the last 35 years. As well as his commitment to cricket, he nurtured the talents of his twins Adam and James who both play for Walsall FC. Bert was a true hero. I hope Bronze CC can produce some good one day cricketers.

Valerie Vaz MP