

View from the House

Walsall MBC is in uncharted territory. The Labour Group who hold the largest number of seats are unable to form an administration. It is extraordinary that a party with 8 fewer seats than Labour, and which has been losing seats for four years will be in charge.

The NHS continues to dominate. There were stories in the national press about patients' details being passed to insurance companies. The Health Select committee, of which I am a member, raised this issue and expressed concerns about the breach of security of people's data. The Health and Social Care Information Centre carried out a review of its predecessor.

The Review found "there were lapses in the strict arrangements...in place to ensure people's personal data would never be used improperly". In one case there were 2 releases of data and it was not known who they were released to. This is an organisation that is there to protect our personal data but was unable to do so. The Review admitted that information was released to 3 "re- insurance companies" which allows them to use the data until 2015 and 2016.

Many of you have told me you are unable to make an appointment with your GP within a few days. One constituent was offered an appointment in 3 weeks time. This is unacceptable. We know that waiting times have increased and there has been no strategy to deal with recruiting and retaining doctors in A and E.

Now the CCG is undertaking a consultation on urgent care. The closing date is 14 August 2014. They are asking for your views on whether urgent and emergency care services in the borough should be brought together in a single facility at the Manor Hospital. Also if the Walk in Centre should remain in the town centre. It is important to respond to this consultation. In my view there will be confusion if a walk in centre or urgent care centre is based at the Manor. Details are available from www.walsallccg.nhs.uk/urgentcare

Finally, well done to the pupils at Queen Mary's Grammar School. They are attempting to beat the altitude achieved by Felix Baumgartner, who skydived from 39,045m, with their own atmospheric probes.

The Beat Felix Team's first probe, 'Gagarin', reached an altitude of 35,118m only 3,927m short of their goal. Their final two probes, 'Armstrong' and 'Hadfield' will launch within the next month. Do look at the amazing photographs on their website.

VALERIE VAZ MP

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