

View from the House

This is my first column as your re-elected MP for Walsall South. I want to thank those of you who voted for me and to thank those of you who may not have voted for me but took part in the democratic process. Thank you to all those who supported me and worked so hard to achieve a result which included a tripling of the majority and a swing.

At Westminster I was part of the ceremony to “drag” John Bercow to his seat as Speaker of the House of Commons. The tradition of “dragging” the Speakers originates from earlier times when the Speaker may have had to face personal danger when relaying the Commons’ views to the Monarch. Between the years 1394 - 1535 seven Speakers were executed! Once the Speaker was in place all the elected MPs were sworn in. The next event is the State opening of Parliament where the Queen will read out the Government’s plans for the parliamentary session ahead.

During the election campaign, despite an agreement I struck with Centro to divert a bus away from Stafford Road, 2 new bus routes were added. Predictably, three buses were stuck on a narrow road. National Express West Midlands had to send a member of staff to Stafford Road to resolve the situation. This is unacceptable.

Elsewhere, the world’s biggest banks have been fined £6.3 billion for undertaking and admitting to criminal activity in fixing the foreign exchange market. From 2007 and 2013 they formed a “cartel”. The US Attorney General said the fines should deter competitors in the future from chasing profits without regard to fairness to the law or to the public welfare. It is clear there needs to be more regulation. Mortgage finance is now being re-regulated by the Bank of England in a turnaround from the free market approach of the 1980s and 1990s. It matters because banks should be lending to local businesses and those who need mortgages for homes not speculation. The State has a duty to ensure that these companies are there to deliver economic and social good.

At St Mary’s the Mount RC Church on Sunday 10 May, I witnessed the priests reassert their vows to the community. I will continue to strive for social change: to make food banks unnecessary and campaign for a living wage, affordable homes for local people, and those who need help whoever you voted for.

Valerie Vaz MP

Walsall South, 25 May 2015

