

As the dust settles after the local elections there were one or two major policy issues that came up during that busy time.

The compulsory academisation of all schools was announced in the Budget. All schools would be taken out of local authority control whether they wanted to or not. Added to that there would be no accountability to parents because there would be no parent governors. In the face of opposition by parents, teachers and across parties in local government and nationally, the policy has unravelled. So the U-turn announced by the Government on polling day was welcome. This shows people should raise their concerns on bad policy.

Moreover, the Junior Doctors had their first all-out strike. I met the Junior Doctors who were waiting outside the Department of Health to speak to Jeremy Hunt. But he must not be going to work or using another entrance. I have questioned Jeremy Hunt in parliament about why he refuses to negotiate. That is what the doctors want. Instead the Government want to impose a contract even though the junior doctors only want to work safely and to keep patients safe.

More attacks on the BBC. Now this Conservative Government would like to tell the BBC what programmes it can make and when it is allowed to schedule them. The purpose of the BBC is to 'Entertain, educate and inform' – three things that it does excellently. It is the envy of the world in the quality of its programme making and in its independence from interference by government. This must not change.

The Government want to make their nominees governors of the BBC. That is interference. The Government must listen to the majority of people who replied to the BBC consultation. They said leave the BBC alone as it is. The coalition government were wrong to cut the grant to the BBC World Service but now praise it as providing impartial news worldwide.

The public sector has suffered further attacks this time via HMRC who initially had said the office in Walsall would close in March 2017. Staff and members of the public opposed this. HMRC have now said that the office will close this June without considering legitimate concerns. At my adjournment debate on Tuesday I asked the Minister to reverse the sudden closure.

And finally, congratulations to the Saddlers for making the playoffs, and all those elected to serve the people of Walsall.

Valerie Vaz MP

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