

eNews

from Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP

February 2024



Bentley & Darlaston North - Darlaston South - Pleck - Palfrey - Paddock - St. Matthew's - Pheasey Park Farm

IKEA in Parliament



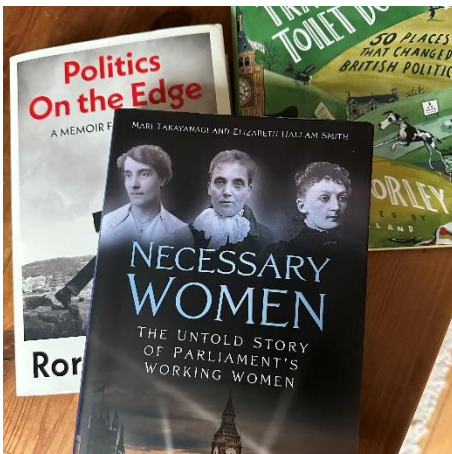
On the 31 January 2024 I hosted IKEA UK & Ireland, Parliamentary Reception in the Terrace Pavilion. I welcomed the Sweden Ambassador Gullgren, Minister Kevin Hollinrake Peter Jelkeby Country Retail Manager, and colleagues from both Houses to celebrate 80 years of Ikea the wonderful everyday: Ikea is based in Wednesbury: the store Manager Patricio Aleman was voted the IKEA global store of the year as a result of the hard work and dedication of the co-workers🌀

Wreath laying at Gandhi Statue



Lord Meghnad Desai was instrumental in the campaign to have a fitting memorial, a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Parliament Square which commemorates the role he played in the peaceful and nonviolent movement to gain independence for India. I pictured with Lord Desai (l) and H.E Mr Vikram K Doraiswami, the High Commissioner for India in the UK. The Indian diaspora gather together to lay wreaths at the statue and remember his teachings. Wreaths are laid to remember his death on 30 January 1948. 🌀

Books are my Bag and Necessary Women



It was wonderful to attend the discussion with Elizabeth Hallam Smith and Mari Takayanagi who work for the House and are the authors of Necessary Women on Monday 5 February 2024. The book recounts the many women who have worked behind the scenes in the Palace of Westminster ensuring the place works.

At the Parliamentary Book Awards, on 6 February 2024 one of the winners was Matt Chorley a radio journalist and presenter won an award for his book Planes, Trains, and Toilet Doors 🌀

Meeting at St Matthews Church



I arranged a meeting with Deborah Williams, Historic England to discuss how to progress the projects that can save this iconic Building in the heart of Walsall. Revd Jim Trood and Dr John Edlin who manages the projects were present with the brilliant volunteers who look after the Church. An earlier Church was built around 1220 and rebuilt in 1820-21. 🌀



Media Bill report and Third Reading



On 30 January 2024, the Bill was debated which updates the legislative framework for public service broadcasting, set out provisions to deliver content on digital platforms, and updates the commercial radio framework. I supported amendments that would have strengthened the Bill, benefitted people across the country and helped to support our broadcasters in the coming years. I supported an amendment calling for a review into whether a Gaelic language service should be given a public broadcast remit which was voted down. An amendment which incentivises publishers to join a recognised press regulator by granting them protection against high-cost court cases was voted down. I voted against 3^d Reading Aye: 194 and Noes: 294 🌀

Motion on Draft Electoral Commission Strategy and Policy Statement

On Wednesday (31 January 2024), the House approved the Electoral Commission Strategy and Policy Statement. During the debate, the Minister for Elections claimed, the statement and previous legislation will augment the accountability of the commission to Parliament serve this as its sole and only purpose: to build on Parliament's and the public's confidence in its work". But polling shows that trust in our politics and democratic institutions is at an all-time low, under this Government. The Statement raises the appearance of politicians in Government seeking to influence the work of the independent body tasked with managing elections, that is why the Statement is so concerning; respected bodies have rejected it. We need a new approach to a democracy that works for everyone. This is a dangerous politicisation of our independent elections watchdog. Government MPs pressed ahead despite the lack of consensus over it. 🌀

Finance Bill



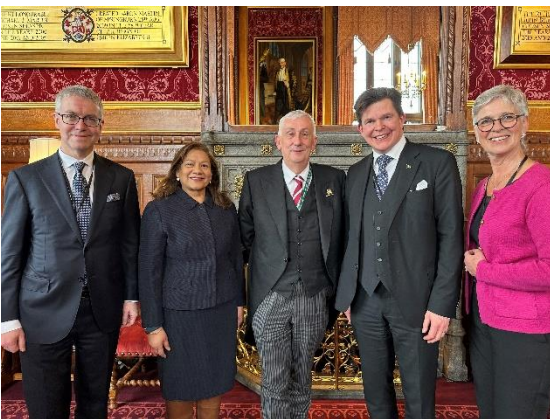
The Bill debated on 5 February, enacts the Autumn Statement 2023. New Clause 6 required the Chancellor to publish an assessment of the impact on investment and growth of the measures. This was voted down by Government MPs. Expensing is a capital allowance tax scheme that lets UK companies deduct 100% of the cost of capital equipment from taxable profits in the year the investment was made which the Bill makes permanent. I support permanent full expensing to support greater business investment and economic growth. I voted for a new clause on air passenger duty. The Bill freezes duty for those flying by private jet, while raising it for people flying economy and business class. This was lost: Ayes: 185 Noes: 285🌀

Opposition Day: Ministerial severance (reform)



On the Opposition Day debate, 6 February 2024 the Motion aimed to initiate a reform of the rules governing severance payments to Ministers leaving office. Ministerial severance pay was first introduced in the early 1990s. The rules governing it have remained essentially unchanged. There have been a number of ministerial resignations at the end of Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's tenures. Many granted severance pay had only been in office for a very short period, in some cases, a matter of weeks or days. I voted for the Motion but this was lost: Ayes: 192 and Noes: 275 🌀

Speaker of the Swedish Parliament



I was delighted to meet the Speaker of the Riksdag, Andreas Norlen on 26 February, with a delegation of cross party Swedish MPs. In 1975 an instrument of Parliament now enables the Speaker and not the monarch to appoint or dismiss the Prime Minister. I also met the Swedish Ambassador to the UK HE Stefan Gullgren again. These delegations provide a good opportunity to exchange views. Sweden is now a full member of NATO.🌀

SNP Opposition Day 21 February 2024



The SNP were granted an Opposition Day on 21. It is the usual procedure to put their motion first. However, Mr Speaker against the advice of the Clerk of the House took the HM Opposition Labour Party motion. As both the Government and SNP did not vote for our motion, this was passed which called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and a halt to the attack on Raffah. I attended a meeting with aid agencies who said the basic food water and medicines have not been allowed through. This must change. 🌀

Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill



On 27 February 2024 the Bill was debated. I was in favour of proposals to prohibit landlords from claiming litigation costs from tenants, other than under limited circumstances. Opposition amendments which I supported, would have ensured leases on new flats required a residents' management company to be established, and would have removed the power of repossession of a freehold property where a freeholder fails to pay. 3 of the Opposition's amendments were voted on, e.g., to ensure all leaseholders have the right to vary their lease and replace rent with peppercorn rent; an amendment to stop landlords being able to terminate a lease and seek repossession for a breach of terms or an unpaid debt of more than £350 was defeated. 🌀

Indian Achievers Award 2024



Living Birdge launched their new magazine in Parliament on 27 February. This celebrates the work of the Indian diaspora and their achievements. In the picture is the Editor Ruhi Khan (2nd R)who is undertaking research for a PHd in Feminism and technology. Tanya Paul (r) arrived from Canada for the award. She was a finalist in Arts and Media.

Also in the picture is Catherine West MP Shadow Minister for Asia and the Pacific. 🌀