

Our local police service

Thames Valley police budget will be £420 million in 2019-20, an increase of £28.3 m or 7.3% on 2018-19. Some of this increase is needed to pay for the increased costs of police pensions.

The new budget will allow increased spending to improve call handling and responses to public reports. More officers will be recruited to give more visible presence in our local communities. More resource will be put into tackling fraud and cyber crime. Data handling and intelligence processing and transfer will also attract more cash.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has developed victim support, and runs a Community Safety fund to offer more money to tackle priority problems.

The Thames Valley force has been graded "Outstanding" in the Police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy review

The Fed eases policy

We are living through a world manufacturing recession. The Fed, Bank of England, Bank of China and the European Central Bank all tightened policy too much in the second half of last year. They spooked the markets and hit borrowing for investment. Several governments, led by the UK, hit their car markets hard with higher taxes, fewer car loans and an attack on diesels.

The Fed has now changed policy. It has ended its rate rises and slashed its Quantitative tightening programme. It has now announced a rethink of its whole approach to rate setting and balance sheet management. The ECB has been slow to respond, ending its Quantitative easing just in time for the industrial collapse. The Bank of China has set out new ways of getting credit into new sectors and ventures to offset the slowdown its balance sheet clean up of commercial banks has triggered. Only the Bank of England has failed to respond despite tightening substantially with its advice to reduce car loans and mortgages, and two rate rises from the low.

We should avoid a global advanced country general recession. Inflation remains very subdued with plenty of spare capacity and competitive forces. The Bank of England should be more attentive to the state of the real economy and get more into line with action being taken to avoid a downturn. The UK needs to end its attack on the car industry.

The need for a rethink by the Central Banks



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- [Read more about John Redwood](#)

The armed forces covenant

The government has rightly signed a special covenant with armed forces personnel to look after their interests. They have no right to strike, and can be put in harms way by their government employer, so they deserve special attention and consideration. There is widespread cross party support for this approach.

I have been talking to MP colleagues this week about what more the government could do to improve the reality of the Covenant. There are various issues affecting service personnel lives where improvements can and should be made.

The first is housing. There is a home purchase scheme, but it does not work for many Ministry of Defence employees. There are cases of individuals ending up homeless on departing the armed forces. They have not saved for a deposit or amassed some equity during their time in the forces. Quite often local Councils give them little priority for rented accommodation as they have been mobile during their service careers, not establishing entitlement in any particular location.

Part of the answer to this is to go over to a home base approach for all service personnel, so there is a place they return to regularly between tours of duty. More imaginative and helpful schemes to encourage home purchase, or to provide surrogates for home purchase would ensure on leaving the forces the individual either owned a home or had money for deposit on a home of their own. My proposals include acquiring the room or flat on the base that the MOD owns for the duration of their service or use, and agreeing to sell it back at an indexed price to the MOD on departure. This in normal market conditions would give the individual a deposit sum from the price gains.

The second is employment for the spouse or partner of the uniformed employee. Where there is no home base and frequent moves to undertake new assignments, the spouse or partner can have their careers disrupted or destroyed by the changes. The home base idea would help with this problem, allowing more stability for the family.

The third is the impact on the education of the children. Frequent changes of school can be disruptive to someone's learning, as they have to adapt to different approaches and curricula. It also breaks friendships and creates more unsettled feelings. Again settling on a home base approach could be of considerable benefit.

I have put ideas into the current review on these issues, and would be happy to add other points if constituents want to join in these conversations.

Another pointless delay

The decision to delay Brexit is a bad one. The Withdrawal Agreement is not Brexit and is not acceptable to most UK voters. The WA is a long and expensive delay leaving the UK in a very weak position.