

Gareth Snell speech at Stoke-on-Trent Central by-election

"I'd like to begin by saying thank you to the returning officer and their staff for all their work in making sure this election runs smoothly.

"I also must thank my wife, Sophia, and our beautiful daughter, Hannah. Both are a constant source of strength, love and inspiration to me. Without their support, this campaign would not have been possible.

"Can I also thank the police for all that they have done today and throughout the campaign.

"For democracy to work it needs the support of dedicated public servants and here in Stoke-on-Trent we can be proud to have some of the most dedicated in the country.

"I'd also like to thank my agent George Sinnott, and the incredible team of Labour Party workers and volunteers who have sustained this campaign throughout. To see the energy and commitment that all of you have shown these last few weeks is a reminder of the incredible strength and passion of our movement.

"I feel profoundly humble to have been chosen by the people of Stoke-on-Trent Central to represent them in Parliament.

"My wife Sophia and I chose to make our life here and it was the best decision we ever made. I'm proud to call the Potteries my home, and I'm prouder still to have been given the opportunity to represent our city as your next MP.

"In recent weeks Stoke-on-Trent has found itself in the national spotlight. Our city has been the focus of a media which all too often prefers to dwell on our problems instead of highlighting our achievements.

"But over these last few weeks a city lazily dubbed by some as the capital of Brexit has once again proven to the world that we are so much more than that.

"We are a city of innovators and educators, artists and entrepreneurs. We pioneered the first industrial revolution and I believe that we have the potential to lead the next one.

"This city will not allow ourselves to be defined by last year's referendum. And we will not allow ourselves to be divided by the result.

"Nor will we be divided by race, or faith, or creed. We will move forward together to tackle the problems that we face and secure a brighter, more prosperous future for one another.

"So for those who have come to Stoke-on-Trent to sow hatred and division, and to try to turn us away from our friends and neighbours, I have one message – you have failed.

"Tonight the people of Stoke-on-Trent have chosen the politics of hope over the politics of fear. We have said with one voice that hatred and bigotry are not welcome here. This is a proud city and we stand together.

"This election is a victory for British values of tolerance and respect. But it is also a victory for the proud Labour values that are the hallmark of our city and its people.

"It is a message that the people of Stoke-on-Trent won't just sit back while this Tory government cuts our National Health Service to the bone and puts the future of our public services at risk.

"It is a warning that we will not stand idly by while politicians in Westminster pour ever-money into London and the South East while the rest of the country is simply left to fend for itself.

"And it is a demand that the contribution our people have made to this country is respected and rewarded with the support and investment we deserve.

"Politics can be passionate – and there have been moments in this campaign that have polarised people.

"My job – and it is the job of all of us here – will be to put this campaign behind us – and work together.

"For those who voted for me in this election, thank you very much. But for those who did not, or who did not vote at all, I want you to know that I will be your representative as well.

"I will work every day to repay the trust that the people of Stoke-on-Trent have placed in me.

“I will be a strong, local voice that our city needs and I will always put the people of Stoke-on-Trent first. I have a plan for the Potteries, and that plan begins today.”