

Leaving Parliament

Packing up is never easy. There are many reminders of old battles fought and won or fought and lost as I tidy the papers and take away personal effects from the office . There are friends and colleagues to say Au Revoir to.

Today I wish to thank all the people of Wokingham for having me as their MP through 9 elections. We worked together well as I sought to represent their views, get redress when government wronged them, pressed for things we needed as a community and set out a vision of how Wokingham and our country could grasp greater prosperity, freedom and success.

For much of my time Wokingham came out high in surveys of best places to live. Unemployment was low most of the time, with many larger and smaller businesses coming to invest or growing from their home base. There has been an abundance of talent and energy to set up and grow enterprises, to volunteer to run events, to help charities and improve our local environment. I have visited many homes with well tended gardens, and watched with delight as bushes and trees have flourished in what were new developments, covering over the bare newness. I have argued to keep the green gaps, the farms and the fields that intersperse our towns and villages and provide some balance to the urban settlements.

I have often been the person who pushes the case for our public services and spaces to catch up with the housebuilding and private commercial parks. The early days I needed to help secure pavements, primary schools and shops for new Earley, through the days of working with the Council to freshen and modernise Wokingham Town Centre. It took a long time to get a new railway station which was much needed but we got there in the end. We did welcome new surgeries, new schools and improved roads under the previous Council.

I have backed home ownership which is the majority experience and the aspiration of many in Wokingham . I have pushed a better deal for small businesses and self employed, as Wokingham is enterprising. I have enjoyed the cultural life of our Borough, enriched by the choirs, concerts, local artists and craftsmen and women. I have helped the Council get more money for potholes, social care and a number of good causes.

Every day as MP I asked myself what can I do to make life better for the people I represent. Every day 365 days a year I wrote a blog to keep people up to date with what I was saying and doing, and to seek views on what the problems are and how they should be tackled., It has made for a fascinating and lively conversation.

Thank you all. Thank you so much to those of you who have contributed so much to our community. I shall miss the privilege of being able to thank you as MP.

I want to stay living in the Borough I love, and will still be running a modified website encouraging a wider debate about how best we can proceed

together as a nation. I am full of optimism for Wokingham and for our country, as long as local and national government reflects the common sense of the people. Government has power and money to do good, but can abuse its privileges or make bad mistakes which set us back. A free Parliament needs to be a noisy Parliament, capable of correcting error and holding accountable those who let us down.