

A general election?

The media is awash with election speculation. The PM confirmed in his remarks yesterday evening to his MPs that he does not want an early election.

It is by no means clear that the Leader of the Opposition wants one either. His party lags badly in the polls. It cannot say what policy it would offer on Brexit, with some wanting revocation of our notice to leave, some wanting a second referendum and some wanting some unspecified renegotiation with the EU that the EU might reject anyway. Of course he has to say he wants one, but he seems happier proposing rebel legislation to delay our exit.

It is quite likely an early election before we had left the EU would be an acrimonious re run of the referendum, with parties wanting to do well having to be clearly leave or remain. There is no guarantee the voters would create a good majority for one single view of Brexit in any new Parliament. Politics is only likely to return to some sense once this so far hopeless Parliament has fulfilled its main task, to get us out of the EU, as promised by both Labour and Conservatives in the last election.

Our main problem is not too few elections. Our problem is the inability so far of this Parliament to implement the decision of the referendum. Until that is done there will be anger about those MPs who have failed to vote and speak on Brexit as promised in the last election, and an inability to move on to discuss how an independent UK will use its new freedoms.

£14 billion cash boost for schools in Wokingham and West Berkshire

The Prime Minister has announced that we are boosting schools with a record £14 billion, levelling up per pupil funding across the country so every child in Wokingham & West Berkshire has a world class education.

The cash boost will mean that every secondary school in Wokingham & West Berkshire will receive a minimum of £5,000 per pupil next year and every primary school will get a minimum of £4,000 per pupil from 2021-22, rising at least in line with inflation.

The cash boost will mean £700 million extra for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), so every pupil in Wokingham & West Berkshire can access the education that is right for them, and none are held back from reaching their potential.

In addition, the new funding will mean £400 million additional funding for

further education and sixth form colleges in Wokingham & West Berkshire to train and teach our young people the skills they need for well-paid jobs in the modern economy.

The Prime Minister has also pledged to meet the £4.5 billion requirement for teachers' pensions from outside the education budget. This means that every penny of the extra £14 billion will go straight to schools and delivering the best educational outcomes for our children.

Commenting, The Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

"When I became Prime Minister at the start of the summer, I promised to make sure every child receives a superb education – regardless of which school they attend, or where they grew up.

"Today I can announce the first step in delivering on that pledge – funding per pupil in primary and secondary schools will increase, and be levelled up across the entire country.

"We should not accept the idea that there can be "winners or losers" when it comes to our children's futures. That's why we are providing additional funding now and for the future for every school, with those historically underfunded receiving the greatest increase.

"My government will ensure all young people get the best possible start in life. That means the right funding, but also giving schools the powers they need to deal with bad behaviour and bullying so pupils continue to learn effectively".

Excellent GCSE Results

Congratulations and well done to the students across Wokingham Borough for achieving outstanding GCSE results, well above the national average. A special thank you to teachers, staff and parents who have all played a part in this excellent achievement.

Measures for Dealing With Illegal Encampments

I have written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to urge him to press on with stronger measures to deal with

illegal encampments, particularly the Government review on the 'Irish model' which criminalises trespass in certain circumstances. I have written in similar terms to the Home Secretary and the Justice Secretary.

THE RT HON SIR JOHN REDWOOD MP, D.Phil, FCSI



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
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2 September 2019

Dear Robert

This summer has seen a great number of illegal encampments in my constituency. In one instance, the residents have taken turns sleeping in their cars for weeks on end in order to barricade the entrance to their estate and they are understandably frustrated by the lack of any effective action which can be taken. They have told me that they have also been subjected to threats and taunts by those who are trying to establish the illegal encampment.

I am aware that the Government responded earlier this year to the consultation on the powers to deal with unauthorised development and encampments. I understand that it is conducting a review of the 'Irish model' for dealing with unauthorised encampments which criminalises trespass in certain circumstances as the majority of respondents to the consultation believe the Government should consider criminalising unauthorised encampments in England.

While the powers that police and councils now have has made it quicker to remove encampments, the great inconvenience to residents, instances of anti-social behaviour, and the expense that local authorities must incur to clean up needs to be addressed summarily and not have to wait for a lengthy review.

I should be grateful for a response which I can forward to my constituents to assure them that the Government is indeed taking seriously their concerns and that effective measures will be put into place.

Yours ever

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'John Redwood'.

Austerity economics comes directly from EU policy and the Maastricht requirements

Sometimes important things are hidden in plain sight. The contentious policies of getting the UK budget deficit down below 3%, and getting state debt to fall as a percentage of GDP which have guided policy since the crash under Labour, Coalition and Conservative governments were made in Brussels. I supported the Labour and Coalition governments from 2009 saying annual borrowing was too high and needed curbing to avoid a crisis of confidence in the UK as a borrower, but have not agreed in recent years with the anti growth stance that the Maastricht state debt rules has encouraged in much Establishment thinking. These rules have been the background to low and no growth in several countries on the continent and to mass unemployment in much of the south and west of the Euro area.

Once a year the UK has a Parliamentary debate around a Treasury Statement on how we have got on in complying with the Maastricht rules. In the last three years the government has been able to report they are below the annual deficit ceiling, but have not until recently started the bigger task of getting state debt down to 60% of GDP. It is this latter rule which encouraged first Mr Osborne then Mr Hammond to resist tax cuts and spending increases that could have boosted the growth rate and improved our investment in transport or improved performance in education and training. Mr Osborne said he wanted to go further and faster than the outgoing Labour government in meeting the Maastricht requirements from 2010 onwards, inheriting big cuts in spending and tax rises from Labour who were also wedded to the policy. In practice he ended up by 2015 in achieving the extent of deficit reduction Labour were planning. He wisely alleviated the extreme cuts on capital spending Labour put into their forward budgets.

As we leave the EU it is time to rethink our economic guidelines. Of course we need to control annual deficits, but we should be less concerned about the debt as percentage of GDP at current levels, and less concerned about borrowing to invest where the public sector has genuinely worthwhile projects that can earn a decent return. As proof that our economic policy has been dominated by Maastricht, I reproduce below a few sentences from the ONS who have set out at length our dependence on the EU rules and our efforts to meet them.

ONS :

“•General government gross debt was £1,821.3 billion at the end of the financial year ending March 2019, equivalent to 85.2% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 25.2 percentage points above the reference value of 60% set out in the Protocol on the Excessive Deficit Procedure.

- General government gross debt first exceeded the 60% Maastricht reference value at the end of the financial year ending March 2010, when it was 69.6% of GDP.

- General government deficit (or net borrowing) was £25.5 billion in the financial year ending March 2019, equivalent to 1.2% of GDP and 1.8 percentage points below the reference value of 3.0% set out in the Protocol on the Excessive Deficit Procedure.

- This is the third consecutive financial year in which general government deficit has been below the 3.0% Maastricht reference value.

The EU government debt and deficit statistical bulletin is published quarterly in January, April, July and October each year. This is to coincide with when the UK and other EU member states are required to report on their deficit (or net borrowing) and debt to the European Commission.

Article 126 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU obliges member states to avoid excessive budgetary deficits. The Protocol on the Excessive Deficit Procedure, annexed to the Maastricht Treaty, defines two criteria and reference values with which member states' governments should comply. “