

Ask the same question and you get the same answer

The crushing defeat for the Withdrawal Agreement again should come as no surprise. It united Remain and Leave voting MPs, as it is such a bad proposition for the UK.

We now know the government is not going to whip the Conservative party after all for the votes to come on Wednesday and Thursday. It is odd that a government which has constantly confirmed No deal is better than a bad deal, and asserted we will leave on 29 March 2019 is now not going to whip its party to support those two central policies that are very popular with many Conservative voters.

Emmbrook Infant School Judged Outstanding by Ofsted

I am delighted to learn that Emmbrook Infant School has been judged Outstanding by Ofsted following its inspection in January.

Many congratulations to the Headteacher Corrina Gillard, the governors and all of the school's staff for their achievement and I hope that they have a wonderful 'Ofsted Celebration Day' on 2 April.

UK grows faster in January

The UK economy grew faster in January, and is now growing faster than the Euro area, France, Germany and Italy. Thanks to Brexit!

The latest annual figures for the main advanced economies shows tax cutting USA way out ahead with 3.1% growth in 2018, the UK at 1.3%, France at 0.9%, Germany at 0.6% and Japan at 0.3%. Italy has spent the last half year in recession.

The interpretative statements

If these new texts change something, then why isn't that reflected in a changed text for the Withdrawal Agreement?

I have not had a reply to my letter to the Attorney General about the other aspects of the Agreement which concern me, and received no good answer when I raised these points last night following the government Statement. Parliament should be shown the legal advice on EU determination of the payments under the Agreement, the role of the ECJ in disputes and the capability of the EU to legislate against UK interests throughout the negotiation period or so called transition.

Choosing a candidate for Police and Crime Commissioner

On Saturday evening I attended with other Conservatives one of three party meetings to select our candidate for the Thames Valley Police Authority PCC elections.

The role of Police and Crime Commissioner has on the whole failed to capture the public imagination, with low turnouts in past elections for the role. This is a pity, as the job should be an important one. I myself was no enthusiast for this particular constitutional change, when Mrs May decided we needed to move on from Councillor Police committees to a directly elected head, but now we have them it is important to try to make them work well.

The PCC is the man or woman who appoints the Chief Constable and who works with the Chief Constable on budgets and strategic direction of the police force. The PCC does not interfere in day to day policing or operational matters. It is not the PCC's job to direct the police to pursue this criminal rather than that one or to prosecute X and not Y. The PCC does not have the training and powers of a police officer to investigate and arrest suspects. It is the PCC's job to understand what the public wants and expects of its police service, and to set priorities, targets and direction for the police in discussion with the Chief Constable. The PCC is both there to lobby MPs and Ministers for the extra money their Chief Constable wants, and to help the Chief Constable establish priorities and create more efficient ways of doing things in the light of the budgets available.

The selection meeting was a good opportunity to review current policing and to send some messages about what the public priorities are. I pointed out that the public say they want more targeted action on drugs, gangs, street violence and illegal settlements in particular. The candidates also wanted

to discuss cyber crime and social media hate speech. Some others wanted to talk about police numbers and the utility of beat policing. I look forward to seeing the Manifesto of the winning candidate in due course