

The MP service I provided in the last Parliament

I think an MP should be easily contactable and personally interested in constituents' views and problems.

I wrote a daily diary piece seven days a week all year setting out my views and actions on national matters, and often a second piece on local issues where I was involved or urging the Council to take action. I encouraged constituents to logon and write back if they wished.

I provided an email answering and problem handling service seven days a week 51 weeks a year myself, with the other week covered during the working week by my staff.

I participated in more debates and votes than the average MP, and made sure I was always in Westminster when there was business on that mattered to my constituents. I did not undertake any foreign trips when Parliament was in session.

I held regular surgeries with appointment times that suited my constituents.

I kept my office costs charged to the taxpayer to well below the average MP office costs, by doing more of the work myself.

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Inflation nears its modest peak in the Euro area and the UK

Inflation has risen by similar amounts in Europe, the UK and the US. Yesterday the Euro area figure for April hit 1.9%, compared to minus 0.2% a year earlier. German inflation reached 2%, compared to minus 0.3% a year earlier. UK inflation at 2.7% compared with plus 0.3% a year ago has risen almost identically to German inflation over the last year, implying the UK inflation is not to do with sterling or Brexit as some allege.

The annual UK figure for April inflation at 2.7% reflected higher energy prices over the year. 30% of the price rise came from transport, with a surge in airfares for Easter a particularly strong item for April, and higher Vehicle Excise Duties adding to the pain. 22% of it came from household items, where Council tax rises and dearer electricity were two of the big

movers. Motor fuel prices fell a little, after being the dominant cause of inflation for the last year.

There are no signs of a wage/price spiral developing as it used to do in the last century. There is not much evidence of companies pushing through price rises to offset the fall in sterling that has taken place over the last two years, though where they can companies seek a small rise as some compensation for general cost pressures. It is interesting that on both sides of the Atlantic with differing patterns of currency performance, the rise in inflation has been so similar. It mainly reflects energy and commodity prices, with some price pressures from China on her exports. Later this year unless there is another oil and commodity price surge, inflation might fall back a little.

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[Labour goes for the full Corbyn](#)

Labour's Manifesto was even more socialist than the leaked version. Nationalised water companies were added to the purchase list, alongside a nationalised Post Office, new nationalised regional banks, regional public sector energy companies, the gradual renationalisation of the Grid and nationalised train companies. This large programme of changing ownership is not costed.

The Manifesto aims to raise £48.6bn in tax and to spend it on other items. Companies would face a big tax hike on their profits, new taxes on highly paid employees, taxes on buying assets and derivatives. The better off would face a 45% tax charge at £80,000 a year and a 50% tax charge at £123,000. Public debt would be likely to go up much more rapidly than under current government plans to pay for investment, nationalisation, and any shortfall in revenues.

The problem with the arithmetic is it assumes very rich people and companies will stay and pay. It assumes rich people with flexibility will still work and invest as hard, and that companies will still build up more profitable business in the UK when other countries offer them a lower tax background to expand. Given the strong growth in corporation tax receipts seen in recent years in the UK as the rate has been lowered, it is dubious to think there would be further major growth in revenues if the rate were raised so much. Given the good growth in the amount paid, and the increase in the proportion of income tax paid by the better off with a reduction in the top rate from 50% to 45%, it is again questionable that Labour's plan would work on Income tax either.

There are even bigger numbers on capital account. A £25bn a year investment

programme is specified, though much of this is projects already underway out of budgets already secured. Presumably on top of that is the wish to set up a National Investment Bank which in turn would be able to lend £250bn for suitable projects. The taxpayer would be standing behind the bank and the projects if they miscarried.

Labour say they “accept the referendum result” and say they will get on with legislating to get the UK out of the EU. They wish, however, to negotiate their way back into the customs union and many other features of the current EU scheme. They would guarantee the rights of all EU citizens in the UK before the EU made a similar reassurance for UK citizens living in the rest of the EU. They are silent in the Manifesto over UK payments to the EU, though elsewhere they have implied they think the UK does have to pay some bills the EU dreams up that have no legal base in the Treaties. None of this makes for a strong negotiating position designed to give both the UK and the rest of the EU a good Brexit. It is in the interests of both sides that we have a good future relationship. The UK being firm as well as friendly is crucial to delivering such an outcome.

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[National election, local matters \(for the Wokingham Borough part of the constituency\)](#)

The main issues that have dominated in Wokingham Borough in recent years are all related to one thing – the fast growth rate in new homes and in the numbers of people living in our community. Wokingham is a welcoming place to newcomers. Some growth is helpful to all. The problems occur if the growth is too sudden or too large.

It leads to strains on roads, public transport, NHS facilities, school places and other parts of our infrastructure.

The Council has difficult decisions to make about when and how to expand their local services. Put in school places too early, and the bills go up. Established schools lose pupils and money as the new schools open. Forest has lost pupil numbers thanks to the opening of the new Bohunt school. Leave it too late, and there are insufficient places. There is a scramble to find somewhere in the area, with longer travel times for pupils and a strain on school resources.

We are short of space on the roads, and up against limits on some public transport. I worked away to get a new station at Wokingham. Reading station

has now been given much needed extra train capacity. Crossrail will soon provide a better service into central and east London. The Council is building the Shinfield, Arborfield and Winnersh by passes, and putting in two new link roads and a new railway bridge in Wokingham. The sooner this is done the better. The roadworks themselves compound difficulties, and current capacity is far below what is needed.

The government is promising some control over the pace of welcoming new migrants to the UK in future. I wish to work with the Council to come up with a fairer number of new homes the area can take to persuade the government we need a sustainable and realistic growth figure. The Council and MP in the next Parliament also need to make common cause and to put enough investment in so the developments improve the provision of transport and public service.

We need to keep enough green spaces and areas to absorb water run off, as too much development increases flood risk and removes too many countryside areas. We also wish to keep green spaces and gaps between settlements to keep the best of our local landscape.

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[This election is about the kind of country we want to be.](#)

The UK General election is both about who should lead our country for the next five years, and what kind of a country we want to create. It is an unusually important election, because the UK has great opportunities now it is leaving the EU. We need to leave in a way which brings more people together in our country. That requires reassurance to all that we are leaving the EU, not Europe. None of us want to damage our economy. We are not out to undermine the many friendly and positive collaborations and friendships UK people and companies share with the continent. We do not wish to turn inward. More than ever the UK needs strong and stable leadership, to negotiate a decent future relationship with other EU member states. I want to see an outward looking, optimistic UK, engaged in the wider world and a pioneer of freer trade on a global basis.

As the official Brexit campaign argued, the UK will not use our departure to undermine the employee protections embedded in EU law. The Conservative leadership has stressed that all existing minimum standards and protections will be transferred into UK law. As governments of all persuasions have in the past, so a future Conservative government wishes to go further than the EU standards. As the Labour party also supports this approach that should be one fear of Brexit removed.

So far there has been no downturn as forecast by some in the Remain campaign who thought the act of voting for Brexit, or the sending of the letter, would bring on an early recession. There is no need for there to be so once we do leave, either. An important task for the new government will be to extend and improve the economic recovery. So far since the banking crash and slump of 2008-9, we have seen good job creation and moderate growth. Setting the right tax rates, allowing sensible levels of public spending to improve the NHS, schools and other crucial services, and creating a climate friendly to investment and enterprise is central to building on what has been achieved since 2010.

There is no such thing as hard or soft Brexit. Remaining a member of the single market is not on offer. Being in the customs Union would prevent us having better arrangements with the rest of the world. It is mightily in the interests of the other member states to have a free trade agreement with the UK, so that may well happen. If it does not in time for our exit, we will be able to trade with them under WTO rules as we do with the rest of the world at the moment.

As we come out we need to legislate for a new UK fishing policy kinder to both our fish and our fishermen. We need to set up a new system of agricultural support, that is sensitive to the UK rural landscape and helps promote more domestic food production. We can get rid of EU taxes we do not like.

I think in a few years time we will have more and better friendly contacts and partnerships with people and companies on the continent. Just as staying out the Euro allowed the City to be Europe's major fund raising market, so being out of the EU will not impede more trade, investment, academic and cultural exchange. Our future relations will rest of the good will and commonsense of people on both sides of the Channel, not on the sometimes unhelpful words of a few EU officials.

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