

## Election candidates debate for Wokingham

I was asked by Churches Together in Wokingham if I would join a debate with the other candidates for the General Election. I replied promptly, offering dates and encouraging the initiative.

I am now told that only half the other candidates have agreed to such an event. I would urge all candidates to take up the Churches offer. I cannot see the point of going ahead with candidates missing. That seems unfair and means any audience would not see the full picture of the election. I am happy to find a different date if that helps.

---

## Animal welfare

I have pressed for higher standards of animal welfare and am glad to see proposals in the Conservative Manifesto.

These include

1. Ending excessively long journeys for slaughter and fattening
  2. New law on animal sentience
  3. Banning primates as pets
  4. Crack down on puppy and dog smuggling
  5. Tougher sentences for animal cruelty
- 

## Better off out

I have always believed and argued that we can be better off economically once we leave the EU. As long as we have the right budget and follow pro growth policies on exit, the UK economy can speed up a bit from its current levels.

Whenever I argue this case the Remain establishment point to past official forecasts saying we will grow more slowly when we leave and ask who am I to gainsay such work. Let me remind you that I have disagreed with official forecasts on three main occasions in the past, and in each case have been right.

The first was the UK joining the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. The

official forecasts said it would deliver lower inflation and steady growth. They dared call it a “golden scenario”! I said it would be destabilising, causing boom and bust. So it proved, bringing about a nasty recession.

The second was the banking crash. I with many others including the Opposition parties in Parliament warned against the excessive debts built up in both the private and public sectors in the UK under Labour from 2005-7. I went on to warn against the actions of government and Central Bank to tighten conditions too drastically in 2008-9 which were bound to undermine the banks and cause a recession. The official forecasts denied there would be a recession until its onset and said the banks had to be taught a lesson. We ended up with a big recession.

The third was during the UK referendum when the government issued official short term forecasts for the impact of a vote to leave. These said that in the two years after a Leave vote there would be a recession. Unemployment would go up sharply and house prices would tumble. I said none of these things would happen. None of them did happen. Employment continued to grow, house prices showed small gains and the economy continued to grow.

Tomorrow I will examine why and how I think we can speed up our growth a bit once we leave the EU. We will have the policy flexibility to promote growth by monetary and fiscal action.

---

## [Doorsteps in Wokingham and Earley](#)

In recent days when canvassing with teams in Earley and Wokingham I have been asked about a number of issues related to social care. Much of our local provision is excellent, but there are problems for some in getting access to all the care and support they need locally.

The Conservative Manifesto rightly acknowledges that more money needs to be made available to improve and strengthen social care. I want to see Wokingham and West Berkshire get their fair share of the increases and spend the money well to deal with people who currently want more or better support.

The Manifesto also says a Conservative government would work to find a cross party consensus on reform of social care funding for the elderly, as any changes need to be agreed beyond party so they are likely to remain for several Parliaments. The big issue is what care should be made available free at the point of need under the NHS pledges, and what if any should continue to be paid for by the individual themselves as part of their living costs for food and shelter. All parties in government in the past three decades have kept the same policy toward care home costs. There is a sense of injustice about that policy over payments. If an elderly person goes into a care home their home or other assets have to be sold to pay the bills, whereas an elderly person who has no home to sell and no savings is rightly given a free

care home place. All parties now say they wish to change the current policy, so it should be possible to work towards some improved consensus.

---

## Brexit should boost growth

The Remain financial establishment led by Mr Hammond 2017-19 followed policies which have led to a slowdown in UK growth. It is true there has been a global slowdown led by manufacturing, but that easily forecastable fact should have made them change their policy even more in the direction of promoting growth.

Instead the Bank of England has refused to consider cutting rates or creating more liquidity to facilitate more jobs and activity, whilst practically every other major Central Bank in the world has eased policy in several ways. China, France, the USA, India and others have also cut taxes to promote growth.

The UK was right to rein in the excessive public deficits reached at the end of the last decade. A period of retrenchment was unfortunately necessary to avoid loss of confidence and enable a recovery to begin. In the last two years I have been pressing for some fiscal and monetary relaxation to prevent the slowdown we are now predictably experiencing. The government led by the new Prime Minister is now taking action to ease the fiscal squeeze, which should help growth in a year's time when the benefits of the next budget start to flow through.

Brexit allows us to change various policies to allow a faster expansion. Of course it is right to keep in place controls on the debts and deficits to avoid excessive debt build up and loss of confidence that can bring. It is also right to allow enough money to circulate to accommodate growth and to allow people to keep enough of the money they earn so their spending can fuel some growth.

Brexit also allows us to set out policies that improve the amount of food we grow and process at home, and to rebuild our fishing industry landing more of the catch for home processing and consumption. It allows us to take tariffs down on much needed raw materials, foods and components from non EU sources. Meanwhile according to the Political declaration we will be negotiating a Free Trade deal with the EU at the same as with other important economies around the world.

The Conservative Manifesto sets out £3.195 bn of tax cuts for 2020-21, with an increase in the National Insurance threshold giving a tax cut to 31 million workers at a cost to the revenue of £2.17 billion. Business rate cuts and an enhanced Employment Allowance make up most of the rest.