

The need for a rethink by the Central Banks



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- [Read more about John Redwood](#)

The armed forces covenant

The government has rightly signed a special covenant with armed forces personnel to look after their interests. They have no right to strike, and can be put in harms way by their government employer, so they deserve special attention and consideration. There is widespread cross party support for this approach.

I have been talking to MP colleagues this week about what more the government could do to improve the reality of the Covenant. There are various issues affecting service personnel lives where improvements can and should be made.

The first is housing. There is a home purchase scheme, but it does not work for many Ministry of Defence employees. There are cases of individuals ending up homeless on departing the armed forces. They have not saved for a deposit or amassed some equity during their time in the forces. Quite often local Councils give them little priority for rented accommodation as they have been mobile during their service careers, not establishing entitlement in any particular location.

Part of the answer to this is to go over to a home base approach for all service personnel, so there is a place they return to regularly between tours of duty. More imaginative and helpful schemes to encourage home purchase, or to provide surrogates for home purchase would ensure on leaving the forces the individual either owned a home or had money for deposit on a home of their own. My proposals include acquiring the room or flat on the base that the MOD owns for the duration of their service or use, and agreeing to sell it back at an indexed price to the MOD on departure. This in normal market conditions would give the individual a deposit sum from the price gains.

The second is employment for the spouse or partner of the uniformed employee. Where there is no home base and frequent moves to undertake new assignments, the spouse or partner can have their careers disrupted or destroyed by the changes. The home base idea would help with this problem, allowing more stability for the family.

The third is the impact on the education of the children. Frequent changes of school can be disruptive to someone's learning, as they have to adapt to different approaches and curricula. It also breaks friendships and creates more unsettled feelings. Again settling on a home base approach could be of considerable benefit.

I have put ideas into the current review on these issues, and would be happy to add other points if constituents want to join in these conversations.

Another pointless delay

The decision to delay Brexit is a bad one. The Withdrawal Agreement is not Brexit and is not acceptable to most UK voters. The WA is a long and expensive delay leaving the UK in a very weak position.

Doctors and surgeries

I have taken up the issue of how many GPs we have in the area and whether we need more to cope with demand for surgery appointments.

The local NHS tells me that "recruitment of GPs is difficult nationally with high retirement rates, less GPs willing to take on partnership roles and many GPs now choosing to work part time." They assure me they can fill vacancies though it sometimes takes time to do so. They also stress that they are recruiting more nurse practitioners, pharmacists, paramedics and physicians' assistants. There is more money for these roles under the new GP contract. The Clinical Commissioning Group for our area has now commissioned evening and week-end provision in accordance with the new national policy to be more flexible for patients.

We have needs to cater for growth in patient numbers and to provide a flexible service for people in employment or with family responsibilities which limit the times of appointment they can accept. I wish this to be fully taken into account. The government is providing substantial new money for the NHS, so I wish to see local service improvements from the extra cash.

The Conservative party opposes any delay in our exit

Last night just 133 Conservative MPs supported a motion to delay our exit beyond this week. 98 of us voted against and another 77 abstained. Those unwilling to vote for the delay included 4 Cabinet Ministers and senior whips! They were given permission to miss the vote, presumably because they had no wish to vote for it. Many of those abstaining were clearly in and around the Commons chamber, so they could have voted if they wished. When we had a free vote on delay 188 Conservative MPs voted against and 12 abstained, despite the Prime Minister leading the forces for delay in the division lobbies. In the country opposition to delay within the party is even greater.

The Prime Minister has not made a good case for delay. She has enjoyed almost three years in office to reach an Agreement with the EU that the Conservative party with its allies the DUP can support, or to leave without a Withdrawal Agreement. She always promised us No deal was better than a bad deal. The only sensible answer now is for her to lead us out with no Withdrawal Agreement this week. Why should the EU believe she can get agreement to their Withdrawal Agreement in the next few weeks when she has failed to do so ever since the Chequers policy? That policy about turn led to so much anger and so many resignations from the government and Conservative party senior posts and should lead her to drop it and get on with leaving.