

The King's speech and Parliament

The King spoke well with a moving tribute to his late mother and his clear pledge to undertake his new tasks in the spirit of public service above politics which informed the Queen for seventy years. At the Privy Council he reaffirmed his wish to uphold our democratic traditions and to be guided by the Parliaments of his realms.

In the coming week the UK Parliament will rest adjourned in mourning. The Palace of Westminster will be turned into more of a fortress than normal in preparation for the funeral of the Queen and the arrival of numerous Presidents, Heads of State and government from around the world to London for this great and sad occasion. The Queen's body will lie in state in Westminster Hall in preparation. The external business of government will stop, with politics suspended whilst the relevant Ministers are involved in the preparations and events surrounding the death of the monarch. The nation mourns with its government until the funeral.

Meanwhile the country wrestles with the energy crisis and the cost of living pressures. It is fortunate that the government was able to make a reassuring statement before these sad events that relief is on its way from unaffordable fuel bills. Behind the closed office doors it is important that work goes on to complete the plans for the energy package and for the promised Financial Statement later this month to follow the period of mourning. Parliament should return earlier from the planned Conference break to scrutinise and approve measures commensurate with the scale of the challenge to business and families posed by the prices of gas and electricity. Business is suffering now with no protection in place against the surges in energy prices.