

Better healthcare

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I understand that the Health Secretary is engaged on just such an exercise. I would be interested to hear from people, especially constituents, on what would be sensible requests for spending this additional cash. My priorities include wanting a well staffed GP service locally so that patients can get appointments that are timely and GPs feel they have manageable workloads so they can provide the best possible service. I think we do need some more hospital capacity for the most common procedures to reduce waiting times and provide some choice and flexibility for patients over when and where they receive treatment.

Local services need to be expanded to reflect the additional homes and increase in population. I share the government's wish to see better mental health provision where there are proven protocols and treatments that can make a difference to people in need of help.

The government is considering the role of technology in future medical services and care. How far do patients want to go with digital booking, or even remote consultations? I am keen that this should be based on patient preference rather than a mandatory conversion, as healthcare is a private and individual matter where the patient needs to feel happy with the system. Patients need to trust the doctor and the way he or she works for it stand most chance of being a success.

New primary free school announced for Shinfield West, Wokingham

I have received this letter from the Department for Education:

Dear Sir John Redwood,

Statement of Intent for a new primary free school in Shinfield West, Wokingham

I am writing to inform you that Keys Academy Trust has been given Secretary of State approval to sponsor the new free school, which is proposed to open from September 2019 or September 2020.

Since Floreat Education Academies Trust withdrew from the project in May 2018, Wokingham Borough Council invited proposals from other potential sponsors under section 6A (the free school presumption') of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (referred to as the Act'). Following the local authority's assessment of the proposals received, the Secretary of State has agreed, in principle, that sponsorship of the new free school be awarded to Keys Academy Trust.

With effect from May 2015, all new schools established under s6a of the Act have been classified as free schools. The school is not required to use the term free school' in its name, in line with practice within the department's centrally managed free schools programme.

Letters have also been sent to Wokingham Borough Council and Keys Academy Trust informing them of the decision.

Yours sincerely

Martin Post

Regional Schools Commissioner, North West London and South central

The Commons votes

Yesterday the Commons voted down the Grieve and Cooper amendments to the government's neutral motion. The Grieve amendment would have given Parliamentary time for a series of debates and votes on indicative approaches to Brexit, seeking to pre-empt or direct the role of government to propose, amend or pass legislation and pursue policies of its design. The Cooper amendment would have given Parliamentary time to enact a delay in Brexit, amending the EU Withdrawal Act, against the government's wishes. These amendments were rejected by 20 and 23 votes respectively, more than the government's majority.

The Commons also passed the Spelman amendment by 8 votes. This amendment to the motion expresses the opinion that we should not leave without an agreement, but it does not overturn the legislation already passed for us to leave on 29 March. The government opposed it, in part because any suggestion we will not leave without a deal undermines the UK bargaining position.

The Brady amendment also passed requiring the government to go back to Brussels to seek to remove the Irish backstop from the draft Withdrawal Agreement. The government to win over more Conservatives to this measure promised that they will seek a rewrite of the legal text of the agreement on the backstop, when they had previously indicated they would just be seeking a protocol which would have been too weak. The PM also promised she will strengthen the official negotiating team and will take seriously the Malthouse compromise about the future negotiations and possible

settlement. As someone who objects to more than just the backstop in the draft Agreement I was unable to support a motion which said I would support the Withdrawal Agreement after changes to the backstop. I do support the part of the Malthouse approach which seeks a managed no deal Brexit with talks about a comprehensive free trade agreement and use of the Article 24 of the GATT whilst in talks about such a proposal. I do not agree with more delay or payments to the EU after March. It is difficult to see what we might be able to agree after March that we have been unable to agree over the previous 33 months. If the EU agreed this removes the need for any tariffs or new barriers to UK/EU trade.

New migration policy causes stress for Labour

The New Immigration Bill before the Commons yesterday carries out one of the promises of the government over Brexit. It takes powers to repeal freedom of movement from the EU into the UK, establishing a migration system for EU countries which will be the same as the system for the rest of the world. This could come into effect shortly after March 29 if we leave then, but would be delayed for a couple of years were the UK to enter into a Withdrawal Agreement and so called Transition.

The government has not provided many of the details about how the powers will be used. It has stated that it wants to base its common worldwide migration policy on allowing the recruitment of talent from anywhere around the globe. It is likely talent will be defined by a minimum salary or wage for a job the person is coming to accept, but clearly it could be qualification based as well or additionally. Students will be allowed then as now to come to recognised UK institutions to study an approved course, and faculty members allowed to reflect the international nature of much modern scholarship.

Labour decided they could not oppose this measure. After all they had promised to end freedom of movement, and seemed to understand the views of many of their voters on this issue. Some in the Union movement did feel that allowing too many people into low -aid jobs from abroad undercut British workers and tended to help keep pay down. Late in the day Labour under pressure on social media and from some of its own backbench MPs decided to switch course and ask them to vote against it. Apparently Labour changed its mind and felt that the policy would be too restrictive on migration after all.

What criteria would you want the government to use when deciding who can gain entry to work here? This legislation takes back control, but leaves many questions unanswered about how exactly we should use the new powers we gain once we have left the EU.

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