

Thames Valley Police grant

On Thursday the government announced an increase in grants to police forces. Thames Valley will receive an additional £8.8m in general and pensions grants. The Commissioner can also levy up to an additional £24 million to meet budget needs.

A reply to constituents concerned about Brexit and wanting a second referendum

Thank you for your email concerning Brexit options. Trying to represent any constituency when opinions are so divided on this important matter is not easy. Clearly an MP has to express one view and cast one vote in any matter to be settled, whilst his constituents have a range of views. In order to come to a judgement I take the following things into account

1. The promises I made in my own Manifesto to my voters at the last General Election, and the promises made by my party in that Election unless I expressly disagreed with them at the time
2. The recommended course of action laid down by the Conservative whip. People elected me to support a Conservative government, so I normally vote with that government. They also voted me in to exercise some independent judgement, which I am willing to do when I think that government is wrong.
3. The balance of opinion within my constituency, judged from my email box, website contributions and my conversations with constituents. I often reinforce this by announcing a consultation and encourage people to write in. I also look at national opinion polling which often reflects changes of moods in Wokingham.
4. My judgement of the issue based on experience and knowledge, with a mind to what will be the best outcome for constituents

I do not take into account my own interests, which are irrelevant when exercising the power of voice and vote held as MP, which is held on behalf of the community I represent.

There are now various options being proposed as to how to proceed with the EU. The immediate question relates to Mrs May's draft Withdrawal Agreement with the EU. I have consulted very widely on this and also have made my own judgement about the wider interest of Wokingham and the nation. It is clear that this Agreement does not suit Leave voters, who do not think it represents what they voted for, nor does it suit a substantial number of

Remain voters who rightly worry about leaving us without vote and voice in the EU whilst being partially in it. I therefore oppose this Agreement. Until the government either rejects this Agreement or puts it to a vote in the Commons, it will not be possible for the government to explore other options on how to proceed or for Parliament to vote on such options backed up by government legislation to enact them.

I therefore intend to continue to argue that we need to vote down the Withdrawal Agreement soon, to enable us to think of other ways forward. The Conservative party and the Prime Minister do not favour a second referendum, and we did not include any such proposal in our Manifesto. In order to understand the case for one better I would appreciate it if you could tell me what the question should be in any such vote. It does not seem to me to be much point in putting Mrs May's Withdrawal Agreement to a public vote when it looks as if it is opposed by a large majority of MPs. If we had a referendum on Mrs May's Agreement or staying in Leave voters would feel their option was excluded, and if Mrs May's Agreement won there would still be difficulties in getting it through the Commons unless Labour then agreed to back it. If we had a re run of Leave or Remain the vote would not necessarily resolve the Parliamentary logjam created by the last referendum on that topic and would lead to demands for a third referendum were Leave to lose.

There are no easy answers when Parliament remains so divided on this issue.

[The curious case of the car industry](#)

Day after day I hear scare stories on the media that the UK car industry may suffer if some undefined friction were created at our ports impeding the inflow of components after we have left the EU. I have proposed no tariffs on any parts coming in, so there would be less friction on non EU parts than today, and the government may well adopt such a proposal. They have certainly not ruled it out. No-one has yet explained why we will mess up our ports in ways which delay deliveries to car plants. Just in Time systems anyway flex according to how far the components come and the journey conditions they experience in the regular course of business.

What I do not hear is analysis and concern about the very real damage being done to our car industry whilst we remain full members of the EU. The collapse in car sales since the Spring of 2017 has nothing to do with Brexit and everything to do with the high Vehicle Excise Duties, the tax and other regulatory attacks on diesel cars, and the tough guidance to banks to cut down the car loans imposed by the UK authorities. As a result car sales have fallen by almost one quarter, and car sales by Jaguar Land Rover have been hit much harder given the high proportion of expensive cars and of diesels in their mix.

Why doesn't the media take up these unhelpful policies, and make more of them

than the silly scare stories about why might happen if we just leave the EU?

It would also be good to have more informed comment and discussion of a real economic problem worldwide, rather than the false worries about Brexit. The rest of the world is talking about the general move to slow money and credit growth in the USA, the Eurozone and China as well as in the UK. Car sales are very dependent on credit and get hurt early on when rates rises or when cash is restricted in banking systems. Car sales in China fell heavily last month. US car sales peaked earlier this year and are also in decline. The German car industry got hit badly this autumn. It was largely attributed to changes in EU regulations delaying certification and sales of new vehicles, but it is probably also about the turning of the credit cycle and the decline in underlying demand in the world car market.

I have often said that whilst Brexit is a very important political and democratic event for the UK, it is unlikely to have much impact on the world economy, and will have just a modest positive impact on the UK economy once we leave if the government follows sensible policies. We should try to prevent endless scare stories and the Groundhog day coverage that is the current UK media from stifling debate on the things that do have an economic impact. The media should be expressing some alarm about what monetary tightening is now doing to the world car industry. There is no obvious inflation threat in the advanced world, and clear signs of economic slowdown.

The Post Office counters closure in Wokingham

I have talked to the Labour party campaigners collecting signatures in town today to object to the closure of the counters in the current building. They tell me they have now seen a letter saying the Consultation will only be about the facilities in Smiths, and not about the principle of the closure and switch , which was not made clear to me when I contacted them. I will therefore write to the Post Office setting out public objections to the closure and asking them to think again.

Visit to Wokingham sorting office

I went to thank the Post Office staff for all their hard work delivering the Christmas cards and parcels at the Wokingham Sorting office on Friday morning. They have done a good ,job handling the big volumes so far, and

report plenty of packages as people shop on line for some presents.

I asked the Manager for their views on the possible move of the front counters to a retail store and confirmed I will be making representations about that when they share more details with us. The relationship between the Sorting office and the counters is one of the issues a move would raise. Currently we go to the counters to retrieve mail they could not deliver, and they can produce the parcels quickly from the back sorting office.