

Free parking in Wokingham Borough car parks in Wokingham Town

I am pleased Wokingham Borough Council has agreed to remove car parking charges for shoppers going into Wokingham on the three week-ends before Christmas, beginning on 9th December. They have also announced that their car parks in the town will be free after 3 each day until the end of January.

I have been encouraging them to do something to help Town traders during the period of disruption with all the building works going on. This of course only applies to Council car parks.

Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision

Mental health problems affect a significant number of children and young people, with the most recent data suggesting that one in ten children and young people has some form of clinically diagnosable mental health disorder. This means around 850,000 children and young people may have a diagnosable mental health disorder in the UK today.

Children and young people with mental health problems are more likely to have negative experiences early on that can damage their life chances as they grow towards adulthood. This affects education, relationships, health, future employment and income.

Some of my own constituents have had difficulties in accessing mental health services for their children. In some cases, support from the NHS is only available when problems get very serious, is not consistently available across the country, and young people can sometimes wait too long to receive that support. Some schools and colleges find it difficult to offer enough help.

I strongly support the Government's Green Paper which sets out measures to improve mental health support for children and young people.

The Green Paper focuses on earlier intervention and prevention, especially through schools and colleges.

The proposals include:

- Every school will have a designated, senior person responsible for co-ordinating counselling services and other forms of support.
- Recruiting thousands of professionals to form new mental health support teams, which will dramatically expand the range of treatments that can be offered in or near schools and colleges.

- Piloting a new waiting time standard in some areas for children to be seen within four weeks by a psychiatrist or other mental health professional if they need it.

I encourage parents, teachers, medical professional and anyone with an interest to contribute to the consultation which closes on 2 March 2018.

You can access the consultation at:

<https://engage.dh.gov.uk/youngmentalhealth/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-consultation/>

No agreement to talk

Yesterday reminded us how far the EU wish to push the UK even to get to talks about a future Agreement. The talks ended in disagreement about the Irish border issues.

I continue to support the government's stated view that it must take back control of our money, our borders and our laws, and that no deal is better than a bad deal. There is no news about a future Agreement, as we still have not started talking about one.

Facebook and new technology backs the UK

Yesterday's opening of the new Facebook headquarters was a timely reminder of how the business community sees us. Facebook has chosen to invest in an important new architect designed building close to Oxford Circus and to expand its workforce substantially. It is recruiting engineers, as it likes the UK as a base for designing new technology services. It is setting up an incubator to help mentor and assist some of the UK technology start up businesses. Facebook appreciates the UK as a source of talented employees, a good base for business, and a place that offers world class accommodation and facilities.

Google too has grown quickly in London and is taking substantial space. It is working on a 1 million square foot headquarters at Kings Cross. Amazon meanwhile is attracting more and more business from UK shoppers and is taking on a range of properties around the country to allow it to deliver products in a timely and efficient way.

The new economy majors see the UK as a fast growing opportunity, with many

people wanting to expand their use of digital media for everything from shopping to their social life, from news and entertainment to banking. These latest investments are important for future UK growth and development.

Two views of Brexit

Brexit continues to dominate the media because there remain two different views of how to implement it.

There are those in the civil service who understand the wish of the majority to leave. They realise we voted to take back control of our money, our borders, our law making and our international relations, especially on trade. They are working diligently on what can come as soon as we leave. They are planning a new fishing policy, a new agricultural policy, new trade deals with non EU states, and much else. I am pleased they are and look forward to the results of their detailed labours for Ministers.

There are others who seem to think after Brexit we need to mirror all the arrangements and controls we had when in the EU. They have been busily mapping every nook and cranny of EU involvement and interference in our government and daily lives. They present each intervention or control as a problem, or as something we have to negotiate to continue it or to replicate it. They also seem to think the UK is in a weak position because in their view it needs to keep so much, so they recommend making many concessions to the EU negotiating position in order to cling on to something similar to what we have.

There is an irony here. The Remain advocates who encourage this type of thinking are often the same people who told us before the referendum that the EU did not have much power over us, that we remained a sovereign state even within the EU, and that Eurosceptics exaggerated when we claimed the EU now does control a lot of our lives. The vote has made a difference to their view on all this.

The truth is the EU does currently control a lot of matters which a self governing country controls for itself. We have agreed between remain and Leave advocates following the result that we should aim to take back control of our law making on departure, but to ensure continuity we will replicate in UK law all the features of EU law. Parliament will then at its leisure review, amend or repeal what we do not need or can improve.

This model should not be diluted by rushing to agree permanent extensions of EU law, or by seeking to newly bind us into decisions of the ECJ or into regulatory bodies we do not control. We can only take back control of our laws, our money and our borders if we leave with no further commitments to EU jurisdiction. We also need to remind the EU there is no legal requirement to pay a so called divorce bill, and I still want us to spend our

money on our own priorities from the day we leave the EU. The government still states its policy as taking back control of our laws, our borders and our money. That is all a good idea. Let's set the deadline as 29 March 2019 and work to it. There is still enough time to ensure all works well under the WTO option if the EU continues to refuse a sensible discussion of a Free Trade deal.