

Why I did not seek election in 2024

I decided not to run both by weighing up what I could hope to achieve as an MP in this new Parliament for Wokingham and for the wider nation. I assumed Conservatives generally would suffer a heavy defeat, though when I made the decision not to run I thought I had a decent chance of holding my seat on a very much reduced majority. The calculated majority for the new seat was much better than the old one. The Conservative Manifesto and election campaign were worse than I imagined. This blog considers my local thoughts.

I recognised that my ability to get better outcomes for Wokingham would be increasingly impaired by the dreadful conduct of a Lib Dem led Council. They refused my offer to work with them, denying me any briefings on their financial position, cash needs or cases to Ministers.

I had to make my own arguments to government based on public information to get extra money for social care, which was most successful. I supported the need for more Special Education provision leading to two new schools. I belonged to Conservative MP groups to get rid of top down housing targets to leave Wokingham and other Councils free to decide on local plans, only to see the Lib Dems unwilling to make timely use of the new freedom. We will now lose this under Labour. I worked with other MPs to secure a substantial uplift in road maintenance budgets and new targeted money to repair potholes.

The Lib Dems not only failed to collaborate but tried to get their own meetings with the very Ministers I was regularly talking to. It seemed they did this in order to put out a press release blaming the government for whatever had gone wrong.

The Lib Dems were nasty, putting out that I did not do the job properly or was part time. I was the only MP who wrote a daily report of my thoughts and deeds seven days a week 52 weeks a year. I answered constituent emails and queries on Saturdays and Sundays when my staff were not in the office and on working days talked to them about how I wanted to respond to new campaigns or cases where they were handling matters for constituents.

I was an assiduous attender at Westminster with a good voting record. When I abstained in protest at a government action I was there in person to tell Ministers why I did not support.

I could not see a way to get the Lib Dems to behave responsibly and saw them allowing Wokingham to become litter strewn, with overgrown and weed filled public spaces, blocked road drains and missing or overflowing litter bins. They have splattered the place with red road closed signs, yellow diversion signs, temporary lights and plenty of cones. Their passion to waste money on impeding use of vans and cars is vexatious. Their failure to let out empty office space and to control staff costs ladders us with high taxes, and their aggressive car park charges reduce business in our shopping and leisure areas. All the Lib Dems wanted to do was to blame Conservatives to cover up for their bad management. The answer to every problem they faced was to send

out more leaflets full of self serving spin.

I was worried that with a Labour government the lack of cooperation from the Council which was an irritant in getting a decent deal from a Conservative government could become a major obstacle. I thought a new Conservative candidate might have a better way to shame or persuade the Council to cooperate for the greater good. A Lib Dem MP is unlikely to have any influence with Labour. I imagine he will not even try to get them to change policy on top down housing targets, adding to the extra development in Wokingham he says he opposes.