

## Wokingham's MP splashes the taxpayer cash so others do the work

The Treasury have drawn attention to the £20 bn black hole in national finances thanks to the collapse of public sector productivity this decade. You would have thought every new MP would want to show how they can help do more with less to start the fight back for higher productivity and better value for money. Not so in Wokingham.

The new Lib Dem MP has advertised under a Lib Dem logo five well paid posts to do his job for him. I assume these are all taxpayer paid Parliamentary staff, yet they go out under the Lib Dem logo. One of the posts is for a "Campaigns Organiser and Communications Officer " to " work for Wokingham Liberal Democrats organising campaigns and volunteers for the MP and local elections and for the MP's Parliamentary office on communications on constituency non party political matters." Surely such a post should be a Lib Dem volunteer or party funded staffer if the MP can't be bothered to do it himself?

He wants a speechwriter and drafter of Parliamentary amendments, questions and interventions. He needs a Chief of Staff to sign off constituents letters he cannot be bothered with, and to run the enlarged office. He also wants a Senior Caseworker and a Caseworker, more normal assistance. He is offering a maximum combined salary of £214,401 with a salary of £36,744 up to £ 52 ,793 for each job depending on the post gradings. There will be other staff costs on top of the salaries. It sounds as if this will all be paid by the taxpayers.

As the MP he replaces, in the last published year 2022-23 my spend on office staff was £101 ,873. I employed two excellent people. I did all my own research, wrote all my own speeches and my daily blog to communicate, drafted any bill amendments and questions, kept myself up to date with Parliament's agenda and with my constituents. I did any local campaigning myself alongside Councillors and volunteers. My two staff did a great job replying to constituents following discussion with me about the incoming queries . They ran the Parliamentary diary and worked with local institutions and people over meeting arrangements and events. They followed up and resolved difficult cases with local and national government officials. I dealt with the Ministers and Councillors where necessary to try to get a good outcome.

I could not have found full time work for 5 staff and have no idea what I would have done with my time if someone was doing my research, identifying and running campaigns, communicating with press and public as well as doing all the casework and signing my letters for me. Surely we should expect more from an MP on a good salary. The productivity of the Wokingham MP office has just halved at a time when everyone in the public sector should be striving to improve it.