

Caring for Constituency Concerns Day and Night

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald Article

18th November 2021

During the past week I declined invitations to take part in twenty national broadcasts. On the parliamentary standards issues, I judged that the floor of the Commons was the right place to speak firmly. The few I accepted included discussion on BBC Sussex about water companies' sewer discharges.

Rather than joining the photo political protest outside Southern Water, I prefer to engage positively, recognising previous management knowingly did things that were wrong. Hold their successors to their own expectations as well as ours.

Water quality is improving. We should expect it to continue getting better with investment in systems that are more efficient and effective. Sixty years ago, untreated sewage entered our swimming waters in a constant stream. That was ghastly. Quality of our water matters greatly to our seaside health and economy that relies on high-quality beaches and bathing waters.

Standards, second jobs for MPs and threats to the safety for MPs were amongst the questions raised by students at Worthing College following Parliament Week. People at more risk from attacks include mental health workers, lone shop keepers, taxi drivers, public transport staff, the police and the military, together with medical staff in hospital and paramedics facing patients affected by drugs or alcohol.

Councillor Alison Cooper kindly joined me at the constituency advice session in Rustington where we were assisted by PCSO Owen Godfrey and the parliamentary team who helped to alleviate any security concerns.

It was a delight to be with James England who is participating in the Diana Award. He is now at Chichester College after studying at Oscar Romero school, previously Chatsmore Catholic High school. During recent years, my Westminster staff have continuously included graduates from local schools and colleges. Additionally, we now host Ibrahim Bahadur as a promising university intern during his graduate studies at Kings College London and look forward to hosting a student from the University of Sussex in the new year.

Local communities came together in towns, in villages and in hamlets across Worthing and Arun in remembrance over the past week. It was a privilege to join people of all faiths, and none, to remember those we have lost.

Pre-Covid, I twice mentored groups of three faiths students, introducing them to the local Islamic Society at Worthing's mosque, seeing the activity of the Salvation Army and meeting local Jews.

The testimony on Tuesday of Azeem Rafiq was harrowing, as was the questioning of ministers about academic freedom linked to the hounding of sane sensible feminists by bullies, including one who runs an anti-bullying charity. I stand clearly and with quiet determination with those who say that biological sex matters, without disregarding the situation and problems faced by the trans community.

On racism and sport, few missed the irony that the MPs panel was all white. Activists need to include people of every background. Councillors and MPs are visibly diverse and inclusive. When alternative political parties back candidates who are black or Asian, we will not suggest they were chosen for reasons of tokenism. I ask that our opponents do not either.

In terms of language, I suggest that over recent years, more people realise that words between friends look bad in print when reproduced years later. What may be said in anger is worse when served up cold in public. Social media can be a treasure trove. When electing Dame Margaret Hodge to chair the all-party group for British Jews, we celebrated her return to the Labour whip. The Labour Party's return to taking anti-Semitism seriously is welcome.

Super-fast broadband is spreading thanks to the City Fibre team led by Adrian Smith, a local boy made good. He explains there are vast advantages to seamless, future-proof high-speed connections. Libraries, emergency services, housing offices and others have been connected. I recommend private estates get involved. There are some concerns about wires between poles, though this reduces the need to rip up too many pavements. MPs and organisations should remember to consider the generation who can't access the internet to ensure information and services are available to all.

Twenty-four-hour provision of internet aids communication and access, including constituents watching parliamentary debates. MPs can make that a better experience if we all do more good.