

# Important Purposes of Politics

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

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The week started when I chaired a major meeting on gas safety and the dangers of carbon monoxide. It was a occasion to bring interest groups together with the common purpose of saving 100 lives a year. Then I was briefed on whether the government is going the wrong way in closing over half the BTECH courses, contradicting an assurance given by the previous education secretary.

On Tuesday the prime minister invited environmental network colleagues and me to a breakfast discussion. I spoke about the challenge of decarbonising heating in leasehold properties and the legal challenges in finding the fair effective way to make decisions on costs and timings.

At my constituents advice session on Friday in the Worthing library, a resident discussed the helpful Spanish health card. It simplified and reduced errors over prescriptions and helped clinicians and patients alike. I went on to the Boots community pharmacy to meet their heroes who carried us through the first years of Covid.

Thank pharmacists and their colleagues for what they do every day. Remember too the research facilities and the factories where vaccines, antibiotics and medicines are developed, tested and manufactured, for the benefit of all.

The police also are active throughout the nights and days, ever vigilant, always responding. Recent high profile cases may have made the vast majority feel that the public wrongly tar all alike. My experience contradicts that. Not everything is perfect and problems in the Metropolis are not illustrative of county forces.

I am grateful for the useful briefing I received on Friday in discussion with leading representatives of the Sussex Police Federation. Our police are capable of learning from mistakes, whether accidental or deliberate. That is why I spoke on local television days ago about the unresolved murderous attack on Jay Abatan.

Worthing College is impressive. The academic and support staff combine with students to make it happy, purposeful and effective. It is a place to do well, to do brilliantly.

Following the recent visit of College members to Westminster, I went a few days ago to talk with others studying law and criminology about the processes of parliament in its legislative activities, in addition to considering the purposes of politics – or political service as I describe it.

The ancient Greeks called it creating the good society. R A Butler was one of the senior politicians who might have expected to become prime minister. He created the modern education system, later he was a successful chancellor and a reforming home secretary. He failed to become party leader and prime minister in 1957 and 1963. His memoir in 1971 was 'The Art of the Possible'.

Political activity should be more, about making possible the things that are right: how can we reduce avoidable distress, disadvantage and handicap, and then to increase well-being, a mixture of wealth and welfare. Those are the points I shall make when volunteering to be reselected for the proposed Worthing West constituency, assuming the revised boundaries.

The students and I considered which would have been the right year to confront Adolf Hitler's Nazis?

As for sex, I spoke this week in parliament about the need for all in the Church of England to accept women priests fully, and to the love between people committing to each other exclusively. Parliament can help undo the institutionalised discrimination against women that persists in the church.

Later in the week I am involved in Holocaust memorial events before the debate on Friday. I hope our generation's efforts can reduce the repetition of genocides that did not cease in 1945. The purposes of politics demand our commitment at all levels, including in parliament where a vocal minority still think it acceptable to howl at women saying things that may be challenging.