

# Join In To Stir and To Be Stirred

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

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If anyone wants a calm life in political service, think again. It is physically demanding; it can be emotionally draining.

If you are the rare person responding to a request to meet a special interest group, expect to come away with extra responsibilities to investigate unfairness or to promote the worthwhile activities they say, often rightly, will contribute to better lives for them or for those for whom they care.

Opening the post, I realise that the wealth generating sectors of the economy seldom write. That is why I welcomed the business day at Wilton Park, Wiston where MP colleagues Andrew Griffith and Tim Loughton welcomed Trade Secretary Liz Truss. The exporters' fair and conference was on one of the best days in one of the most attractive places in West Sussex.

I welcome visits to the manufacturers, to the food and drink providers and the business services firms that generate the jobs, collect the taxes and, as valuably, develop the training that raises our levels of skills and productivity. Our competitive economy grows that way.

The Worthing West caring team and I are not planning experts and we cannot give legal guidance, beyond the simple truth that, usually, if a civil case has to go to court to be resolved, either one side or both is making a mistake. In criminal hearings, either the charge is fair - the crime should not have been committed - or the accused should not be in court.

If a constituent has been unfairly prosecuted or persecuted, and if we know, we can try to advise and to help. I honour the work of trade union lawyers who stand up for members who can fall foul of bullying colleagues and vindictive managers. My experience is that most who come for understanding and who ask for our help are justified. Something had gone wrong or was still going on.

When MP candidate selection was required, others and I were treated fairly by the selectors. Three were paraded before members massed at Our Lady of Sion school. When I came first, I thanked the agent, Mary Lermite, later a distinguished councillor, for the process she had organised with Hugh Braden and East Preston's Ray Bowdery.

I asked why I was chosen. It was suggested I was unusually committed to justice, including for unpopular people or minority causes. One is my respect for Channel 4. Before this is published, I will have spoken against its possible privatisation. The arguments have not changed in 25 years.

Turning to groups with special experiences, it helps to be able to act as a responsible loudspeaker for those whose voices seldom reach the microphone. My latest positive intervention came on Monday. Community nurses in their duties attend the homes of many people. They can volunteer to take the C-19 test daily.

It appeared the NHS system changed. I doubted ministers knew. In the Chamber I asked the Vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi to reinstate the better system of collecting multi-month packs of test kits at work rather than each person applying for a set of seven to be posted weekly, with unnecessary extra packaging and plastic.

I am stirred by exceptional individuals. One is Terry Woodjetts, North West Durrington Residents Association. If the developers and the managers First Port had the insight and the sense to employ a person with his commitment and dedication, they could complete their obligations faster, first time and probably at lower overall cost. Everyone's a winner, as I would say when running a roll-up stall at Battersea Fun Fair.