

Constituency and Parliamentary Report – June 2006

Representing Amblecote, Cradley, Lye, Norton, Oldswinford, Pedmore, Quarry Bank, Wollaston, Wollescote and Stourbridge Town

Lynda on shift with West Midlands' Ambulance Service



Lynda with Johnathan Winnall (left) and Keith Davies from West Midlands Ambulance Service

I was delighted to be able to meet with both the West Midlands' Ambulance and Fire Services this month. I did a full 8 hours night shift with Ambulance staff and it was certainly an eye-opener! As an MP, I think it is vital that I understand the work being done by the front line staff of such important services. That shift gave me a real insight into the problems and

experiences of public service workers. Now I can better represent them and my constituents .

MP supports Tanhouse Residents' Association

I recently met up with members of the Tanhouse Residents' Association, along with Councillor Tim Crumpton, to discuss some of the problems they have been experiencing in terms of lack of adequate play space for young children and facilities in general for children and young adults.

I was dismayed to hear reports of children who have no option but to play in areas strewn with dumped rubbish, broken glass and other dangerous items and to see for myself the thigh high grass and generally unkempt nature of the once safe and accessible buildings and grounds.

I have written to the Director of Housing asking for an immediate clear up and for her to meet me at the estate for a tour of the worst sites so that she can see the problems at first hand.

The residents' group is enthusiastic and has great plans for the estate; I am pleased to be able to support them on these matters.

Lynda opens Community Gardens at St. Thomas's

It was a great honour to be asked to open the new community garden at St. Thomas's Church in Market Street during June. The garden is the result of a great effort from Reverend Curtis and the church congregation, which has taken several years and more than £40,000 to plan and create, £25,000 coming from the Government's Liveability Fund. It is a small sanctuary in the middle of Stourbridge for all visitors and constituents to enjoy.

As part of the official opening of the garden, I was also able to help launch a new fundraising effort for the church. The Grade I listed building is badly in need of £750,000 of funding to complete urgent repairs to its structure. If you want to help in the church's efforts please call Rev. Ron Curtis on 01384 394185.

Celebrating Osteoporosis Society's 20th Birthday



Lynda Waltho MP, Ken Strike, and Sylvia Heal MP

I recently joined with Sylvia Heal MP to celebrate the 20th Birthday of the National Osteoporosis Society at the House of Commons. We were both delighted to meet up with Ken Strike, Chairman of the Dudley branch. I have lobbied on their behalf for DEXA scanners to be included in Dudley South PCTs budget for 2006/7. These are crucial for measuring bone density and diagnosing osteoporosis.

For further information on improving bone health, log on to www.nos.org.uk

Hot Issues in the Westminster Postbag

The ‘hottest’ issue by far this month has been pensions, of course stimulated by the long-awaited Government White Paper on Pensions and response to the Turner Report.

- At the heart of the of the new settlement will be a new low cost savings scheme into which all workers will be auto enrolled and employers will make matching contributions.

- Importantly, and something I have long supported, there will be a higher, fairer state pension, re-linked to earnings.

- The new settlement will be sustained by gradually raising the state retirement age from 65 to 66 in 2024 then a further year per decade until it reaches 68 by 2050.

- Another one of my key campaign issues, unfairness to women in retirement, will be addressed by modernising the contributory principle so it rewards social contribution equally with cash contributions by cutting to 30 the number of qualifying years you need to receive a full state pension and introduce weekly credits for mothers and carers that will count towards their pension entitlements in the same way as national insurance contributions.

The key outcomes should be:

- Up to 10 million people will be saving into a personal account, by retirement their fund should be worth around 25% more.

- In 2010, 70% of women reaching retirement age will be entitled to a full basic state pension compared to 30% at the moment.

- By 2050, the basic state pension will be worth twice as much as if it had been linked to prices.

- The projected long term spread means testing will be reversed with only around a third of pensioners needing to rely on Pension Credit by 2050.

I will keep you informed of the progress of this item through its legislative stages but if you require more detailed or specific information, please contact my Westminster Office.

Votes in Parliament

I have voted in favour of the following bills this month:

- NHS Redress Bill
- Compensation Bill
- Fraud Bill
- Work and Families Bill
- Electoral Administration Bill
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill
- Charities Bill
- National Lottery Bill
- Childcare Bill
- Company Law Reform Bill

Please contact my Westminster office if you would like further details on any of the above.

In addition I have had meetings with the Prime Minister; Schools’ Minister Jim Knight MP; Housing Minister Yvette Cooper MP; Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker MP and Health Minister Patricia Hewitt MP on matters pertaining to the Stourbridge constituency.

Advice Surgery Dates for June

Friday 14th July, 4.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.

Norton Community Centre, Kempton way, Norton, Stourbridge

Saturday 29th July, 10.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.

The Sunshine Club, Crowle Drive (off New Farm Road), Stourbridge



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