



# News from **Westminster** Jun/Jul 2019

No. 119



## Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



*This month I met with my constituent Michael Gallagher, who had travelled down to Parliament as part of the "The Time is Now" environmental mass lobby of Parliament.*

### **Childhood Obesity Plan**

It's been one year since the Government published its second Childhood Obesity Plan, yet almost no progress has been made so far. The Government promised to consult on six policies when the plan was launched, but they have not even undertaken all of the consultations let alone implement any new policies yet.

These consultations include; a ban on energy drink sales to under-16s, clearer calorie labelling and a crackdown on junk food advertising. A generation of Children are being badly let down by a Government that is either unwilling or unable to bring measures into effect that so many desperately need.

It is clearer than ever that Brexit has entirely consumed the Government, with little being done to tackle important issues in our society such as this.

It therefore should come as no surprise that childhood obesity is still at a record high. There is no silver bullet to childhood obesity, but the Government isn't taking any serious action to tackle the crisis this country faces.

### **Brexit / Tory Leadership update**

I'm sure many people will be following the Tory leadership contest in horror. Despite being heralded as the 'more sensible' option, Jeremy Hunt has hardened his rhetoric on a "No-Deal" Brexit in recent days. On the Andrew Marr show, he was asked if he was prepared to look someone (who had a business at risk of closing due to a "No-Deal" Brexit) in the eye and say, "You've got to lose your job because I am going for No-Deal". Shockingly, he said he would, although he would do so "with a heavy heart".

There is a horrible irony in the notion that it is the Conservative Party, who so often boast of their economic credentials, that now has two candidates to be leader who would risk our economic security merely to placate an ideological pursuit. Crashing out of the European Union (EU) without a deal would be disastrous for manufacturing in our region, and I will continue to support credible options to break the Brexit deadlock and prevent No-Deal.

### **TV Licence Campaign**

The free TV licence for over-75s was something the Labour Government introduced in 2000 as a package of social welfare policies for the elderly. But it was the Conservative Government who, in 2015, callously outsourced this treasured benefit to the BBC, and has now broken their 2017 manifesto commitment to protecting "all pensioner benefits including... TV licences for the duration of this Parliament."

The changes to the free TV licence for over-75s will see only those receiving Pension Credit now being able to access a free TV licence. Many constituents have contacted me about this issue, and I share their concerns about the impact this could have on those affected by these changes, both financially and socially. I contributed to the BBC's consultation on the free TV licence back in February, spoke in a recent debate on the proposed changes and hosted the National Pensioners Convention's parliamentary lobby in March protesting the changes and will continue to campaign against this deeply unfair change.

### In Parliament

#### Leaseholds Parliamentary Question and Letter



Following the constituency consultation on leaseholds, I took the opportunity to raise them at HCLG questions and asked the Minister whether he would put a moratorium on new leaseholds whilst the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) carries out its investigations into leaseholds. I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that, following pressure from MPs and campaigners, that new build houses will not be sold as leasehold. However, I call on the Government to address the injustices current leaseholders face. I also wrote to Heather Wheeler MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Housing, Communities and Local Government) on this issue. Read my letter here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5nhba9e>

### In and around the constituency

#### Electric Vehicle Charging Station launch, Sunderland



I was delighted to join Julie Elliott MP, Cllr Graeme Miller and many others at the opening of the new Electric Vehicle (EV) charging station in Sunderland. It is the UK's first fast charging station for electric vehicles, with four 50 kW fast chargers and two 175 kW fast chargers that are enabled for 350 kW charging, the fastest charging rate in the UK. At the launch event, Michiel Langezaal the CEO of *Fastned* the Dutch company who installed the station spoke about Sunderland's important role in the development of EVs through Nissan and its supply chain.

Charging at the site will be free initially, which is a great way to encourage people to use the facility.

#### Visit to Fatfield Academy, Washington

It was a pleasure to visit Fatfield Academy in Washington. Whilst there I presented two books from the Reading Agency as part of the Summer Reading Challenge, was interviewed by Darcey & Warren for the school magazine, viewed the schools fantastic arts facilities, and spoke to pupils in every age group. I am grateful to Headteacher Tracey Pizl, for showing me around the school. I had a great morning and it was lovely to speak to some of the previous winners of my local Christmas Card Competition. I am looking forward to visiting again soon.

#### PM's Award presentation for 4Louis Charity



I was honoured to present Kirsty McGurrell, with an award from the Prime Minister who has recognised her for her exceptional service founding 4Louis, a charity originally based in Washington and now in Pallion, providing support to families through miscarriage, stillbirth and child loss, and working to improve the care that bereaved parents receive from healthcare and other professionals. After her first child Louis sadly died twelve days before his due date in 2009, Kirsty set up 4Louis to help other bereaved parents. The charity produces memory boxes to help grieving parents build valuable memories of their child and come to terms with their loss.

#### Springwell Village 1940s weekend, 2019



I was delighted to attend the Springwell Village 1940s weekend and hear my constituent RAF Veteran Tom Davidson's talk at the Bowes Museum, on flying Halifax Bombers during World War Two. It was a lovely day. Well done to all involved.

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