



# News from the constituency

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## Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



the nation. We must remember that, like so many women who are abused in the street, she was just walking home. The police intervention at the vigil for Sarah led to shocking scenes. The Home Office now wants to make those scenes a common feature of life in Britain in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSC), which was brought before Parliament recently. The Bill criminalises protest which causes ‘serious annoyance,’ which as thresholds go is an incredibly low one. While I support parts of the Bill, such as ‘position of trust’ provisions off the back of a campaign from my Labour colleague, Sarah Champion MP, Labour could not support a Bill which sought to erode our hard-won right to peaceful protest.

Yet because the Conservatives have made the Bill broad to cover lots of different things, Labour’s opposition to the worse parts of the Bill can be painted as opposition to better parts of the Bill; but this isn’t the case. Elsewhere in the bundle of legislation, the PCSC introduces ten-year maximum sentences for defacing statues, while certain crimes which have more impact on women than men remain on lower sentencing guidelines. The Government’s priority is the protection of inanimate statues rather than their real, female counterparts. As the Bill continues to be considered in Parliament, I will be pressing the Government to drop its poorly thought-out proposals and instead work across the political divide to legislate to tackle violence against women.

### Guest Speakers to the CLP

In line with the budget theme during March, I was delighted to virtually welcome the current Shadow Chancellor, Anneliese Dodds MP, and the former Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell MP, in successive weeks. Both sessions were extremely positive and they faced some tough questions on Labour’s economic vision, both guests were extremely knowledgeable and thorough in their answers. There has to be a special nod for Anneliese though, who despite being stuck on a train and then a train platform without any notes, and it being her birthday, was able to speak to us and take questions for almost an hour. She got home safely I’m pleased to report.

### Police Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

The tragic death of Sarah Everard sent shockwaves across

### Budget speech

Following the Chancellor’s Budget last month, I spoke in a debate in which I raised transport infrastructure spending, which is two and a half times more per person in London than in the whole of the North. I asked the Chancellor to commit to his ‘levelling up’ agenda by funding rail infrastructure in our region and reopening the Leamside Line in full. I also raised the fact that many of my constituents with businesses without fixed premises have been excluded from access to Government financial support, saying that the Government should not be putting Local Authorities on the line and making them the fall guys for a conscious decision the National Government made. Ultimately, the Chancellor’s Budget has failed to rebuild the foundations of our economy and has merely papered over the cracks.

### Home Office question



During Home Office questions last month, I raised the alarming increase in COVID-related scams, including a particularly sinister plot of offering cash for a fake vaccine on the doorstep. I asked the Minister for Policing, Kit Malthouse, what the Government were doing to prevent such horrific abuse of the vulnerable. The Minister agreed that this was a profoundly serious matter and urged people who come across this kind of instance to report it, please, to Action Fraud. You can do so here > <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk>

### Armed Forces Bill Select Committee



Over the last month I have been working on the Armed Forces Bill Select Committee, as part of my role as the Shadow Minister for Veterans. This Committee is unique in that, for the first time, fully-virtual scrutiny of a Bill has been allowed. Labour have brought forward amendments on expanding the scope of the Bill, to bring all aspects of the Armed Forces Covenant, not just health, housing and education, into law; making the national Government responsible for the Covenant, as well as Local Authorities; and for the Government to record and publish the number of veterans sleeping rough across the country and the number of veterans who have died by suicide. Whilst there have been some productive debates, unfortunately the Conservative

Government voted against these amendments. The Bill will now continue throughout its remaining stages in Parliament where Labour will continue to hold the Government to account for their commitment to serving personnel, veterans and their families.

### Unison Labour Link meeting



I was happy to once again participate in Unison's Regional Labour Link Forum meeting which was this year held via Zoom. It featured an excellent discussion with Unison activists and Labour colleagues, including our Councillors and Police and Crime Commissioner candidates about the work of Unison and the upcoming elections on 6th May.

### Local elections, 2021

This year, local elections will take place on the 6th May. While campaigning will be very different this time around, it is crucial that we use the tools at our disposal to ensure Labour candidates are returned to the wards. If you have not done so already, please sign up for an early vote before the deadline of 20th April and encourage others to do the same. As we saw in the US elections of last year, early voting increases turnout among the voters we need, so it is especially useful to have supporters signed up for it. Members are also encouraged to participate in campaigning either on Dialogue, leafletting or door knocking (where it is safe to do so).

**Further details on all of these activities are available from the candidate in your ward, or our CLP Secretary.**

To find out more information on your local Labour candidates for Washington and Sunderland West – to contact them and help out in your own local area – click on this link here below:

<https://www.waswlabour.org/local-election-candidates-2021>

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