



Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



This year's winning group of entrants and judges, at my annual Christmas card competition, which takes place in the Washington Arts Centre, Biddick Lane.

Annual Christmas card competition

My favourite film is Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, an old Christmas classic. It shows audiences how our brand of politics is the right one (and it only became famous once it was put into the public domain!) In that spirit, we run an annual children's Christmas art competition in the Washington Art Centre. The winning entry finds its way onto my MP Christmas card and, from there, into the homes of hundreds. It's always a highlight.

This year we had a host of brilliant entries, making for some tough decisions. I am ever grateful to the judges: Mayor Cllr Harry Trueman; Mayoress Cllr Dorothy Trueman; Deputy Mayor Cllr Alison Smith; Deputy Mayor's Consort David Smith; and Susan Coles. The overall winner was Ruby Cowan from Biddick Primary, who stood out amid dozens of entries, and will feature on the front of my card.

Highly commended and runner-up art from Jiya Peller from Springwell Village and Kole Baxter from Oxclose Community Nursery feature on the inside of the Christmas card, too.

As chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Crafts and Design in Education, I have seen first-hand the benefits of creativity in schools. The lovely work these children produced is testament to the ongoing value of the arts.

Sunderland Manifesto Conference

In November the three Sunderland CLPs came together with our Council Labour Group to create our new manifesto that will take the party into the 2022 elections and beyond to 2026. We had introductions from Graeme Miller and myself and watched a video sent from Keir Starmer, followed by workshops to discuss policy. The event took place in the brand new City Hall and provided a distinct opportunity to consult on ideas to make sure that the next manifesto works equally as well for everyone across Washington, the Coalfields and centre of Sunderland, with bold and daring visions to take the city into the future.

This manifesto will fire the flames of that campaign and let us go onto the doorsteps for local elections in May with a determination and a real plan which this Labour council will deliver. I can't wait to see the finished product at the manifesto launch in early 2022, and I'd like to thank all Councillors, members, and organisers who made the event such a success.



Some highlights (No. 145 - Nov/Dec 2021)

Street Surgery in Chipchase, Oxclose



At the start of November, I held a roving street surgery in Washington South in Oxclose. Reception was good with residents and passers-by keen to stop and discuss their concerns with me and the team on the doors. Most notably, general concerns over buses, houses, and local greenery were raised. I look forward to chasing up these issues and ensuring that, in the build-up to the local elections next May, every constituent feels they can come to the Councillors and I to voice their concerns. I am talking with local councillors to arrange future Street Surgeries and public meetings across 2022 in other wards. Details will be circulated once confirmed. I would like to thank all the Councillors and volunteers who made the time available to help and I look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Remembrance Sunday



This past month we all stood silent to remember our brave service men and women who gave their lives for their families and country. We must also remember those who continue to struggle with physical and mental health complications. I was honoured to attend the Remembrance Sunday parade through Washington Village and to speak to some of the inspiring veterans from our community. With one of the highest enlistment numbers of any UK region, it is important to remember that the history of the armed forces is deeply entwined

with the North East. The two minutes silence gave me the opportunity to reflect upon my own family who have served. Finally, I was grateful for my opportunity to lay a wreath and pay my own respects. Lest we forget.

Speeches in Parliament

This month, I made three speeches in the House of Commons on a variety of important policy areas.

Early Years speech, Commons Chamber



Firstly, I spoke on the Early Years offer in Britain. Successive Conservative and Liberal Democrat governments saw the early years as an afterthought. On the contrary, the early years are the foundation of a happy life. I stressed the need for Government to learn from the benefits of Sure Start. The proposal for 75 upper-tier Local Authorities to receive a 'Family Hub' scheme must mark the start of a revived Early Years sector, as I laid out in the Fabian Society Early Years Commission this year.

In-school Counselling, Commons Chamber

The second of my speeches centred on school counselling. A silent epidemic is sweeping through our schoolchildren in poor mental health. For some children, school is a solace from difficulties at home. In-school counselling services help children cope with a broad range of emotional pressures and reduce chronic mental health problems. Only around 61% of schools in the UK benefit from a counselling service, a sad deficit which the Government must address.

Bus service provision in the North East, Westminster Hall

Thirdly and most recently, I raised the lack of quality bus services in the North East. At last month's street surgery, the inconsistency and infrequency of buses was brought up many times. Reliable and frequent bus services connect people to the economy and are vital for areas like Washington which risk being stranded. However, our Local Authorities are having to bear the brunt of the Government's public transport cuts as the Government has slashed covid funding for the Metro. With the Leamside line snubbed in the Integrated Rail Plan, bus provision is even more important. I will continue to press the Government on this issue and work with colleagues like Bridget Phillipson and Paul Howell regarding the reinstatement of the Leamside line.

Sharon Hodgson, Washington & Sunderland West Constituency
Units 1 & 1A, Vermont House, Concord, Washington,
Tyne & Wear NE37 2SQ
Tel. 417 2000
W: www.sharonhodgson.org E: [info\(a\)sharonhodgson.org](mailto:info(a)sharonhodgson.org) Twitter: <https://twitter.com/@SharonHodgsonMP>