



News from **Westminster** Jul/Oct 2016

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Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



Sharon inviting local school chef Audrey Chappell, of Albany Village Primary School, to visit Parliament to cook for MPs as part of LACA's National School Meals Week in November.

This summer, the Labour Party entered into another leadership contest, where Jeremy Corbyn and Owen Smith set out their stalls on the future of Labour and our country as a whole. I congratulate Jeremy on his victory. Now that the result has been decided, it is important that we find a way to work together.

This will mean reconciliation by both sides, but despite the differences that became apparent over the summer, the Labour Party must remain a broad church whereby we all work together to hold the Tories to account on their Brexit negotiations and their plans for the future of our country. Labour is a party which founded the NHS, brought in the National Minimum Wage promised by Keir Hardie, and passed the Equality Act and Child Poverty Act. We can be that Party again.

One issue which has united Labour is our opposition to Theresa May's plans to open new grammar schools. Her plans on social inclusion and mobility hark back to a time when a child's life was defined by a test they took at the age of 11. We should be supporting all children, not just a

certain few in society, and as all major evidence shows, where grammar schools currently operate they are not improving the widening educational gap. This is why Labour will be working hard to reverse these plans and oppose them in Parliament at every available opportunity.

Brexit

Last week, we reached the 100-day milestone since the EU Referendum vote and despite a summer where Brexiteer ministers should have been getting to work on what Brexit will mean for the UK, we still got their same old line of "Brexit means Brexit". This week, we found out that Article 50 will be invoked in March 2017 and we will have a Great Repeal Act in the next Queen's Speech which will repeal the European Communities Act of 1973, but still nothing more.

Theresa May's speeches this week should have allayed many of the questions posed to her by the public, politicians and business leaders alike, yet she has given us further questions that need to be answered, such as our future access to the single market and what will happen following the Great Repeal Act once it is pushed through Parliament next year – there are still important questions left unanswered. It is important that throughout this process that the jobs and livelihoods of people here in the North East are not negatively affected. For example, Nissan here in Sunderland, which depends greatly on access to the single market, needs to have answers from the Government on our future post-Brexit. As always, I will be holding the Government to account on what Brexit will mean for my constituents and ensure that we finally get the answers we all need.

Boundary changes

Recently, the Boundary Commission announced its initial proposals for the redrawing of the constituency map. As many will already know, Washington will be split between three constituencies and Sunderland across six. Many constituents have contacted me with their concerns, and if anyone wants to find out how to make their voices heard in the consultation, they can go to the Boundary Commission's website here: www.bce2018.org.uk

In Parliament:

Youth Character Awards



It was wonderful to meet with one of my young constituents, Reece Lunt, and his mam Kerry, and the head of his school, Mr Lofthouse of Rickleton Primary School, in Parliament and hear all about his incredible work to promote diabetes awareness. Reece is a credit to not only his family and his school, but also all young people who are doing selfless work from such a young age.

Wembley fact-finding mission

As Co-Chair of the APPG on Ticket Abuse, I attended a fact-finding mission outside Wembley Stadium on one of their busiest event days, when Liverpool vs Barcelona were playing, to see first hand ticket touts in action. It was very apparent of the need for further action to enforce the laws we have by the local council in the area and also the police, to address these matters. I wrote to the new Culture Secretary about this issue and hope to have a meeting with her in the near future.

Culture and Business Questions



In the two weeks of the September-sitting of Parliament, I asked two questions of two departments: at Culture, Media and Sport questions, I raised how disparate arts funding between our region and places such as London is impacting our country's culture and why Sunderland

should be awarded City of Culture 2021 to showcase what we have to offer; at the first Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy questions, I raised the need for Nissan to be engaged and included as part of the Government's industrial strategy to ensure one of our most vital industries continues to support our much-needed economic growth.

In and around the constituency:

WASPI Action Day, Newcastle



I was delighted to go along to the WASPI Action Day at Gray's Monument, to show my support for the WASPI women who are campaigning against the discrimination they face due to the equalisation of the State Pension Age. It was lovely to meet with constituents and women from across the North who are fighting against this inequality, and I will be presenting a petition signed by constituents on Tuesday the 11th October in the Chamber, along with other MPs. So please tune in to BBC Parliament to watch - it'll be around 7pm.

Washington Village Rotary Club



I was honoured to be made an honorary member of Washington Rotary Club last month. It was lovely to hear about the work their members do in our community at their regular meeting but also to meet the winners of their two awards for outstanding community work, Terry Rutherford & Phoebe Hedley.

FareShare visit

Food poverty is an ever-increasing problem here in the UK, where we have seen food bank usage increase dramatically under the Tories. This is an issue that I am keen to address, especially child holiday hunger through my work as Chair of the APPG on School Food, and as part of this work I visited FareShare's Regional Centre in Newcastle to find out more about their work to support charities and organisation with their food provision during the school holidays.

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