



# Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



*A few days before Christmas I visited our retiring CLP Secretary Jimmy Atkinson, to give him a gift on behalf of the local Labour Party to thank him for his hard work over the years.*

### Rail fares

The Christmas season is now finally over, and with everyone now returning to normal daily life, we have yet again seen rail fares rocket under this Government. This is an on-going issue which has many people up and down the country frustrated, yet the Conservatives have been stubborn and kept their heads in the sand and continued to allow prices to soar.

To sweeten the bitter pill of ever-increasing rail prices, the Tories kept saying that higher fares would help fund investment; however, rail infrastructure investment has continually been delayed and now travellers are having to pay the price. This is also being seen in the wider public transport infrastructure problems in our area. Buses are one of the main modes of transportation for people to get around here in Washington and Sunderland, yet many struggle to rely upon buses and look to other modes of transport – sometimes when there might not be any. For me, public transport is a key priority, and I have continually campaigned for better public transport for our

local area, including supporting the Quality Contracts for buses but also extending the Metro into Washington – which would greatly improve connectivity to other parts of Tyne and Wear and help bring more jobs to our area whilst also helping people travel around the region with more ease.

It is important that the Government rethinks their approach to investment not only for our railways, but also on public transport at a far more local level, such as buses and light railway. This is why when we see the Government's new Industrial Strategy later this year, I hope local public transport infrastructure funding will be a central component and the North East will get its fair share to help improve local transport infrastructure.

### Brexit

This year will see the formal start of the process of the UK leaving the EU, expected to begin in March with the triggering of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, set out by the Prime Minister. The vote was for us to leave the EU and I will vote to trigger Article 50, if and when the time comes. However, this does not give Theresa May and her Government free rein to do as they wish. It is my strongly-held belief that the people in our area did not vote to become poorer as a consequence of leaving the EU and it is important that jobs and livelihoods are protected.

This is one of the most momentous constitutional, economic and diplomatic tasks we have seen in a generation and the voices of the people of Washington and Sunderland West must be heard. That is why I have launched a listening exercise, which will include two public meetings in the constituency and a questionnaire, so that I can hear the views of the people of our local area to help inform my work as your local MP. If you want to find out more or have a copy of the questionnaire posted out to you, then please contact my office via email at: [hodgsons@parliament.uk](mailto:hodgsons@parliament.uk) or call my office on 417 2000.

## Some highlights (No. 91 - Dec 16/Jan 17)

### In Parliament

#### Britain Against Cancer "Prevention" breakout session



As Shadow Minister for Public Health, I chaired a breakout session of The Britain Against Cancer Conference on prevention measures to reduce cancer prevalence. Much of the session focused on issues around obesity, smoking and alcohol and how the Government seriously needs to address these issues, not only to address cancer prevalence but also wider health implications that remain unresolved.

#### Shadow Ministerial business

Last month, I responded to two debates in my role as Shadow Minister for Public Health, including one on the Accelerated Access Review and the issue of the drug, Orkambi, and how the impasse on the provision of this drug has affected many people living with cystic fibrosis who could seek to benefit. The other debate was a short one to update tobacco regulations in line with current consumer legislation. I took the opportunity to remind the minister that we are still awaiting the new Tobacco Control Plan.

#### Visit to the Felix Project



With food poverty on the rise in the UK, I went along to visit the Felix Project based in West London who in under

a year have fed just over 6,000 Londoners each week. It was amazing to see the work they are doing to seriously address the issue of food poverty and for me to hear more about what we can do as politicians to address this issue further.

### In and around the Constituency

#### Visit to Washington's Royal Mail delivery office



During the Christmas period, I visited the management and postal workers at the delivery office in Washington to hear all about their work to get our cards and gifts delivered safely and on time for Christmas. It is always a pleasure to visit our hard working postal workers and show them support for their hard work all year round through wind, rain and shine.

#### Sunderland's End Food Poverty Event



I was pleased to be invited to speak at the End Food Poverty event in Sunderland and talk about my work around food poverty, especially child hunger, but also to learn about what is happening locally. I talked about the need for more to be done around food waste by our supermarkets, as

has been done in France recently.

#### Meeting with Balance North East

I recently met with Colin Shevills, Director of Balance NE, and Gillian Gibson, Director of Public Health at Sunderland City Council, not only to discuss issues around excessive alcohol consumption and the impacts it has on our health, both individually and as a nation, but also the economic impact and what more must be done to address these issues such as minimum unit pricing. It was especially concerning to hear that a cheap three-litre bottle of strong white cider which costs less than £4 had the equivalent of 22 shots of vodka in it.

Sharon Hodgson MP, Washington & Sunderland West Constituency  
Units 1 & 1A, Vermont House, Vermont Road, Concord, Washington,  
Tyne & Wear NE37 2SQ

Tel. 417 2000

Website: [www.sharonhodgson.org](http://www.sharonhodgson.org)

E-mail: [info\(a\)sharonhodgson.org](mailto:info(a)sharonhodgson.org)

Twitter: [@SharonHodgsonMP](https://twitter.com/SharonHodgsonMP)