

August 2019 Update

Welcome to my August newsletter

Brexit has now defeated two Tory Prime Ministers and it might be well on its way to defeating a third. The Parliamentary session came to a close last week, but the work continues into August as a snap General Election has never looked more likely.

As ever, if you want to get in touch about any of the issues covered here – or anything else – you can arrange an appointment at one of my regular advice surgeries by calling my office on 0207 219 4243 or e-mail me at gareth.thomas.mp@parliament.uk

Election watch



Labour Party Members in Harrow West turned out in big numbers for the unanticipated European Parliamentary elections on May, 23rd; Harrow was one of few local authorities to buck the London-wide trend and our members played a big part in returning Seb Dance and Claude Moraes to Brussels. While Harrow was able to buck the trend, it is clear that the result wasn't a success for Labour on a national level and the party's position on Brexit was in need of reform. Since I stepped down as a Shadow Minister two years ago, I have been vocal in my support for a public vote on the Brexit deal that would provide the option for remain on the ballot. With the threat of a disastrous no deal scenario looming, I am pleased we are as a party beginning to see a significant shift in position. Labour has a crucial, historic duty to safeguard jobs, rights and living standards and there is increasing realisation that no Brexit outcome alone can do that. I stand by what Shadow Brexit Secretary, Keir Starmer has said; as Westminster returns in the autumn, Parliament must now be put on a war-footing to prevent a no-deal Brexit and every tool in our armoury must be deployed

including “amending legislation, forcing emergency debates and triggering no-confidence votes”.

Careers Fair



Several hundred students and parents were in attendance this year for my first Careers Fair in partnership with Rooks Heath College.

Students from across Harrow had the experience to talk with representatives from 20+ companies and institutions including BFI, Royal Navy, Selfridges Food, Heathrow Airport, London Sport as well as partake in CV and Cover Letter workshops provided by Google.

All the fee-paying schools in Harrow and across the UK have their own careers fairs organised internally, but there has been a vacuum for careers fairs organised for local state schools. I thought it was high time to put that right.

The organisations that took part represented many different careers across many different industries and the stall format allowed those in attendance to approach any stall that interested them. This allowed personal one-to-one conversations about that career, industry and the journey it takes to achieve their career goals.

Standing down as Chair of the Co-operative Party



In May, I took the decision to stand down in my role as the Chair of the Co-op Party. This is a position I had held for almost 20 years. The Party is in good position – it's got a large number of MPs, a record number of councillors, and the co-op movement is in very good health. It's time for someone new at the top and I am delighted to see the excellent Anna Turley taking on the role. I have many highlights of my time as Co-op chair, including steering significant changes to co-op law through Parliament, and an expansion of co-op schools and credit unions. More latterly we championed the idea of an armed forces credit union, which has been introduced, and the campaigns on modern slavery have forced the government to

move; our campaign on food poverty and hunger will hopefully do the same. We've had some cracking successes, and I'm looking forward to carrying on as a Labour / Co-op MP, because the thing we want is a Labour/Co-op government, bringing new legislation for co-ops and mutuals to expand, a new credit union act to help the sector help and serve all the people who could usefully benefit. Plus, we'd like to see a shift to renewables and to give people more right to jointly own renewable power to fight against climate change. **I'll always be a co-operator, and I'm very proud to have had the privilege of chairing the Party for as long as I have. I look forward to helping it grow even more.**

So where is Parliament now?

Earlier this month, Boris Johnson suffered his first Commons defeat before even becoming Prime Minister, as Parliament voted by 315 votes to 274 to prevent the new Prime Minister's Government from suspending parliament for more than two weeks. Shutting down parliament is not only unconstitutional but also unlawful, and while there is currently a clear parliamentary majority against no deal, it was surprising that just 17 Tory rebels joined us in the voting lobby. The vote on Hilary Benn's amendment means that even if the new Prime Minister suspends the Commons, it would be possible to recall MPs for five days, during which they could attempt to extend Article 50. Under the rules as they are



now, it would be “almost impossible” for MPs to stop no-deal without using a no confidence vote to bring down the government. That means that a General Election is increasingly likely.

Bob Currie Close



Earlier this year, I joined four very proud Labour Cllrs at the opening of new council housing on the new “**Bob Currie Close**”, South Harrow. Bob was a Cllr for [The Labour Party](#) too, a former Mayor of Harrow, who grew up and lived on the same estate in the same community throughout his life, and is still missed by all who knew him. Harrow Council revealed this month that tenants have started to move into the new close, with three council homes for social rent and three available on shared ownership. Harrow

Council have shared a video of the new housing here. More council houses are to be built in South Harrow, with work due to start shortly - <https://youtu.be/fLONQ93aBjI>

Harrow Half-Marathon

Over the last year I’ve been working again with Harrow Athletics Club, Harrow Council and a number of other organisations to bring the Harrow Half-Marathon back for another year. Whether you’re planning your 2019 race calendar or need a target to belatedly achieve a New Year’s resolution, it’s the perfect time to enter the Harrow Half Marathon on SUNDAY 15th SEPTEMBER 2019. There’s still time to sign up

here: <http://harrowhalfmarathon.co.uk/>



Following the ‘history making’ event last year, as London’s first ‘Single Use Plastic Water Bottle Free’ event, the marathon will be offering ‘Ooho’ water sachets again. <http://harrowhalfmarathon.co.uk/latest-news> Indeed, organisers are looking at further ways of becoming even more sustainable. Your suggestions are always welcome at: info@harrowhalfmarathon.co.uk I’ve not yet made up my mind on whether I’ll be running the full half or if I will be joining the one mile ‘Roger Bannister Family Race’ again

that commemorates Harrow's own trailblazing runner but I will keep you up to date on my decision.

International Trade Committee



In June, I took a seat on the International Trade Committee; my role on the committee will involve examining and scrutinising the expenditure, administration and policy of the [Department for International Trade](#) and its associated public bodies. A lot of the scrutiny so far has largely been about Brexit myth busting. While the new Prime Minister believes that a free trade deal with the United States could be in place by the 1st of November 2019, in fact the (now former) Minister for Trade policy appeared to suggest to me that 5 to 10 years would be a more reasonable expectation.

Watch my most recent interrogation here: <https://youtu.be/qMwDXxuwGz8>