



John Howell MP's Westminster Report

Member of Parliament for Henley

Winter 2009/10



Dear Constituent,

Thank you for the positive comments I received on my last Westminster Report. In that edition I set out what a typical week was like for an MP at Westminster. I know a great number of you found this of interest.

In this edition I want to give you the other side of the picture—what an MP does in the constituency and how that links with the role at Westminster.

Taking the two editions together should give you a good picture of the whole job.

My regular surgeries are one such activity. The back page of this newsletter sets out the surgeries until Easter 2010. This has been designed so that you can keep it as a stand-alone poster to remind you when and where the surgeries are to be held and how you can contact me.

My best wishes for 2010



John at some of the many public meetings, events, visits and openings that he attends in the course of his duties as MP



Don't Forget John's Surgery Dates see back page

Working for you locally
and at Westminster

MAKING LINKS — WHAT AN MP DOES IN THE CONSTITUENCY

The constituency role of an MP breaks down into a number of specific areas. One of these is acting as the bridge between constituents and the Government and Whitehall.

A second role is trying to resolve the problems local constituents face in dealing with Government departments. Some of these problems

involve a wide group of constituents and become local campaigns or major local issues. There is a further more general leadership role in working with local organisations such as the PCT and local councils for the benefit of constituents. These pages provide examples of how this works in practice.

CASE WORK AND SURGERIES

People often contact the MP's office when they don't know where else to turn. Cases come in via phone, email, letter and from the MP's surgeries. Topics cover a huge range of issues but regular topics include benefits cases, those relating to child support as well as issues relating to the NHS.

Our first task is to seek to understand what lies at the root of the issue and then try to find the best course of action John can take to help resolve the problem including deciding who or which organisation is best placed to help.

For example, many of the problems with benefits cases have a long history and are complex. A frequent issue is dissatisfaction with the way medical evidence may have been assessed. In some cases, wider implications may also have emerged such as accumulated debts including rent and the threat of house repossessions.



Angie Paterson is John's constituency-based case worker. She explains how individuals' problems are dealt with.

Resolving cases invariably means liaising with a range of organisations including State agencies, local councils, the courts and the bailiffs. A key characteristic in dealing with cases is the need for terrier-like persistence in pursuing them to a successful conclusion. Every case is unique even where there are common features and we need to find out about the constituent's circumstances before we can take action which is going to be effective.

Other cases which are brought to us include complaints against Government departments. In many cases people have exhausted normal complaints procedures. In some circumstances we can take these cases forward with the Ombudsman.

The MP's surgeries can also generate issues which cross many boundaries including Government policy and local action. We make every effort to help, but sadly there are some cases such as those that require legal advice or are private disputes where we are unable to help.



John attending the Investors in Education awards in Henley

LINKING WESTMINSTER TO LOCAL CAMPAIGNS

At both ends of the constituency the future of our local community hospitals has been a cause for concern. In Henley this has been about delays over the re-build of Townlands. In Thame it was about the future of the £4 million promised for its redevelopment and the contract for medical cover.

In both cases, a good way of linking these local campaigns to action in Westminster has been by me raising Parliamentary questions which are answered by Ministers in Hansard. That's put on record answers to questions for example about the timetable and funding of the next phases of development.



Celebrating Neighbourhood Watch at Nettlebed



The contract for medical services at Thame Hospital was first raised with John at a local surgery



To contact John call 020 7219 6676
www.johnhowellmp.com



LINKING PEOPLE IN TO GOVERNMENT POLICY

There is a huge amount of correspondence from people about Government policy. Whilst this is often via email, people also send in a lot of campaign cards which call for action on single issues. For example recent popular campaign cards have been those regarding the urgent need to act on climate change.



Katheryn Santos is John's Westminster-based researcher. She explains how John answers constituent issues relating to Government policy

more information on the steps the UK would take to ensure that the Copenhagen talks result in genuine progress. The detailed response has been forwarded to those who sent us a campaign card and we would be happy to pass this on to

anyone else who is interested. We are always keen to keep people updated on the latest development on issues in which we know they have a particular interest.

This process has enabled us to engage with constituents in numerous discussions about climate change and how the UK should respond to this pressing issue. It is certainly a useful way of allowing people to voice their opinion and as a result politicians can 'keep their finger on the pulse' as to what policy issues their constituents are really concerned about.

In this last month alone, nearly 100 people have contacted us about the UN climate change talks in Copenhagen this December. The issues raised by people have varied from requests to commit developed countries to cut emissions by 40% to views about public funding for developing countries to assist them in tackling climate change. It is clear that those who wrote were concerned that any deal agreed at Copenhagen should reflect the concerns and interests of everyone involved.

As a result, we wrote to the Prime Minister outlining these concerns and for



Whitchurch School

Making Links for Young People

With so many young people not in training, education or employment there is a great need to understand how the education and employment system supports young people.

That's why I've put in place a programme of visits to schools and youth clubs to understand the issues in the area. I want to understand what more can be done to build aspiration and provide the opportunities that are going to be meaningful to them.

By visiting schools I am seeing where the stress points are in the education system from the teachers' and from the students' perspectives and also from the point of view of the state of the physical environment in our schools.

There is a big agenda here in which our councils play a key role. But it's also one where making links to Westminster are crucial both in relation to Government policy and in engaging young people with the political process.

LINKING A BILL WITH LOCAL ACTION

This year I sat on the Child Poverty Bill Committee – the type of committee which examines a bill line-by-line.

As part of the committee we took evidence from charities involved in dealing with child poverty and also from local councils who are already undertaking a lot of work to break the cycle of deprivation for families in their areas.

The charity Action for Children gave me the chance to make a



Action for Children – raising money for disadvantaged young people

tangible local contribution to the debate by marooning me and others on Temple Island until we had personally raised over a £1,000 each. I was pleased to raise £1,200 and together we raised over £6,000. This was a good example of a practical link

between Westminster and what happens in the constituency. The amount we raised went towards helping the most vulnerable children and young people in the UK.



Watlington Youth Club

TEAR OFF AND KEEP

Here to Help...

A General Election will be held during 2010. Until the date of the election is known, we have provided a list of surgeries only until Easter 2010.

John Howell holds regular surgeries around the constituency. You do not have to wait for a surgery to come to your area before booking an appointment.

Most of these take place on a Saturday morning between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon and are in locations which mostly have wheelchair access. If you have a disability which prevents you from attending a surgery please give us a call.

If you would like to book a 15 minute appointment, please ring the surgery hotline shown below.

If you would prefer to write to John please contact him at one of the addresses listed below.

PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE
John Howell MP,
Constituency Office,
PO Box 84,
Watlington
OX49 5XD

Email:
howelljm@
parliament.uk

2010 Surgeries

Woodcote

16 January

Location: Woodcote Community Centre,
The Old School House, Reading Road,
Woodcote RG8 0QY

Henley

30 January

Location: Town Hall, Henley-on-Thames RG9 2AQ

Chinnor

13 February

Location: Chinnor Village Centre, High Street,
Chinnor, Oxon OX39 4DH



Watlington

27 February

Location: Community Office, 1 Old School Place,
Gorwell, Watlington OX49 5QH



Thame

6 March

Location: Town Hall, Thame OX9 3DP



All surgeries are on Saturday between
10.00 am – 12.00 noon

John Howell

Member of Parliament for Henley

If you would like to book an appointment with your MP, please ring the surgery hotline.

Surgery Hotline 01491 613072



Surgery venue
has wheelchair
access

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