



Oliver Dowden CBE MP

Member of Parliament for Hertsmere

End of Term Report – Easter 2018



After another busy parliamentary term, I wanted to take the opportunity to update you on my work since Christmas in this latest End of Term Report.



In January, I was delighted to be appointed by the Prime Minister as a Minister at the Cabinet Office. My new role means working across the Government, making sure that the promises we have made are actually delivered on for the British people. I am also responsible for the machinery of government – issues such as government IT, procurement and property; civil contingency; public appointments; as well as serving on a number of cabinet committees relating to Brexit.

My work to serve Hertsmere as its local Member of Parliament will of course carry on as before. I continue to hold constituency advice surgeries and am keeping up my campaigns, including for better local infrastructure, more good school places and protecting our precious open spaces, which I have written about in more detail below.

I have continued to work on the following priorities:

On Infrastructure and Services

How we meet the needs of a growing community is one of the biggest challenges we face here in Hertsmere. That was why it was important for me to convene a meeting with the Borough Council's Planning Department to understand their proposals and to make sure that residents' voices are heard as the Local Plan is updated.



They are examining a wide range of options to meet the Government's new targets for house building and I stressed to them that while we must provide homes for the next generation, we must also make sure that we keep what makes our area special. The green space surrounding our Borough's towns and villages creates distinct communities and prevents ugly urban sprawl. This must be preserved. At the same time, new development needs to be matched by the right infrastructure, including schools, roads, GPs and emergency services.

I was very glad to hear from the Council that they share this view and are working to achieve this in the Local Plan.

It is equally crucial that alongside new development we make sure existing properties are fit for people to call home. I know that many residents are pretty sick and tired of the performance of Clarion, one of our largest housing associations. I used a meeting to press them on a number of issues that people have complained about, including problems with customer service, anti-social behaviour and repairs to properties.



They listened to these points and assured me that they are making improvements. We also agreed to stay in close contact to help resolve individual cases that constituents bring to my attention.

On crime, I meet regularly with our police and residents' groups to discuss issues in Hertsmere. At the start of the year, I had a constructive meeting with Potters Bar residents to discuss recent burglaries and other concerns. They shared with me their own experiences and I was able to update them on my work with the Chief Inspector, our Police & Crime Commissioner, and in Parliament.



I know that our local Police are very much aware of concerns around burglaries and they are working constantly to catch the perpetrators and keep us safe. As I have said before, I would urge anyone who has concerns about activity they fear may be crime-related to contact the Police. Any piece of information can help them with their investigations. Similarly, do not hesitate to get in contact with them if you are seeking advice on steps you can take to improve your own personal home security.

After taking part in the Wheelchair Challenge in Borehamwood last year, I saw clearly the challenges faced by wheelchair users and I tabled a number of Written Parliamentary Questions to the Government. I was pleased to hear in answers from the Local Government Minister that they are reviewing regulations over disabled access to public buildings, such as high street shops. I am glad the Government is addressing this and I will continue to monitor progress on behalf of my constituents.



On Education



In March, it was good to meet with the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, Cllr David Williams. I used the opportunity to press him on making sure that Hertsmere gets the education resources it needs.

I raised the concerns of my constituents over the availability of good primary school places in Potters Bar. I was pleased to hear that there are plans to add capacity over the next few years, should demand continue to grow. This will likely mean initially adding a new form to an existing school, or in the longer term, a new school being opened.

We also discussed the need for a new secondary school, mainly to serve Radlett, Borehamwood and Bushey. With Hertsmere's Local Plan anticipating around 400 new homes a year over the next decade, it is essential we begin planning now for the infrastructure to go with them.

The County Council is very much aware of this and is working closely with Hertsmere Borough Council to deliver new school places. Again, at first, this will likely mean adding new capacity to existing schools, before looking to open new schools in the medium to long term. Sites will need to be found for these and this is something I am discussing with the Borough Council.

I have also had the pleasure of visiting a number of our excellent local schools over the past few months, including Longwood School, Immanuel College, the Wroxham School and Oakmere Primary. I am grateful to all of them for the warm hospitality they showed me.



On Defending our Green Open Spaces



Over 600 of us were at the Bushey Forum in February to discuss the future of Bushey County Club. Like many others, I was sorry to hear the news that the Country Club was closing. However, I am clear that we must maintain the green open spaces of the Club and that the Council should engage with residents at every stage of the process to find a new use for the site. If we get this right, the community can seize this opportunity to create greater public access and new village facilities for Bushey.

I was pleased by the reassurances given by Hertsmere Borough Council and I will continue to use my position as Bushey's MP to make sure that residents' voices are heard as the future of the site is decided.

Following my meeting in February with the Environment Agency (EA) and concerned local residents, I am glad that the EA have taken real action to stop the appalling smells that are emitted by the Reviva Recycling Plant in Elstree. They issued a notice that means Reviva must address the problems at the site or face closure. I know how incredibly distressing the problem has been and hope this will be good news to residents. There is of course more to do and this will not be solved overnight as Reviva have the right to appeal, but I will continue to monitor this and make sure that the views of local people are heard.



Westminster News



Last month, I showed my solidarity with protesters against anti-Semitism at the event in Parliament Square organised by the Jewish Leadership Council and the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

It was an honour to meet with His Holiness, Radhanath Swami, global spiritual leader of the Hare Krishna movement, in Parliament. HH was in Westminster to talk about the importance of values and morality in leadership. I greatly appreciated the opportunity to listen to his thoughts.



In my first speech as a Minister, I was honoured to open the Holocaust Memorial Day event in Whitehall. The event was held in the room in the Treasury where Churchill addressed the nation on VE Day. It was a particular privilege to welcome local Radlett Holocaust survivor, Harry Spiro, to lead the remembrance. It is vital that as a country and a community we remember the Holocaust and never forget what history has taught us.



I was also proud to present the prizes at the Cyber Centurion Awards, including to an all-girls team on International Women's Day with the Governor of Gibraltar.



Along with many of you I think it is outrageous that the flag of the anti-Semitic terrorist organisation Hezbollah can still be seen flying in marches on the streets of London. In my final contribution from the backbenches before being promoted I raised it again with the Home Secretary in Parliament.

Out and about in Hertsmere and Westminster

As ever, I've been out and about across Hertsmere and London and I've included a selection of the photos below.



Oliver Dowden CBE MP

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
oliver@oliverdowden.com, 020 7219 3415

Facebook: oliverdowdenhertsmere **Instagram:** oliverdowden.mp **LinkedIn:** oliver-dowden-cbe-mp **Visit me at:** www.oliverdowden.com
Come to one of my surgeries: In Borehamwood, Bushey, Potters Bar or Radlett. Please contact my office on 020 7219 3415 to make an appointment.