



# Oliver Dowden CBE MP

Member of Parliament for Hertsmere

## End of Term Report – Summer 2018



From rail chaos, to the NHS and Britain's exit from the European Union, it has been an exceptionally busy parliamentary term. So, to keep you updated on my work as Hertsmere's MP since Easter, I've produced my latest End of Term Report.

Alongside my duties as a Minister at the Cabinet Office, I continue to push on my local priorities, including improving infrastructure and services, and campaigning for more good school places. I also continue to hold regular local advice surgeries and have enjoyed visiting schools, charities, groups, businesses and local services across our area. Sadly it is impossible to cover everything so this report aims to give a few select highlights, but as always please do get in touch if there is anything you would like to raise or discuss with me.

### Govia Thameslink and Transport

Govia Thameslink's performance has been appalling. I use **Thameslink** every day and know how difficult the disruption has been. Many of us have had to leave home over an hour earlier to get to work on time, and still face the confusion and anger which last minute cancellations cause. In the run up to the May timetable change I had regular meetings with both Govia and Network Rail to seek updates on how the preparations were going, and was assured everything was on track. This is why I have been so hugely frustrated by the dreadful service.



I therefore organised urgent meetings with the Transport Secretary and directors from Govia to press them on what caused the disruption and when passengers could expect improvements. I am pleased that the Transport Secretary has announced an independent inquiry into the chaos, and he has reassured me that he does not rule anything out, up to and including the removal of the franchise. I also think it was right that Govia's Chief Executive took responsibility and resigned. In terms of compensation, I made progress in securing a package which will give a month's free travel to season ticket holders, in addition to the delay repay scheme. At the same time, I am still pushing for extending the scheme to pay as you go travellers.

As I write this, there has been some improvement with the introduction of a new temporary timetable. But I am keeping up the pressure and I recently met again with Govia executives at Elstree & Borehamwood Station. I made clear that passengers on Thameslink and **Great Northern**, remain hugely frustrated. I will be pursuing this with the Transport Secretary and Govia and will continue to press for wider improvements, including overhauls of stations and carriages to cope with crowding.

I also met with the new Managing Director of London Northwestern railway, as I know there has been poor service at **Bushey Station** and it was important to raise this directly with him. After the meeting, I wrote to Transport for London to call for improvements to the station, namely; installing more platform shelters and increasing the number of bicycle racks.



Separately, it was incredibly disappointing to hear from the Rail Minister that the Government no longer expect **Oyster** to be delivered to Potters Bar and Radlett this year. In my regular meetings with Transport Ministers over the past two years I have received repeated assurances that the extension was on track. I will closely scrutinise the contents of the Department's Oyster review later this year and will lobby hard for the commitment to Radlett and Potters Bar to be honoured. As ever, throughout this, I will keep you updated on the outcome.

## Infrastructure and Services

As I always say, we need to provide new homes for our children and grandchildren, but not at the expense of what makes our area special. However, where there is appropriate new development, meeting the needs of a growing community is vital and remains one of my key focuses.

**Healthcare** is a huge part of this and I was therefore very concerned that another service was being removed at Potters Bar Community Hospital. The Hospital is a vital asset to our area so I organised a meeting with Herts Valley Clinical Commissioning Group to secure a definitive commitment about its future. The CCG confirmed that the Hospital remains integral to their plans for the future of healthcare in Hertsmere and will stay in place. This is good news and is something I have been pushing for constantly over the last year.



I also urged them to improve **GP services** in Borehamwood and they confirmed that plans are in place for a new health hub that will increase capacity and provide brand new facilities. I will next be meeting with Hertsmere Borough Council and the CCG to discuss how they can work together as the Local Plan is updated.



The paramedics and staff of the Ambulance Service are some of the most dedicated in the NHS. I'm grateful for all their service and for taking the time to show me more about their work when I visited their station near Bushey. It was also great to speak at the annual meeting of the Red House GP surgery's patients' group in Radlett. As we deal with the challenges of an ageing population this was a great opportunity to speak with people and hear their views on general practice services in our area.

Turning to **roads**, potholes are something that frustrate and aggravate us all. That is why I called a meeting with Cllr Morris Bright, Deputy Head of Highways at Hertfordshire to discuss the maintenance of our roads. Cllr Bright assured me the Council know how serious the issue is and explained that the particularly bad weather this winter and spring have exacerbated the issue more than normal. I was pleased to hear the Council is taking action and I will be meeting with them again to discuss their progress.



**On crime**, I recently met with Hertfordshire's Chief Constable, Charlie Hall QPM and our local Chief Inspector, Steve O'Keeffe. I used these meetings to raise people's concerns over crime, particularly burglaries. I secured assurances that Herts Constabulary are doing everything they can to tackle this problem. Our police work tirelessly keeping us safe and if you have any issues you want to discuss with them, do not hesitate to get in touch. I also wrote to the Police & Crime Commissioner, David Lloyd, urging him to make sure that police funding is fairly distributed and that our towns and villages should not lose out to the county's larger urban areas.

My fight to resist the **Radlett rail freight terminal** also goes on. Most recently, I have written to the County Council with Anne Main MP and Bim Afolami MP, urging the County not to sell their land to the developers. This is crucial after the good news that St Albans Council are now considering the site for a new garden village. I do not want this green belt land developed, but if it must be, it is ludicrous there can be planning permission for a freight terminal but not homes.



## Education

As we build more homes, it is important that we have more good **schools** to serve our growing community. I therefore arranged a meeting in Westminster with officials from Hertfordshire County Council and Hertsmere Borough Council to discuss their plans for the future of schools in Hertsmere. Current capacity is already under pressure and to deal with this, and any future growth, sites for schools need to be found as soon as possible in the Hertsmere Local Plan.



The division of local government responsibilities means that Hertfordshire County Council are in charge of assessing the need for new schools, while Hertsmere Borough Council must identify sites and the Department for Education approve and fund them. I secured assurances from Cllr Harvey Cohen, cabinet member for planning at Hertsmere Borough Council and Cllr Terry Douris, cabinet member for education at Hertfordshire County Council, that the process of finding new sites is well underway. This is a positive step, but there is much more to do and I will continue to campaign on this over the coming months.

I have also visited many of our schools over the past few months, including St Hilda's, Bournehall Primary, Aldenham Prep and Hertswood Academy, where I saw their new state of the art building which is currently under construction. It is always such a pleasure to meet with students to discuss their work, and to speak with teachers to hear their thoughts on the challenges they are facing.

## Westminster News

In July, we celebrated **the NHS's** 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday. The NHS has always been there for me and my family and it was a perfect opportunity to reflect and appreciate the vital role the service plays in our lives. It was also important to support this year's Mental Health Awareness Week, an issue that is rightly receiving much greater attention.



This year also marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **women's suffrage** and I was proud to support the events marking the milestone. Particular highlights were the unveiling of the statue of Millicent Fawcett in Parliament Square and having my very own Suffraduck!



**On Europe**, as I've said all along the people of Hertsmere, like the rest of the country, voted narrowly but clearly to leave and it is my job as your Member of Parliament to deliver this. We've made significant progress this term. Parliament has voted through the EU Withdrawal Bill which transfers EU law into UK law ensuring we have legal certainty as we leave and provides the basis for future changes. We're also making progress with the Trade Bill and other key legislation.

On the negotiations themselves, the Prime Minister has put forward fresh proposals in the so called Chequers Agreement. I know that many constituents have expressed an interest in these.

It's important to say that these remain proposals and any final deal will remain subject to approval by Parliament. The proposals mean we will be leaving the Single Market, the Customs Union, the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy. Additionally, the proposals will also see an end to the vast annual contributions we currently make to the EU.

I know though that some constituents have concerns over a common rule book on industrial and agricultural goods. This is a complex area and if you would like full details on my position in relation to this, please contact my office and I will send you more a comprehensive briefing.

## Out and about in Hertsmere and Westminster

As ever, I've been out and about across Hertsmere and London and to finish, I've included some of the photos below.



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