



The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP

Member of Parliament for Hertsmere

End of Term Report – Summer 2023

As we approach the next Parliamentary session, I wanted to update you on my work as your Member of Parliament over the past few months in my latest End of Term Report. I have been continuing my work defending our countryside, improving public transport, supporting the diverse local community and our vibrant local economy, and helping to secure investment for our local schools and medical facilities.

A great deal has changed since my last End of Term Report. We turned a page in our nation's history when we celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III. I hope many of you across Hertsmere were able to mark this new chapter by coming together to celebrate the defining and momentous occasion.



I was also deeply honoured to have been asked to serve as the Deputy Prime Minister by the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak and to continue having the opportunity to play an important part in Government. I look forward to working even more closely with the Prime Minister as we tackle the issues that matter most to the people of this country.

Following the local elections in May, Labour and the Liberal Democrats have now formed a coalition where they are now in control of the Borough Council. Your Conservative councillors and I will be holding the new coalition to account to ensure that they deliver on the priorities of Hertsmere residents.

Defending our Countryside

Growing up locally, I understand how vital our green open spaces are and the importance of protecting this. I know many residents are increasingly anxious and concerned about the

burden being put on our greenbelt land by development pressures. It is, of course, important amidst an acute nationwide housing shortage that we build more houses for the future. I am sure you all agree that it is important that our children and grandchildren have the same opportunities to buy their own homes that previous generations have enjoyed.

However, this must not be at the expense of what makes our area so special. We are privileged to experience real natural beauty around our towns and villages, and we must not allow this to be lost to urban sprawl.

I have visited and spoken out against numerous planning proposals in Hertsmere, where residents have expressed their concern about development on greenbelt. This includes recently visiting Shenley Hill in Radlett alongside Cllr Lucy Selby, where Fairfax Acquisitions propose to build up to 195 homes. I remain firm that we should not be building on greenbelt land, except in exceptional circumstances. I have made my views clear, and



Oliver at Shenley Hill, Radlett

I do not believe that there are exceptional circumstances and have highlighted these views to the Borough Council. I also have grave concerns about the traffic that this development could potentially generate, in what is already an extremely congested area of the constituency. I am aware that this application, following its appeal by the developers, will now be determined by the Planning Inspectorate, and have written to them directly to outline my position.



Oliver with the WHVGC, Borehamwood

I have also made my views known on several other proposed developments around the constituency, including Barratt Homes' proposal to develop 220 homes on the Horses Field BE6 site in Borehamwood and Endurance Estates' prospective proposal to build 150 apartments and bungalows on the green belt land at Allum Lane Fields.

I also convened a meeting with members of the Woodcock Hill Village Green

Committee to receive an update and to discuss their tireless campaign to protect Woodcock Hill Village Green. They have now got permission to fight the Judicial Review decision and continue to resist development on the Green which would be a huge disappointment for the community. They have always had my full support, and this will, of course, continue.

I was incredibly disappointed to hear that Hertfordshire County Council confirmed the sale of the former Radlett Airfield site after it agreed terms with Segro in June. As I have previously stated, this proposal to build a Rail Freight terminal near Radlett is completely unnecessary. It will clog our roads, blight our countryside, and put further pressure on the Thameslink line.

I also recently visited Cecil's Horse Sanctuary which is currently under threat of losing its site in Elstree, where it homes up to 17 horses and ponies that have been neglected, abused, and abandoned.



Oliver at Cecil's Horse Sanctuary, Elstree

The land which is currently owned by Heineken is in the process of being sold to Retirement Villages Group (RVG), who are proposing to build a 130-home retirement village on this piece of greenbelt land. I have serious concerns over what exactly the exceptional circumstances are in this case and have raised this with the council. I also have serious concerns of the welfare of the horses should

Cecil's struggle to find an alternative site for them and have offered my support to help them in their search for an appropriate alternative site.

I will continue to oppose development on our greenbelt land, unless I believe there are exceptional circumstances. As you are aware, the new Labour-Lib Dem coalition will now oversee the drafting of a new Local Plan for our area and your Conservative Councillors and I will continue to hold them to account to ensure that our greenspaces are protected and preserved.

Reaffirming my Commitment to the Jewish Community

It is a real source of pride to me to represent one of the largest Jewish communities in the country. On a personal level, I have had the pleasure of making many great friends and I continue to attend a variety of events. I stand firm against the scourge of antisemitism and continue to make key achievements in this respect.

I have recently pledged to bring forward the BDS and Sanctions Bill and the Holocaust Memorial Bill. The BDS and Sanctions Bill is an important piece of legislation which was a priority for me to get into the Conservative manifesto in the first place.

This proposed Bill would ban BDS to prevent further boycotts against Israel.

The Holocaust Memorial Bill will aim to update Victorian legislation and the progress the building of a new Memorial and learning centre in the Victoria Tower Gardens in Westminster. It was also a pleasure to speak at a Jewish



Oliver at Shenley Synagogue

Leadership Council event in Parliament in June where I reaffirmed the Prime Minister's and my commitment to the Jewish community.



Oliver at a JLC event in Parliament (Photo Credit JLC)

I understand the strength of feeling of the continued threats facing the Jewish community both in Hertsmere, and nationally. I will of course continue to engage closely with Jewish leaders and remain a staunch friend and ally of the community.

As we look forward to September, I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all those celebrating a happy and peaceful Rosh Hashana. I hope that everyone celebrating will have the chance to enjoy

with their Jewish friends, neighbours, and families. I hope this important occasion in the Jewish calendar brings joy and renewed hope to you all and that you enjoy the traditions of this wonderful holiday. Shana Tova!

Infrastructure

I know many residents will be deeply frustrated as the ULEZ expansion approaches. I am totally opposed to London Mayor Sadiq Khan's proposed expansion of ULEZ, and it is totally unacceptable that Hertsmere residents, who do not live in London, should pay extra to travel towards London as a result of the Mayor's poor financial decisions.

Many constituents have been in touch to explain how these extra charges will put additional financial strain on their families during what is already a difficult period.

This will affect residents travelling into London from Bushey Heath towards Stanmore, and at the A41 Elstree Hill Roundabout and A1 Stirling Corner Roundabout, to name some examples.

I have made my serious concerns clear to the Transport Secretary, as well as to both TfL and the Mayor of London.

I have always campaigned to improve our local transport networks and I think everyone, regardless of their accessibility needs, should be able to use them.

Many residents have also been in touch regarding the difficulties they face at Bushey Station in relation to the large gap between the train and the platform. This is particularly difficult for those who are wheelchair users or are travelling with prams and luggage. I have written to the



Oliver in Bushey



Oliver at Bushey Station

Transport Secretary, Transport for London, and the train companies to lobby them and raise residents' concerns. I am hoping that we will be able to get some movement on this and will update residents accordingly.

Like many residents, I have long been frustrated by the poor accessibility and lack of lifts at Radlett Station. Rail users must climb the many stairs up to the footbridge to access the trains.

This is increasingly challenging for rail users who use wheelchairs, cannot climb stairs or even those who travel with prams and luggage. At the beginning of this

year, I once again nominated Radlett for this year's round of Access for All Funding, and I am glad that the Department for Transport and Network Rail will be in a position to announce successful stations later this year.

Defunding the local PCSOs

With a Labour-Liberal Cabinet now in place following the recent local elections, I was extremely disappointed that one of their first decisions since coming to power has been to remove the £130,700-a-year fund which paid for additional PCSOs in the area.

I know how supportive residents are of their local PCSOs, who do so much for community safety. They and I are now worried there will be a less visible presence of police in the area.

This is a terrible first move and I hope it is not a sign of things to come. Going forward your Conservative councillors and I will continue to hold this new Labour-Lib Dem administration to account to ensure we keep Hertsmere a safe place to live and work.

Healthcare Provision

As our towns and villages grow, particularly in areas such as Borehamwood, it is important that we have the correct infrastructure to match. That is why I have campaigned tirelessly to improve medical facilities in the constituency, with particular focus on Borehamwood. I know that this is an ongoing matter for residents in Borehamwood, who regularly contact me about their difficulty in getting a GP appointment.

Over the last few months, I have convened meetings with Partners at Manor View Practice and Fairbrook Medical Centre to discuss plans for the



Oliver at Manor View Practice, Borehamwood

future of healthcare provision in the area and to see the great work they are undertaking for our community. I continue to make the case for a healthcare hub in Borehamwood and will follow developments closely.

I recently visited Schopwick Surgery in Elstree, who were recently rated overall as *Outstanding* by the Care Quality Commission, to meet with the Partners, patients, and others. It was great to see the hard work and excellent service the practice provides and how they offer the very best care and attention to their patients. The practice has also introduced a new initiative, aimed at lowering the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, such as high cholesterol, by making small lifestyle changes.



Oliver at Elysium Healthcare, Potters Bar

I also visited Elysium Healthcare, who are an independent provider of NHS specialist mental health services, based in Potters Bar. They offer a safe and nurturing environment to support and aid recovery of young people suffering from complex needs. It was a pleasure to meet with the hardworking staff who work tirelessly to improve the lives of others and who continue to deliver this important specialist care.

I was also delighted by the Government's recent announcement, confirming a fully funded new state of the art hospital on the Watford General Hospital site, which will be built by 2030. I have worked closely with Dean Russell MP to help secure this, and this commitment will support my constituents from Bushey, Radlett and beyond. I know how important this hospital is to our community, it is used by many local residents, including myself – my son was born there. It will provide much needed services for our community in one place locally.

As we celebrated 75 years of our National Health Service, I was delighted to nominate West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospital NHS Trust's Virtual Hospital Programme in this year's NHS Parliamentary Awards.

Following my visit to Watford General in March, I was very pleased to nominate them for the prestigious Excellence in Healthcare Award after seeing first-hand the ground-breaking care they can provide through this programme. Their commitment to transforming and improving patient outcomes is exemplary and I was thrilled that they were awarded *Highly Commended* in their category.



Oliver at Watford General Hospital with Dean Russell MP

Education

It is also right that as our community continues to grow, we need to invest in new schools and facilities. I am therefore delighted that a new special free school will be opening in September 2024 in Potters Bar. This is a significant step in our commitment to expand provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities and I know the delivery of these additional school places will be very much welcomed in the local community as it continues to grow.

And of course, I continue to speak to students of all ages across the constituency. I have enjoyed some great visits to our brilliant local schools and to chat to pupils and answering their many questions. It is great to see them showing a genuine interest in politics at such a young age and I am always pleased to provide insight into my role as their local Member of Parliament.

Our Vibrant Community

One of our great strengths in Hertsmere is the range of small local businesses, hardworking charities and community groups that we have. Likewise, one of the great joys of being Hertsmere's MP has been making a huge range of informative and enjoyable visits to these around the borough.

A highlight was returning to Bushey Acoustic Festival to once again open this brilliant community event dedicated to the performing arts. It was a fantastic day with over 80 local artists, and I thank Raymond Coffer for once again organising such a great community event. Roll on next year!



Oliver with Raymond Coffer at Bushey Acoustic Festival



Oliver at Borehamwood Boxing Club, Cowley Hill

It was also great to visit Borehamwood Boxing Club, off Aycliffe Road in Cowley Hill, which has recently undergone a major refurbishment project to improve the gym area. There was a great atmosphere, and I chatted to lots of local lads who have given up their time to help work on the new gym. I know that amateur boxing clubs like these make a huge

contribution to their communities, supporting young boys and men who often come from difficult backgrounds. I look forward to visiting again to see the completed gym!

It was also a privilege to meet with the addiction therapy charity, *The Living Room*, which helps adults across Hertfordshire, including those across Hertsmere, to abstain from addictions, such as drug, alcohol and behavioural. It was clear from meeting those who have directly benefited from the therapy that *The Living Room* plays a vital part in our community and truly saves lives.

I also visited *The Sewing Studio* by Bunmi Okon, at Aycliffe Road in Borehamwood. I had a great time joining Bunmi at one of her Saturday children's sewing classes. It is a fantastic opportunity for children to learn how to sew and develop their skills. A real gem in our community!



Oliver at The Living Room, Watford



Oliver at Give.Help.Share in Elstree

Another highlight was visiting Give.Help.Share in Elstree to present Amanda and Jaqueline with their Points of Light Award. This Award recognises the hard work outstanding volunteers do their community, in this case throughout Hertsmere for children in need of food and health and food education.

It was a delight to join local residents in a Step2Skills class and speak to those at Step2Skills about the great work they are doing for our community. This initiative was set up to help people learn new skills and to prepare them for employment and volunteering opportunities.

And of course, it is always great to catch up with residents while I am out and about in the constituency. I have held local advice surgeries across the constituency, including with local councillors, and have taken up many causes on behalf of residents. I prepare them for employment and volunteering opportunities.

Oliver at The Radlett Centre holding a local advice surgery.



As we approach a new Parliamentary session, we will again witness a defining moment in our nation's history as we witness King Charles III's first King's Speech at this year's State Opening of Parliament. We have faced some difficult months as a nation, however the decisive actions that the Government has taken is working, but we must stick to the plan. The King's Speech will be an opportunity to highlight our future priorities as we tackle the issues that matter most to the people of this country.

Finally, I look forward to upholding my first duty, which is to serve you as your Member of Parliament. As always, I am here to help so please do get in touch with me at oliver@oliverdowden.com.



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