

Promoted by Oliver Dowden MP of 3 Vision House, Station Road, Borehamwood, WD6 1DE.



The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP Member of Parliament for Hertsmere End of Term Report – Christmas 2023

As we approach Christmas, 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.

2023 has been another eventful, tempestuous, and challenging year. I know that many in the Jewish community will continue to feel the aftershock of the events of 7 October. It is difficult to find words to describe the barbarity of the Hamas terror attacks that we witnessed in the last couple of months in Israel. As a staunch friend of Israel and the Jewish community I will continue in my unwavering support. I hope you all can take comfort in the strength and togetherness that the community has already shown. The spirit of light and hope will ultimately prevail over darkness.

So, as we face some hard challenges moving into 2024, I am of course always guided by the interests of our local community, and will always continue to uphold my first duty, serving the people of Hertsmere as your Member of Parliament.

I will be 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 GP surgeries.



Oliver at Bushey Synagogue with Chief Rabbi Mirvis

As always, a report of this length cannot cover everything, so do visit my Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or website for further updates.

Reaffirming my Commitment to the Jewish Community

I know that this is a deeply worrying time for the Jewish community. The merciless attacks of 7 October, which saw the degrading slaughter of over one thousand civilians, including so many women, children and babies offends every value we hold dear.



Oliver at Bushey Synagogue with Chief Rabbi Mirvis

I have been clear in deeply moving ceremonies that were held in Bushey and Borehamwood synagogues that I view this not just as an attack on the people of Israel or the Jewish community, but on all of us. It is an affront to decency, rightness and humanity.

I have also convened meetings with local Rabbis and Jewish representatives from across Hertsmere to discuss government action and fears the community have at this difficult time around security and freedom

of expression. I will always stand firm against antisemitism and in defence of the freedom of the Jewish community as an integral part of British society – both in government and as a local MP.

More recently, I was honoured to join Chief Rabbi Mirvis, residents, and local faith leaders at the Vigil for Hostages in Borehamwood Shopping Park. While I stood united in praying for the safe return of hostages, I also made clear that the Government will stand four-square behind Israel's efforts to free hostages.



Oliver at the Vigil for Hostages, Borehamwood

Like many readers, I also fear for consequences of the 7 October attacks on our streets here in the UK. We must guard against the terror and hate of this attack spilling over to terror and hate against the Jewish community. I have been appalled by the conduct we have seen on our streets. I do not believe the marches have shown a tolerant society and I have been clear about my grave concerns regarding them.

Whether we see blatantly antisemitic placards or hear cries of ‘*from the river to the sea*’ and ‘*jihad, jihad*’, I know this intimidates the Jewish community across our country. When this is combined with the alarming scenes we have seen in our train stations, on the tube and more locally with the Israeli flag at Borehamwood and Elstree Town Council being defaced or school children being verbally abused, we should be asking ourselves, Jewish or not, whether this is acceptable to our society as a whole.

Jewish Lives Matter. Antisemitism is racism, full stop. The same abhorrence that we should show towards antisemitism. As your local MP and as Deputy Prime Minister, I will continue to make this argument.

It has been an honour for me to be included in the traditions of the Jewish community over the last eight years of being your local Member of Parliament. The past two months have been exceptionally difficult, and I hope you were all able to feel a sense of hope and light over Chanukah this year. Across the eight nights of celebration, I was pleased to join members of the Jewish community in lighting the Menorah.

I want to take this opportunity to express my continued commitment, especially now, as we stand together in fighting hatred, intolerance, and discrimination.

Defending the 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



Oliver at the top of Aldenham Church



*Oliver with Cllr Harvey Cohen and Cllr Morris
Bright lighting the Menorah*

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 long been campaigning to get the Housing Secretary to look again at the approach to areas like Hertsmere. We are exceptional in that almost all the borough’s un-developed land is green belt. Until now, we have been constrained by heavy handed housing targets, which force inappropriate decisions on local councils without any

consideration of our individual circumstances in Hertsmere. Earlier this year, I was pleased that these concerns were recognised in the revised approach being taken by the Housing Department.

This week, the Secretary of State announced a long-term plan for housing, in which he announced a series of reforms to the planning system. One of the reforms makes clear that green belt boundaries are not required to be reviewed or altered if this would be the only means of meeting the borough's housing targets. Further reforms will mean that local authorities will be able to reject development if it would significantly alter the character of an area, which I know is of grave concern to constituents in Hertsmere.

I have visited and spoken out against numerous planning proposals in Hertsmere, where residents have expressed their concern about development on greenbelt. This includes my recent visit to Letchmore Heath, where Chiltern Green Energy have submitted a planning application to build a Battery Energy Storage System on a 30-acre site just outside of the village. I share the concerns of local residents about the effect this proposal would have on our green spaces as well as the potential fire risks. Like me, local residents are strongly opposed to the proposal. It is not right that we have development like this built in a community where it would significantly alter the character of the area and impinge on the green belt.



Oliver at Letchmore Heath

I am also aware of residents' concerns over ongoing applications which are currently being investigated by the Planning Inspectorate. I have serious concerns over applications such as Shenley Hill and the proposed Solar Farm on the land North of Elstree Aerodrome. I do think it is important that the Planning Inspectorate considers whether the scale of both developments are appropriate for our local community.

I understand that the Woodcock Hill Village Green Committee have gained permission to fight the Judicial Review decision over the Deregistration and Exchange of land of the village green land at Woodcock Hill. This would be a huge disappointment for the community, and they have my full support in fighting their case.

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



Oliver at Shenley United Synagogue

around the borough. A highlight was joining in with Rosh Hashana celebrations at Shenley United Synagogue and making some traditional honey cakes for everyone and answering some very interesting questions.

Amidst Diwali celebrations this year, I received a warm welcome to the Oshwal Centre in Northaw. I had the pleasure of meeting with executive members of the Oshwal Association of the UK, which

represents the largest Jain community in the UK.

I was also pleased to join a female business initiative panel supporting women across Hertfordshire. Make It Your Business is a fantastic nationwide initiative encouraging and supporting women to start or grow their business. It was great to see so many Hertfordshire women in attendance, particularly local Radlett resident, Cal Graham, a director at property business, 'Wayhome', which helps people across England to buy their first home.



Oliver at the Oshwal Centre, Northaw

It is always a delight to visit care homes across Herts mere to meet with elderly residents, many of whom have lived in the local area for decades. I have had the pleasure of visiting the Radley Care Home in Borehamwood and Cooperscroft Care Home in Potters Bar. I thoroughly enjoyed taking questions from residents and hearing about how the community has changed during their lifetimes.



Oliver at The Radley Care Home, Borehamwood

I have also had the opportunity of meeting residents of Cecil Rosen Court in Bushey which is one of 7 sites run the Jewish Blind and Disabled charity and

provides independent living and support. Resident highlighted their grave concerns when crossing the High Road in Bushey as they leave Perrin Close due to the speed of cars in both directions. They expressed the need for double yellow lines outside Perrin Close, the implementation of a 20mph zone, and an island crossing being brought closer to Perrin Close. Conservative Bushey Councillors and I are continuing to make the case for these changes with the Highways department and will update residents accordingly.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet constituent, Moksha Roy, and present her with a Points of Light Award. Moksha received the award for her exceptional service advocating the UN Sustainable Development Goals and campaigning on



Oliver at the King George Recreation Ground with Moksha Roy

great to be shown around by Ken Haslar and to hear about all of the hard work that went in to make the event such a huge success!

I have also met with Hertsmere's Chief Inspector, Mark Bilsdon to discuss the protection of residents and crime in the borough. It was interesting to hear the work being carried out to tackle hate crime, car theft, and possession of knives and drugs in the local area. I also had the opportunity to discuss what additional steps are being taken to protect the Jewish community at this time.

It was a pleasure to meet with third-generation tenant farmer, Eveyy Hunter at Pursley Farm in Shenley. We



Oliver at Cecil Rosen Court, Bushey

issues such as pollution from microplastics. At just 7 years old she is already a passionate campaigner, advocating for sustainability and the reduction of pollution.

Another highlight was visiting Aldenham Art Festival to see an array of original art work from over 80 artists. The festival, which took place at Aldenham Church, showcased contemporary and traditional works of art. It was



Oliver with Chief Inspector, Mark Bilsdon

discussed the most pressing issues facing the local rural businesses, including internet connectivity and public rights of way. I even got the opportunity to see their grain store and fantastic Christmas trees they had to offer.



Oliver on the Winyard Ward, Watford General Hospital

More recently, it was a pleasure to visit Watford General Hospital to deliver Christmas treats to patients on the Winyard Ward. I was also pleased to meet with Alison Rosen, Chief Executive Officer of Raise, West Hertfordshire Hospitals Charity to hear about their brilliant Christmas winter appeal, 'Give with a heart this Christmas'. You can find more information on Raise and their Christmas appeal here: <https://raisewestherts.org.uk/winter-appeal/>.

Infrastructure

As many of you are aware, the Government announced plans for a full funded new state of the art hospital on the Watford General Hospital site, which will be built by 2030. Recently, I met with Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Coats and Chief Operating Officer, Mary Bhatti to discuss the progress of the new hospital.

I know that the Trust is continuing to work closely with colleagues in the New Hospital Programme to map out a timeline to the opening of the new facility, and I look forward to seeing this exciting project progress. Not only will the new hospital provide much needed services for our



Oliver visiting the Robotics Programme

community, it will also be crucial in delivering the state-of-the-art facilities that they and the staff deserve.



Oliver at the new Watford General Hospital Site

It was also fantastic to see first-hand the robotic programme at Watford General Hospital. The game changing equipment enables surgeons to carry out robotic-assisted surgeries on patients. Not only does this innovative machinery reduce post-operative pain, but also increases recovery

time, leading to earlier discharge from hospital. I even had the change to try my hand at the trainer simulator!

School Visits

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.

I have had the privilege of visiting pupils at Hertswood Academy in Borehamwood and taking questions from the Year 13 politics students. It was great to see the school doing so well and full of bright young minds.



Oliver at Yavneh Primary School, Borehamwood

I was also pleased to celebrate UK Parliament Week 2023 with students from Yavneh Primary School who showed a genuine interest in the role of a local Member of Parliament and what happens in Westminster. I was also very pleased to have some time with Yavneh College Politics students who rightly outlined their concerns over the ongoing situation in Israel. I do hope I was able to provide some assurance over the Government's support for Israel and their right to self-defence.



Oliver at Sacred Heart Primary School, Bushey

Another highlight was joining pupils at Sacred Heart Primary School, Bushey in participating in the 'Joy of Moving' Programme, led by Ferrero UK. The programme, in partnership with Watford FC Community Sports and Education Trust aims to get children moving and learning about active lifestyles. It was great to spend the afternoon playing dodgeball with pupils and learning about what makes a healthy meal.

Labour-Liberal Democrat Coalition Bin Charges

It is very disappointing that the new Labour-Liberal Democrat Coalition administration have decided to charge residents for their green bins. For 18 years under the Conservative run Hertsmere Borough Council, the collection service of garden and food waste was free of charge. For 18 years under the Conservative run Hertsmere Borough Council, the collection

service of garden and food waste was free of charge. The £50 per bin charge will come into force from April 2024. It is expected to affect 39,000 homes out of the 45,000 across the borough. This is the last thing residents need after their police cuts and Labour Mayor's ULEZ charges.

Surgeries

It was a pleasure to join Shenley residents at a public meeting where I was joined by PCC David Lloyd, Leader of Hertsmere Conservatives, Cllr Morris Bright and Shenley Councillors. Many residents raised their concerns over local development, crime and highway issues which I have taken up on their behalf.

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 in Shenley. More recently, I held my final local advice surgery of 2023 at the Radlett Centre and have taken up many causes on behalf of residents.

As we approach a new Parliamentary session, 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

Finally, I would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a healthy, happy New Year!



Oliver at The Radlett Centre