



News from **Westminster** Feb-Mar, 2023

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Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



Great turnout for the Washington Central ward local election campaign launch, for our local Labour candidate Beth Jones, in Washington Village – for 2023.

Taking on a new challenge.

It has been my honour to serve as Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to Keir Starmer for the past two years, facilitating the relationship between the Leader and members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) behind the scenes, and I am equally honoured to accept the appointment by Keir to be the Chair of the Commons Finance Committee. This committee considers expenditure on services for the House of Commons and has particular responsibility for the preparation and detailed scrutiny of the House's budgets. I will endeavour to ensure that every penny of taxpayers' money spent on the House (for example in procurement and contract management) meets high standards in its value for money. As Chair to this Committee, I will then also have a place on the House of Commons Commission, chaired by the Speaker, which is responsible for the administration and services of the Commons. I know that Jessica Morden MP, who is taking over from me as Keir's PPS, will be fantastic. I am very excited to be taking on this new challenge. I also look forward to having more time to campaign on the issues that are incredibly close to my heart, such as free school meals, battling ticket abuse and galvanising support for the Leamside Line campaign.

Labour's missions going into the next General Election.

Labour's five missions for a better Britain will form the backbone of Labour's election manifesto and the pillars of the next Labour government. They will allow our country to break out of the cycle of 'sticking-plaster' politics and get our confidence and our future back.

Our plan for a mission-driven government that will work relentlessly towards measurable long-term national goals. We will:

- **Secure the highest sustained growth in the G7**
- **Make Britain a clean energy superpower**
- **Build an NHS fit for the future**
- **Break down the barriers to opportunity at every stage**
- **Make Britain's streets safe**

The missions will be built on a foundation of a stable economy, strong armed forces and security at our borders and will usher in a decade of national renewal. Missions can only be achieved with sustained focus and partnership; business working with unions, the private sector partnering with the public sector, and national and local governments hand in hand. Rishi Sunak's promises are designed to get the Tories through the next few months, and attempt to paper over the cracks the Tories have caused over the last 13 years – they are nothing more than sticking-plaster promises, with no ambition for Britain.

First meeting of Dyslexia and Other SpLDs APPG in 2023.

On Tuesday I chaired the first meeting in 2023 of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dyslexia and Other SpLDs. We attracted an impressive 82 attendees. In the meeting we explored a potential extension of the current screening provision in KS1&2 as a result of the new policy framework paper: Empowering our Teachers and the Children that they teach. A policy framework paper highlighting how a universal light-touch screener can be implemented by teachers for early identification of children's learning difficulties. During the meeting we were also able to discuss the topic of Early Identification of Dyslexia and Other SpLDs and the importance of early intervention and support to improving the outcomes for children and young people with SEN.

Campaign launches



I joined St Anne's ward (pictured above) and Washington Central ward (pictured overleaf) on February 4th for back-to-back campaign launches. Catherine Hunter and Beth Jones received a great reception on the doorsteps and are working hard for their communities. Since losing the General Election in 2019, Labour has steadily rebuilt relationships with voters to ensure their voices are heard and priorities understood. I am looking forward to supporting candidates in Washington and Sunderland West as we approach May's local elections.

Sainsbury's visit, Washington



Last Friday, I visited Sainsbury's at the Galleries in Washington. I met with staff who have worked for the company for many years, one I had met had reached 46 years! Sainsbury's has engaged with the local community by donating food to School Breakfast Clubs, local charities and Washington Community Food Project. Sainsbury's also informed me about the work they are doing during the cost-of-living crisis. They have given staff a 10% pay increase in the past year, provided free food to staff during shifts and increased staff discounts around payday so they can stock up for the following month.

Gentoo meeting

Earlier this month I met with Louise Basset, the newly appointed interim Chief Executive of Gentoo and her colleagues Emily Cox MBE and Kerry Leng. I was happy to learn about Gentoo's plans for 2023, and most importantly how they will continue to support their tenants through the Cost-of-Living Crisis. I am assured that Gentoo remains committed to our community and that Louise has hit the ground running in her new role. My team and I look forward to working closely with Gentoo throughout the remainder of the year.

Parliament turns Teal for Ovarian Cancer



We began March with Teal Heroes, the biggest event of the year for the Ovarian Cancer APPG. The event encourages MPs to dress up and have their photo taken as their very own teal hero. Beneath the laughter and good spirit, we took the time to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of Ovarian Cancer and remember those who have tragically lost their lives. Since I established the APPG in 2010, I am happy to see the great progress we have made. This has been a challenging winter for the NHS, therefore continued representation of those suffering from ovarian cancer and their families remains critical. I look forward to a promising spring when I will be holding further talks with cancer specialists and those in government.

President Zelenskyy's Westminster Hall address



It was an honour to hear President Zelenskyy's inspiring address to members of the Commons and Lords in Westminster Hall last month. It once again cemented the fact that we must stand shoulder to shoulder with our Ukrainian brothers and sisters to defeat Putin's evil and illegal war.

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