

# Caroline Dinenage

December 2012  
Issue 24

Your local MP reporting back from Westminster



## MP for Gosport, Lee-on-the-Solent, Stubbington and Hill Head

With the festive period well and truly upon us it's hard to believe that this is my final monthly newsletter of 2012.

I kicked off December by attending Christ Church's Christmas Fayre on Stoke Rd, where I thoroughly enjoyed the vast array of treats and sweets on offer! Alverstoke Junior School Christmas Fayre was also buzzing, with the choir on good form and lots of stalls offering a host of Christmas goodies, there was something to get everyone in the Christmas spirit.

Up in Westminster, I was delighted to invite Stubbington's bravery award winning hero, PC Alex Stypulkowski and his family on a visit to Parliament. Our police do an incredibly demanding job to help keep us safe and PC Stypulkowski's courage is a true inspiration. I also met with Hampshire's superb outgoing Chief Constable, Alex Marshall – with crime down five years in a row, burglaries at the lowest rate for 30 years and Hants the 3<sup>rd</sup> cheapest force in the country for tax payers; his successor will certainly have some big shoes to fill!

As a strong supporter of early-years learning, I highlighted the need to raise the standards of mathematics in schools, during questions to the Department for Education. I voiced my concern after figures showed an alarming number of primary-age school children were over-reliant on calculators and lacking mental arithmetic skills, and was pleased to learn that the Government will be removing calculators from primary tests to make sure students master the basics.

Local readers will know how vital shipbuilding and the associated supply chain are to our local economy. With concerns for the future jobs of hundreds of workers in mind, I met with BAE bosses to further the case for keeping Portsmouth Shipyard open. Any threat to the shipbuilding or dockyard would have disastrous implications for the entire South-Hampshire sub-region and so I also met with other regional MPs to ensure we are all working together in fight to preserve these vital local jobs. I took these concerns straight to the Prime Minister during PMQs where I sought reassurances that Portsmouth would remain integral to the building and export of warships and the baseport of our future surface fleet. I was pleased the Prime Minister shared my view that Portsmouth would always be the home of the Royal Navy and, with 15% of the Dockyard staff from Gosport, over the coming weeks I will continue to do all I can to protect local jobs.

This month also saw the publication of the long-awaited Leveson Report; I am in favour of the press being independently monitored in a more robust way and look forward to seeing how the forthcoming draft Bill suggests that this would best be achieved.



*Alverstoke Junior School choir in action*



*With PC Stypulkowski and family*



*Asking PM for reassurances about Portsmouth Shipyard*

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*With Arctic Convoy veterans*

Regular readers will know that I've long campaigned for our heroic Arctic Convoy veterans of WW2 to be honoured with a specific medal. This month finally saw the campaign come to a triumphant end, as the Prime Minister announced the decision to award the veterans with the Arctic Star. I'm thrilled that the veterans' unimaginable bravery has finally been recognised, my only regret is that it has taken so long to achieve this, many of the heroic servicemen that deserved this medal are no longer alive to receive it.

As Chair of the APPG for Local Growth, I held a productive meeting with Lord Heseltine, where we discussed his review into delivering growth with particular focus on the role Enterprise Zones can play in assisting our economic recovery. This month also featured the Chancellor's Autumn Statement - having written to colleagues at HM Treasury expressing my opposition to January's planned fuel duty increase; I was delighted to hear that the government has now scrapped the scheduled 3p rise, meaning fuel is now a staggering 13p per litre less than it would have been under the previous Government. This offers some help for those feeling the pinch in this tough economic climate, as does the news that, by April 2013, 37,402 of the lowest paid people in Gosport will get tax cuts and 1,514 people will be lifted out of tax altogether. On top of all that the latest Office of National Statistics figures show the biggest quarterly fall in unemployment since 2001.

Having secured a meeting with the Defence Minister during last month's debate in to the tragic case of toddler Katrice Lee, who went missing in Germany 30 years ago, I travelled to Royal Military Police HQ in Bulford with Katrice's mother and sister. Sharon and Natasha Lee conducted themselves with the same courage and dignity they have shown for the last thirty years and the meeting was another step towards finally getting these remarkable ladies the answers they need and the apology they deserve.



*With members of the Lee Family*

My own children are almost bursting with the Christmas excitement by now and I know Santa has a few tricks up his sleeve, but it's also the time of year to remember those who aren't so fortunate. As a supporter of Save the Children, I donned my most festive woolly and took part in the inaugural Christmas Jumper Day to raise some much needed funds for this important charity. I also helped to distribute food hampers with the lovely volunteers at Gosport's Waterside Community Church, as ever I was overwhelmed by the brilliant community spirit in our local area.



*Helping pack food hampers at Waterside Church*

All that remains is for me to thank you for reading my newsletters in 2012, especially to the many of you who have contacted me over the year. Thank you for your words of encouragement, kindness, advice, information (and yes, sometimes a ticking off!). I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Best wishes

*Caroline*

## GET IN TOUCH

Please feel free to contact me on any issue, or to find out when my next surgery is. It is also possible to come up to Parliament to have an official tour. I'm always happy to arrange tours of the Palace of Westminster and Big Ben for my constituents. Just please contact my office to book at least two months in advance to make sure you get a place - the tours are very popular!

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