

CAROLINE DINENAGE MP

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR GOSPORT

NEWSLETTER

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I don't think January is anyone's favourite month - it's certainly not mine! However I have been taking my mind off those cold, dark January days by keeping very busy with my role, representing the people of Gosport, Lee on the Solent, Stubbington and Hill Head both in Westminster and in the constituency.

I couldn't resist beating the New Year blues by joining Queenie for a yummy hot chocolate at [Queenie's Travelling Teapot](#).

I know that this is a favourite destination for visitors to Hill Head beach and I'm extremely glad I visited!

The Teapot ladies are hoping to secure a pitch along the Gosport waterfront too in the months ahead and I'm keen to see great home grown businesses like this thrive and expand, creating local jobs.



I was also delighted to meet the winners of Gosport's Best Independent Shop 2021 - Liz and the team at [Alverstoke Village Hardware](#), to hand them their award and a bottle of House of Commons bubbly! The competition saw over 2,000 constituents nominating their favourite small business. The diversity and quality of the nominees really underlines our strong local spirit of enterprise and creativity.



While both of these flourishing businesses are run by brilliant, enterprising women, women-led business have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and I took the opportunity to raise this issue with the [Women & Equalities Ministers in Parliamentary Questions](#).

I was pleased the Omicron [Hospitality and Leisure Grant](#) was announced by the Government in December, however, it's even better for these sectors that the Prime Minister took the decision not to restrict them over the Christmas and New Year period and has now eased Covid restrictions.

It is also good news that [testing measures](#) for eligible fully vaccinated arrivals to England will be removed from 4am on the 11th February - meaning that families travelling abroad for half-term or Easter have one less thing to worry about when planning their trip.



I was delighted to welcome [Police and Crime Commissioner](#), Donna Jones, and Flick Drummond MP to Gosport to meet our ground-breaking Oarsome Chance charity.

[Oarsome Chance](#) work with young people struggling in the mainstream school system and really and turn lives around by teaching skills, based around boat building, sailing and water-sports, as well as offering fantastic support and learning opportunities.

It was likewise great to join Meoncross school virtually for a Q&A Session as part of their 'online trip' to Parliament. Don't forget that any school can arrange a real or virtual trip to Parliament via [UK Parliament Education Centre](#) and I'm always happy to pop and meet my youngest constituents!

This month I also visited Gosport Job Centre Plus who have helped 177 local young people into employment through the Kickstart Scheme, which supports unemployed 16-25 year olds into work. The dedicated local JCP crew are one of the most successful branches in our region.

With many older children considering their options for post-16 education, Apprenticeships can offer a fantastic route into a career and [National Apprenticeship Week](#) aims to highlight some of the great opportunities available..



This month has been a busy one in Westminster. I [spoke in the debate on the Draft Online Safety Bill](#). As Digital Minister for two years I was proud to play a part in developing in this world-leading legislation. It was good to hear cross party commitment during the debate to making the UK the safest place in the world to go online.

I also [asked the Secretary of State](#) for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, for reassurance that Gosport will benefit from the Government's focus on Levelling Up.

As the newly elected member of the Women and Equalities Select Committee, this month I attended my first meetings, discussing a range of issues including: Equality in the Asylum process; Menopause and the workplace; and Ethnicity pay gap reporting.

Mid-month I appeared on BBC Politics South, discussing a number of topical issues and all things politics! You can catch my interview [here](#).

Our very busy new Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire, Donna Jones, was back in Gosport. This time at the Discovery Centre for an event organised by our local Cllr and former Police Officer, Lesley Meenaghan.

Donna joined Lesley and myself to meet with local residents to discuss their concerns about crime and policing issues in our area - which included everything from shop-lifting to anti-social behaviour and car crime to parking.

She also talked us through her brand new action plan to tackle some of the key challenges that we face across the county [‘More Police Safer Streets’](#).



I also visited Ravens Hall Veterans Group in Gosport to meet members and see the support provided in action. The session that I attended included an external speaker from [All Call Signs](#), the peer support network for veterans, serving military personnel and their families.

I was pleased the Government announced the [Veterans Strategy Action Plan](#) which promises £70m in funding and contains 60 commitments. As Gosport has such a large population of serving armed forces and veterans, this will mean a lot.

In [Defence Oral Parliamentary Questions](#) I took the opportunity to stress that Ministry of Defence procurement and disposals, including Gosport's Fort Blockhouse, must learn the lessons of Haslar in the early 2000s and be made

in the best interests of taxpayers and local communities.

The Gosport Taskforce - which I formed back in 2016 to navigate the disposal of local Government owned sites - met again this month to discuss the future of a range of sites including Fort Blockhouse and Haslar Immigration Removal Centre. We also had an update on the [National Infrastructure Bank](#) and how it might be used to support local regeneration projects.

RAVENS HALLS



THE VETERAN & SERVING ARMED FORCES SUPPORT GROUP

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WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU!



In local transport news I am pleased to hear that the Millennium Bridge is back in full operation! After nagging the Council about the lack of action on repairing the lifting mechanism for over a decade, I'm happy to see this work has now taken place.

I met Hampshire County Council Transport boss, Cllr Rob Humby to discuss local transport issues including progress on the long awaited Stubbington bypass which is due to open in the coming months.

Like many people I was bitterly disappointed with the independent Planning Inspectorate's decision on [Persimmon Homes](#) application this month. Regular readers will be aware that I have consistently opposed a number of previous developments which threaten the strategic gap between Gosport and Fareham and our limited green spaces.

Please rest assured that I always have, and always will represent the concerns of my constituents on developments of this nature, and do all I can to protect our area.

The Gosport Sea Wall is the vital barrier which helps protect the integrity of Portsmouth Harbour. Portsmouth Naval Base, the Commercial Port and hundreds of homes and businesses which surround the harbour depend upon it being kept in good condition. I arranged a multi agency meeting to ensure there is a strong plan in place to see the wall is properly maintained.

I also caught up this month with the new owners of the Daedalus Waterfront area. They have exciting plans for the Lee on the Solent site, which include a mixture of employment, heritage and housing - keep your eyes peeled for further news on this in the months ahead.

This month marked 77 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. I signed the [Holocaust Educational Trust](#) Book of Commitment to honour the millions who were murdered during the Holocaust and pay tribute to the survivors who made it their life's work to educate future generations.

Each year's HMD has a different theme, decided by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, as a focus for educational and commemorative events. This year's theme was 'One Day'. It was a theme which was captured beautifully in a poignant and memorable service at [Elson Church](#), which I was extremely privileged to attend.



Other announcements from Parliament this month included:

- [BBC License Fee](#) has been frozen, meaning that instead of the planned rise to over £180 per year, it will now remain fixed at £159 until April 2024.

- The building of [smart motorways](#) has been paused until a full 5 years' worth of data is available. Instead £900m has been invested to improve safety on existing motorways.
- [4,000 new magistrates](#) are being recruited to help reduce the current court backlog. This is the largest [recruitment](#) effort in the 650-year history of the magistracy.
- The launch of [Help to Grow Digital](#) which provides advice and funding for businesses to flourish.
- The Department for Transport has updated the [Highway Code](#). Changes include creating a hierarchy of road users that will ensure those who can do the greatest harm (those driving large vehicles) have the greatest responsibility to reduce danger they pose to other road users. Stronger priorities for pedestrians and cyclists at junctions and crossings are also being implemented.

Finally we welcomed a fabulous new member of my team at the start of January as Megan joined my Westminster office. As always if you need any assistance or have any thoughts on how we could improve our service, please contact my team and I at caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk.



Best wishes
Caroline Dinenage

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