

CAROLINE DINENAGE MP

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR GOSPORT

NEWSLETTER

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I do hope the New Year has got off to a positive start for you all. January can often feel a bit depressing, as all those good resolutions fade while the extra waistline inches of those mince pies stubbornly remain. So, I'm determined to cheer us all up by starting this first newsletter of 2024 with some good news!

Good News #1 From this month, many Gosport, Lee-on-the-Solent, Stubbington, and Hill Head constituents, in fact 27 million people across the country, will see more money on their wage slips. This is due to the Government's cut in [National Insurance](#) - from 12% to 10% which will save someone on the average annual salary £450 per year.

Good News #2 This week the Government launched [NHS Pharmacy First](#), which has already been adopted by all 16 pharmacies across Gosport, Lee on the Solent and Stubbington. This service will enable pharmacists to treat and prescribe for seven common health conditions: sinusitis, sore throats, earache, infected insect bites, impetigo, shingles, and UTIs. While taking the pressure off GPs and improving patient care, it will also provide additional funding to pharmacies.

Good News #3 This month the Government announced an additional £600 million for local councils in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. I was one of forty MPs who pushed for an increase in local financial support with a [letter to the Secretary of State Michael Gove](#). I am very happy that the Government responded with an extra cash injection which will help reduce pressures on children's services.



Good News #4 [The Animal Welfare Bill passed through the House of Commons. This prohibits the overseas export of live animals for slaughter. In my family of animal lovers this news was welcomed with a rare video broadcast from Dave Dinenage, the dog.](#) Dave was also keen to promote the Pet Abduction Bill, which kicked off this month. These are just the latest in the very long list of laws passed under this Government which make the UK the best country in the world for animal welfare.

Good News #5 The first phase of a new Gosport bus interchange is now open, with a new taxi rank and passenger drop off on South Street. It's part of a package of public transport improvements, funded by the Government's Transforming Cities Fund, that will make it easier to travel around Gosport and beyond.

Good News #6 The brand-new A&E Department at Queen Alexandra hospital is on track to open next winter. I never

understood why this wasn't upgraded as part of the big, expensive PFI project to expand QA in the early 2000s. Quite simply the current provision is woefully inadequate, I campaigned hard to secure £58.3m for the new facility. It was good to visit the building site, almost double the size of the current A&E when complete, with a dedicated children's entrance and much improved facilities.



The new A&E can't come soon enough, recent Critical Incidents and ambulance delays at the QA have been a cause for concern. In Parliament this month I [met with the new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care](#), Victoria Atkins, to explain the issues and ask for more support to be given to Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust and the professionals who work there.



In the House of Commons Chamber, [I asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs](#), Johnny Mercer, about plans to improve the service provided by Veterans UK, in particular for a dedicated helpline to be made available for MP's enquiries on behalf of their constituents. Gosport has the highest proportion of veterans in the country, and it is currently extremely difficult to get swift advice. I was pleased with the Minister's assurances that the Department is looking at potential solutions.

Johnny Mercer said he wanted to improve Veterans Services in the UK, and he's delivering! If you are a Veteran, you can now [apply for a Veterans ID card](#). The process is simple and quick.

[I also met with the new Immigration Minister](#), Michael Tomlinson, to talk about progress on refurbishment of the Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) at Haslar. The site is due to reopen next winter as a secure 130 bed unit for foreign national offenders awaiting deportation. I requested the meeting with the Minister to highlight the need to keep local people informed about progress at the IRC. I am organising another public meeting for residents with Home Office staff and contractors in the spring, to make sure that everyone is kept up to speed. [Over 200 people attended a similar event last January](#), showing just how much interest there is about the site.



[In a question to the Business Minister, Kevin Hollinrake](#), I broke the news of the proposed strike action at the Gosport branch of ASDA. I recently met with local staff reps to hear their concerns, including low staffing levels and health and safety issues. The Minister has indicated that he will continue to monitor the situation closely and I have also heard from Asda HQ, who are keen to see the issues resolved.



I also caught up with Portsmouth FC CEO, Andrew Cullen, to discuss progress on the club's facilities and work across our communities, as well as our high hopes and crossed fingers for both Pompey and Boro' for this season!

In the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee we have also been looking into Football Governance, meeting with the Sport Minister, Stuart Andrew and [Chief Executives of the EFL and Premier League](#). We discussed the deadlock in negotiations over the how funds are filtered down from the Premier League to lower league clubs. [I encouraged the Sports Minister to urgently bring forward the Football Governance Bill](#) which will establish the much-needed Independent Regulator. Footie fans will understand the importance of a system to improve the way clubs are owned, run and financed.

[Bend It Like Beckham creator, Gurinder Chadha](#) also came to speak to the Committee this month about the challenges facing independent British filmmakers.

Back home in Gosport, business was combined with pleasure when my meeting with Andy Hulme, CEO of the [Hyde Group](#), took place against the backdrop of magnificent views from the very top of Harbour Tower on the Gosport waterfront. Hyde are the landlords of 600 properties across Gosport and Stubbington, including the five towers in the town centre. I took the opportunity to ask Andy for answers to all the questions residents had shared with me in advance of the meeting.



I met with [Vivid Homes](#) CEO, Mark Perry, to discuss residents' queries, particularly regarding Royal Ark House. Alongside local Councillors, Maggie and Tony, I have been working through a number of issues on behalf of residents for some time and I'm pleased that a good number have been successfully resolved.

I also visited [StandardAero](#) at Fleetlands to talk about their exciting future plans, I hope that I will be able to update you with some good news very soon.

I was both honoured and daunted to be asked back to judge the Gosport Youth Speaks, youth debating competition run by the Gosport Rotary Club. I was so impressed with the quality of speech writing and delivery from all our young debaters. I wish the winners from Bay House School and 6th Form well as they proceed to the next, regional stage of the competition.

One of my best cures for the January blues has to be cake! Leaving the diet resolutions firmly in my wake, I've broken up most constituency Fridays with a lovely cuppa at one of our local cafes! The team at Tea Room in Lee definitely helped put me and Cllr John Beavis back on our feet with the magic of a teapot! And the [FirstLight](#)

[Trust](#) in Gosport revealed their fun activities planned for February, including yoga and cycling.



As always, you might have seen my team and I knocking on doors across the area most Fridays with my weekly 'Caroline Consults' survey.

This month we have been talking Policing and Crime with residents in Bridgemary, Rowner and Holbrook.

If I haven't yet had the chance to speak with you in person, please do share your thoughts [here](#).

I would also like to thank everyone who has nominated a volunteer who deserves recognition. I am relaunching my [annual Volunteers Reception in Parliament](#) that used to run pre-Covid, to thank those who give so much time and energy to help our community. I look forward to seeing the nominees in Westminster very soon!

In other news announced this month. Hundreds of domestic abuse survivors will receive cash payments of £2,500 to help flee their tormentors under a £2 million government scheme launched this month. Safeguarding Minister Laura Farris said the cash will give survivors "security and confidence" to leave.

Legislation boosting the amount private renters can receive via an increase in local housing allowances was introduced by Work and Pensions Secretary, Mel Stride.

Family hubs opened in 75 council areas for baby feeding and language development. And a national career structure for unpaid carers, including a new certificate qualification and £20 million for training was announced.

This week the Government [opened a consultation](#) on social housing reforms to crack down on rule breakers.

Lastly, a number of local people have contacted my office because they are concerned about [Gosport Borough Council](#)'s decision to no longer live monitor CCTV.

Some of the community groups who do such fantastic work supporting people across our area are organising a march in Gosport High Street to draw attention to their concerns about safety.

Meeting point is at Ferry Gardens at 5pm, Wednesday 7 February.

So, that's it for January! As ever, my team and I are here for any questions, thoughts or concerns you may have. Please do get in touch via caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk.

Best wishes
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