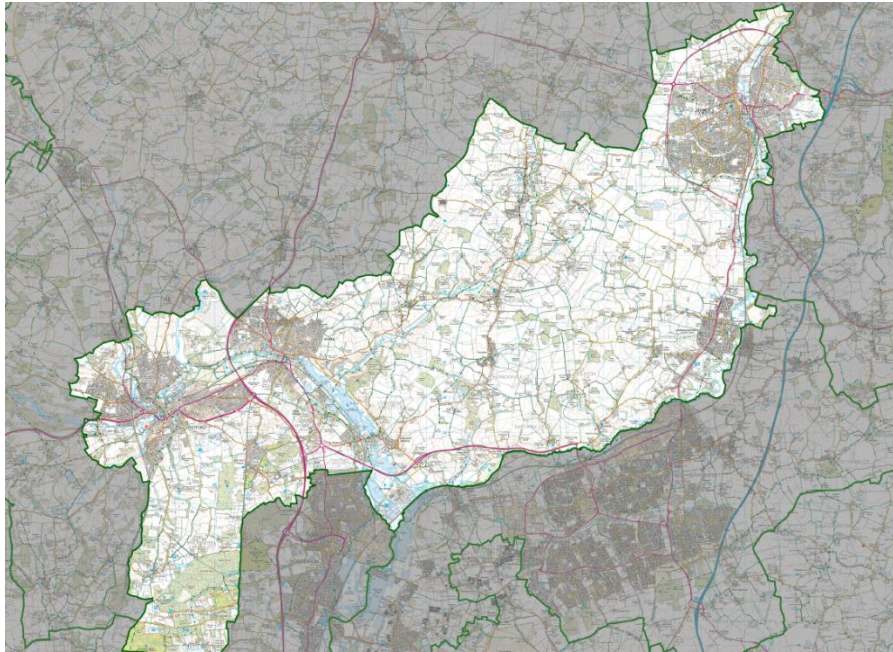




Julie Marson's Annual Review 2020



Hertford and Stortford



Introduction

Just over a year ago, the voters of Hertford and Stortford did me the great honour of electing me as their Member of Parliament.

To have the opportunity to serve my community and my country is the privilege of my life and I take my responsibility very seriously. I want to take this opportunity to share with constituents some of the work I have done this year.

I would like to say from the outset, it has been a tumultuous and difficult year for all of us and the level of work undertaken by my office has been unprecedented. I pay tribute to my wonderful team, who have worked relentlessly and with huge care and commitment to respond to the needs and requests of many thousands of constituents.

There is no training to be a Member of Parliament and nothing quite prepares you for what it entails. I was just starting to recruit a team, find an office and get to grips with the idiosyncratic conventions of Parliament when Covid-19 hit our country. It is a crisis which still preoccupies all MPs and has had a dramatic effect on all our work and objectives.

I have not been able to visit and meet in person as many people, organisations and businesses in our community as I would have liked, due to the pandemic restrictions, however I have engaged as much as possible using technology and look forward to the rest of this year, when we will recover from this terrible health and economic crisis and we can resume a more normal life.



Responding to the Covid-19 crisis

When the first lockdown was announced in March, everyone quickly had to adapt to a new normal. The role of my office changed dramatically, and all our energy and focus became centred around what we could do to support local people and our community as a whole. Over the course of the next few months, and still to this day, we set out to achieve measurable outcomes for the people of Hertford and Stortford which included:

1. Coordinating community volunteers to support vulnerable constituents.
2. Liaising with East Herts District Council and Hertfordshire County Council regarding support provision for constituents, such as tackling loneliness and providing supplies for those shielding.
3. Arranging for the return home of constituents stuck abroad, including from New Zealand, Bolivia and Colombia.
4. Providing advice and support to employees and business owners relating to Covid guidelines and restrictions and government support schemes, including Bounce Back Loans, CBILS, Grants, the Furlough Scheme and the Hardship Fund.
5. Giving a voice to care homes regarding supplies of PPE, including playing a direct role in persuading the Health Secretary to remove VAT on PPE for care homes.
6. Creating a webpage to signpost information, guidance and support for constituents facing acute challenges.
7. Handling a huge influx of casework via telephone and email on matters such as housing, domestic abuse, medical support and mental health support.
8. Liaising with Ministers and third parties regarding guidelines and support, including those not covered by Treasury support schemes such as company directors, local pubs, restaurants and those operating in the hospitality sector.
9. Providing support and advice to schools, parents and students regarding exam provision and university admissions.
10. Working with Hertford Hub and Bishop's Stortford BID to support local high streets and retail and hospitality businesses.
11. Asking questions in Parliament regarding district level restrictions and support for various local organisations and initiatives, such as police and healthcare services.

Working on key local issues

Despite only being a Member of Parliament for three months before the pandemic began, almost overnight I was able to see the huge change in types of casework I received. The pie chart below sets out each category of casework I have handled this year, although Covid-19 is not specified in the data.



Some of the most important work I have done for the local community in 2020 included:

1. Lobbying Herts Police and Crime Commissioner to reinvigorate stalled plans for the new Ware Police Office.
2. Working with CCGs and Department for Health and Social Care to upgrade and improve GP services in Hertford (Wallace House Surgery) and Bishop's Stortford (South Street Surgery).
3. Announcement of a brand-new Princess Alexandra Hospital as part of the Government's £2.8 billion commitment.
4. Support for local residents of Hunsdon, Eastwick, Widford and Gilston regarding the Harlow and Gilston Garden Towns developments, including liaising with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, various Ministers, the Secretary of State and other key stakeholders like Homes England.
5. Liaising with local residents and councillors to oppose any quarry at Briggens Estate, including raising the issue in Parliament at Business Questions.
6. Responding to Government Planning White Paper to oppose any increase in development targets for Hertford and Stortford, particularly on green belt land, and to support environmental and build quality issues.
7. Co-founding the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Chalk Streams, to lobby government to protect our local chalk streams.
8. Working with local councillors and Thames Water to solve recurrent flooding problems in Bishop's Stortford.
9. Working with local councillors and the Environment Agency to expedite restoration of the pedestrian bridge over the River Lea in Ware.

10. Working with local councillors and Hertfordshire County Council Highways Department to address safety and speeding issues in London Road, Hertford Heath.
11. Working with local councillors, BP and McDonald's to address safety and congestion concerns at Rush Green roundabout in Hertford.
12. Working as Vice Chair of the Innovation Corridor APPG, to raise profile and support for important business and infrastructure initiatives including the West Anglia Mainline.
13. Working with police, local farmers and the NFU to address rural crime, gaining commitment from Home Secretary to review the 1831 Game Act which regulates hare and deer coursing, a significant driver of local rural crime.
14. Working with major local employers such as GSK and Stansted Airport to represent views to Ministers.
15. Standing up for local farmers' interests during the Agriculture Bill this year, calling on the Government to use legislation to enable our farmers to access global markets in a way they have not been able to do in the past.
16. Supporting employment in Hertford and Stortford through my inaugural online Jobs and Apprenticeship's Fair, which had 27 exhibitors offering a huge array of employment opportunities and advice to people, young and old, in the constituency.

Using Parliament to promote national causes

As your Member of Parliament, I have sought to use my position to influence national politics in areas that will directly impact my constituents. These include:

1. Elected to Treasury Select Committee, a cross party Committee which scrutinises the expenditure, administration and policies of HM Treasury and its Ministers as well as associated public bodies including the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority.
 - a) This included 58 meetings across the year, questioning people such as the Governor of the Bank of England, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Treasury Ministers, Chief Executive of the Financial Conduct Authority, HMRC, Financial Ombudsman Service, Chief Executives of major UK banks, Prudential Regulatory Authority, OBR, IFS, IMF, Committee for Climate Change, former Chancellors of the Exchequer and a wide range of economists and financial experts and industry representatives.
 - b) Reports completed or underway include recommendations to the Treasury on Covid-19 support for those excluded from existing schemes, decarbonising the economy, and taxation after Coronavirus.
2. Contributed to One Nation Caucus Economy paper with suggestions on amending and extending the Future Fund to support startups in high growth, high potential sectors like Hertford and Stortford's world-leading life sciences companies.
3. Being a member of or leading various All-Party Parliamentary Groups, including becoming Vice Chair for the London-Stansted-Cambridge Innovation Corridor APPG, a founding member and Co-Chair of the Chalk Streams APPG, Vice Chair of the APPG for Adverse Childhood Experiences, Vice Chair of the APPG for Rural Services, and a Member of APPGs for France, Switzerland and Japan.
4. Joining the Conservative Environmental Network and becoming its Green Homes Champion, to lobby for better, more efficient homes in keeping with each region's existing local environment. This has so far included lobbying the government to increase provision for energy efficient homes and low carbon heating solutions.
5. Serving on the Domestic Abuse Bill committee and scrutinising every element of legislation to ensure it provides greater legal protection and support for victims and families.
6. Serving on the Counter-Terrorism Bill Committee, increasing sentences and public protection measures.
7. Appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) at the Ministry of Justice, supporting the ministerial team and acting as a link between backbench MPs and Secretary of State (Lord Chancellor) and Ministers.
8. Leading the Turn on the Subtitles campaign in Parliament and securing agreement from the Prime Minister to work with me and relevant Government departments on this important issue to improve children's literacy, particularly for disadvantaged children.

9. Being part of the campaign for a greater introduction of Family Hubs around the country to provide specialised and joined up support for families in need.
10. Working with the Centre for Policy Studies to produce a report (which will be published in Q2 2021) on Social Impact Bonds, making recommendations to the Government as to how this financial instrument can better direct Government Departmental spending and address some of the more complex public service delivery issues – like homelessness, reoffending and troubled families.

Final thoughts

This is just a snapshot of some of the work I and my team have been doing during 2020, a year like no other in our peacetime history.

I hope and believe that 2021 will eventually look very different, with vaccines providing our longed-for escape from the Covid-19 crisis.

I will continue to support my constituents as we emerge from the public health crisis and focus our attention on the economic recovery and on building back better.