



New Year, new role

After being elected by MPs to the role shortly before Christmas, January was my first full month as Chair of the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC).

As a result of the new role's demands, I resigned from the Intelligence and Security Committee. However, by being Chair of HASC I am now a member of both the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy and the Liaison Committee. This is the committee of Select Committee Chairs that has sessions questioning the Prime Minister several times a year.

Over three weeks in January, HASC has been holding hearings into the issue of the spiking of drinks, and by injection. This has been growing as an issue of violence, against women especially. Amongst other issues that are being considered is whether the Government should be advised to make spiking a distinct criminal offence, as presently the incidence is under-recorded.

More detailed information on the work of HASC can be seen at <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/>.



Victory for NHS and Social Care workers?

After over 1,500 frontline NHS and Social Care staff died from COVID in the first year of the pandemic, one campaign that I have pursued since the May 2021 Queen's Speech is the need for an NHS and Social Care Covenant of the sort being introduced for the Police and already in place for the Armed Forces. I have raised the issue regularly with Ministers. Curiously, when I raised it with the Health Secretary in January, he informed me that he had announced that there would be an NHS Covenant – see [here](#).

This was curious, as there had been no Government announcement and other Ministers appeared to be unaware of the policy when I raised the subject – see [here](#).

I have written to the Health Secretary to ask for more detail about what would be in the Government's NHS Covenant. I also attended an online branch meeting with the Hull and East Riding Health Branch of UNISON to discuss the Covenant idea and I hope that we will never again allow these workers to be placed in the position they faced in early 2020.



Overcoming health inequalities in 'left behind' neighbourhoods



Back Left Behind Neighbourhoods

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Left Behind Neighbourhoods that I co-chair fights to improve life in the 225 most deprived areas of the country. January was a busy month for the APPG. Firstly, we published a report on health inequalities that these neighbourhoods suffer and its cost to the economy. The report can be read [here](#) and I spoke about it in the House – see [here](#) and [here](#).

At the end of January, lobbying from the APPG won a significant victory in our campaign to amend the Dormant Assets Bill so that nearly £1bn of unused money can be used for a Community Wealth Fund for these neighbourhoods. The fact that it was such a hard battle to win this progress at the same time as Ministers were casually writing off much larger sums of tax-payers' money lost in fraud and waste does not put the Government's 'levelling up' agenda in a positive light. My speech on the Dormant Assets Bill can be seen [here](#).



We suffered, they partied

January saw a growing scandal engulfing the premiership of Boris Johnson as evidence emerged that parties were held in Downing Street during the period of COVID lockdown restrictions during 2020 and into 2021. Moreover, it appeared that Boris Johnson has lied to the House of Commons about it, breaking the Ministerial Code, with his shifting excuses - first of all denying any parties had taken place, then claiming they were 'work events' and finally complaining that no one told him what the rules were! This was even though Downing Street designed those rules and told us to obey them virtually every day during the lockdown periods. These events have been the subject of an interim report from senior civil servant Sue Gray at the Cabinet Office, which can be read [here](#).

However, details were redacted from this report as the parties are now being investigated by the Metropolitan Police.

I have spoken in the House on a number of occasions in recent weeks as the 'Partygate' scandal has developed – see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). At Prime Minister's Questions on 19 January I called on the Prime Minister to resign to his face – see [here](#).



Remembering the Holocaust

27th January saw the Annual Holocaust Memorial Day. It marked the 77th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and all the genocides that have happened since. With the Holocaust fading from lived memory, and with a rise in anti-semitism in the UK and abroad, it is up to us to ensure that this history and its lessons are never forgotten. I spoke in the House of Commons debate about the forms that anti-semitism takes in the present day – see [here](#).



Levelling up off the rails

Alongside the massive disappointment last November of the Government's Integrated Rail Plan (IRP), the Government have weakened the role of Transport for the North (TFN) and cut its budget. In January, the Tory former Transport Secretary Lord Patrick McLoughlin was appointed to be the new TFN Chair and I expressed concerns about this - see [here](#). However, upon his appointment Lord McLoughlin criticised the IRP and I was pleased to point this out in the House – see [here](#).

- ✔ Cutting VAT on energy bills
- ✔ Expanding the Warm Homes Discount
- ✔ Taking at least £200 off the typical bill

Funded by a windfall tax on oil and gas companies

Cost of living crisis

Hull North families are facing a cost of living crisis. Real terms pay cuts and the recent Universal Credit cuts are bad enough, but combined with rising inflation, especially food and energy, and the forthcoming rise in National Insurance and council tax bills, it adds up to a 'perfect storm' that will drive more families into real poverty and dependency on food banks. I am currently surveying local Hull North residents on the cost of living and this will help inform my work at Westminster.

Here to Help

Although I am unable to hold face-to-face surgeries at the moment during the COVID-19 pandemic, I can still take up issues for Hull North constituents.

You can contact me by either emailing diana.johnson@parliament.uk or calling 01482 319135.

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