

Gareth Johnson MP for Dartford



Reporting back from
Dartford and Westminster
- now reaching over 5,000
people in the local area

March 2019

Welcome to my latest newsletter.



Bluewater's 20th Anniversary

I was delighted to attend Bluewater's 20th Anniversary last month.

Since opening its doors in 1999, the centre has become the premier shopping and leisure destination in the south, as well as our town's largest employer.

More than 7,500 people work at Bluewater, with

SURGERY DATES

By Appointment Only:

Bluewater

10th May
14th June
5th July
13th September

Dartford Festival

13th July



 [Website](#)

thousands more taken on for the Christmas period.

In the week it turned twenty, Primark, one of the UK's most popular shops, opened its doors at the centre.

Since I became MP for Dartford in 2010, Bluewater has been a central meeting point for people, where they get together, shop, eat and spend their leisure time.

To mark its 20th year, Bluewater has pledged to do 20 good deeds this year and in the coming years, both in time and money in a number of community initiatives.

It is a great asset to our area and I hope the next 20 years will be as successful as the last.



Bluewater's 20th Birthday!

Farmers in Dartford

I recently met with the National Farmers' Union covering Dartford and Gravesham and joined them at their Annual General Meeting.



Eden

Each month I like to feature a local business, large or small and this month's is Eden which is an acronym for emotional development educational nurture.

Eden was established in 2002 and provides counselling to children, young people and families. Their qualified counsellors work in over 50 schools and Children's Centres throughout North West Kent, at their Eden Centre in Dartford, or wherever they are needed.

There are 42 members of the NFU in Dartford farming a total of 4,484 acres.

Across Dartford and Gravesham 1,084 cattle are farmed, along with 1,771 sheep, 1,123 pigs and 1,050 chickens. The NFU estimates the people of Dartford will eat over 12 million eggs this year and consume nearly 11 million litres of milk. They will eat over 1,200 tonnes of chicken and 591 tonnes of beef.

The farmers raised with me issues surrounding trade, agricultural policy, access to seasonal labour and problems with rural crime.



Dartford Borough Council Summer entertainment

Dartford Borough Council has announced details of some of its Summer 2019 family entertainment in Central Park.

The 12th Annual Steam Fair is taking place in the park on Saturday 11th May from 10.00 am and entrance is free. On Sunday, a selection of

They cover all kinds of mental health issues such as eating disorders, loss and bereavement, healthy relationships, self-harm and healthy anger.

They also provide counselling and play therapy in schools and training and workshops for school staff and therapists.

Eden also has a new branch which is dedicated to Mindfulness. They run an 8-week 'Mindfulness For Life' course which is an in-depth introduction to Mindfulness and also includes a one-day retreat.

Eden Mindfulness will also be running weekly groups, a morning meditation group and an evening deep

the steam engines will gather at the Royal Victoria & Bull Hotel at noon before parading through the town.

On 28th April at 2.00 pm the free Sunday concerts at the Bandstand resume and run on Sundays throughout the Summer (except for Dartford Festival weekend). Deckchairs are provided and you can either bring a picnic or head to the Cafe in the Park for tea and a slice of cake!

Some local festivals have disappeared in recent years but I'm delighted that the Dartford Festival goes from strength-to-strength. This year, it's on Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th July. I always have a stand there on the Saturday so please come along if there is anything you wish to raise with me.

Finally, dates have also been announced for the Cinema in the Park performances. The season opens with Mary Poppins Returns on 14th August, Bedknobs & Broomsticks on 28th August and Mamma Mia, Here We Go Again, on 4th September. Tickets are free for Dartford residents. If you visit the Council's website at www.dartford.gov.uk and click on the 'stay connected' button, you will be emailed a reminder when the tickets are available.

More information on Urgent Treatment Centre

As mentioned in my last bulletin, NHS England has told NHS organisations across the country

relaxation group.

In today's world, we are increasingly aware of the importance of mental health as well as physical health and if you would like to find out more about Eden's services, please click on the link below.

[Eden](#)



Cherry Orchard Primary Academy

I was delighted to pay another visit to Cherry Orchard Primary Academy, the new primary school built at Ebbsfleet Garden City to cater for the

to put Urgent Treatment Centres in place, ideally by the end of 2019.

The aim is to provide fast, efficient, care and reduce unnecessary A&E attendances.

These Urgent Treatment Centres will be equipped to diagnose and treat minor illnesses and injury, issue prescriptions and have access to routine diagnostics, have established links with local mental health services and access to electronic patient records.

It is proposed that the walk-in centre at Northfleet and the Minor Injury Unit at Gravesham Community Hospital, will be encompassed in the UTC at either Darent Valley Hospital or Gravesham Community Hospital.

The CCG is asking you to tell them what you think and you can email them at dgs.ccg@nhs.net or phone them on 03000 424903. You can also join the Patient Network at www.dartfordgraveshamswanleyccg.nhs.uk.

A public consultation will follow in due course.

children of new residents.

During my visit, I was asked some light-hearted questions such as whether I have bunk beds in my house and what pets I have. The children also asked me more serious questions such as what happens if someone wants to be both a member of the House of Commons and a member of the House of Lords and why the seats in the Commons are green and red in the Lords.

The pupils at Cherry Orchard have been studying the British constitution and I was very impressed with their enthusiasm and interest.

I am always very happy to visit local



Co-op Safer Colleagues, Safer Communities

I recently visited the Co-op store in Colney Road to meet staff and find out from the Area Manager about the new Co-op campaign called Safer Colleagues, Safer Communities.

Every day, across the retail industry in the UK, 250 shop workers are the victim of a violent incident.

Since 2015, the Co-op has invested over £70m in training, equipment and other resources in an attempt to protect their 45,000 front line employees and their 2,500 shops.

As well as putting in preventative measures in their stores including SECOM monitoring of CCTV feeds, security headsets and tablet devices so that staff can be more visible on the shop floor, the company also provides a wide range of support following any violent incident.

Security partners take witness statements from

schools, both primary and secondary, to speak with the students and if your school would like to arrange something, please contact my office.

New Waste Contractor in Dartford

Dartford Borough Council will have a new waste contractor from July, when Urbaser take over from Amey. The Council will continue to be one of the few councils to collect household waste every week and Urbaser bring a range of other services with them to help keep our town cleaner and greener.

staff, liaise with the police and work with the Crown Prosecution Service. In addition, the Retail Support Centre offers support to staff through LifeWorks which provides access to emotional support, counselling and time off work.

Through their Local Community Fund the Co-op's members also support local projects which address some of the underlying issues fuelling these crimes.



Organ Donation

This month, a bill to make changes to the organ donation system passed its final reading in The House of Lords unopposed, meaning it will now become law.

When it comes into force, this new law, The Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill, will mean that people in England will have to opt-out if they do not want to donate their organs, rather than the current system of opting-in.

The aim of the new law is to save the lives of people who are waiting for a

News from Westminster



Brexit update

As we are all only too aware, the UK did not leave the EU on 29th March or the extended Article 50 date of 12th April 2019.

My position throughout this process has not changed. I believe Britain's future is best placed outside of the European Union. I feel strongly that the outcome of the referendum must be respected which is why I cannot support a second one. I do not believe a second referendum would resolve the situation and would undermine the votes cast for Brexit by two-thirds of Dartfordians.

You may be aware that I resigned as a Minister to vote against Theresa May's deal as I felt that it did not provide a clear path out of the European Union and needed to be re-negotiated. I would prefer to see a negotiated Brexit deal but I have always maintained that we should not fear a no deal outcome.

It is now clear to me that both the House of Commons and the Prime Minister are not prepared to leave the EU without a deal under any circumstances. I do not agree with this position but there is no majority in the House of Commons to change it. I now genuinely fear that Brexit could be lost altogether. Therefore, my votes will continue to be to try and secure a genuine Brexit and against any further delay.

I believe that Brexit should not have been treated as a problem to be managed but as an opportunity to be grasped. I know that some people will not agree with this statement and want to see the outcome of the referendum revoked but I believe it would be wrong to do so. The British people sent an instruction to Parliament to leave the EU and it is the duty of every Parliamentarian to implement this

donor, because despite the majority of people saying they would donate their organs, a much smaller percentage are actually registered as donors.

In England, there are more than 40,000 people alive today thanks to organ donation but sadly, due to a shortage of donors, three people die every day whilst waiting for an organ.

This bill is often referred to as Max and Keira's Bill in honour of 10 year-old Max Johnson, who was waiting for a heart transplant and donor, 9 year-old Keira Ball, whose organs were used to save four people's lives, including Max, following her death

instruction. Sadly, there are some who feel this instruction should be ignored.

Knife Crime

The Chancellor announced in the Spring Statement that there will be £100 million additional funding in 2019/20 to tackle serious violence, including £80 million of new funding from the Treasury. This builds on the roundtable meeting the Home Secretary had with senior police officers on 6th March where he asked them about the resources they needed to fight violent crime.

The majority of this investment will largely go towards supporting police forces, especially where violent crime is impacting the most, to take immediate steps to make our streets safer through an increased operational presence and patrolling, supported with better intelligence.

The Government is also continuing to focus on prevention and this funding will also support the multi-agency "public health" approach through investment in multi-agency Violence Reduction Units. These units will bring all the necessary interests and sectors together locally to focus on the effective measures that must be taken.

This announcement follows the largest annual increase in police funding in England and Wales since 2010. It represents an increase in total police funding of up to £970 million if all Police and Crime Commissioners use the full precept flexibility. This would take total

in a road accident.

Now it has Royal Assent, the new rules come into force in 2020, following a year-long transition to inform the public and allow time for people to discuss their organ donation preferences. Those who don't want to donate their organs, will be able to record their decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

New pension scheme

The DWP has recently announced that a new pension scheme is being introduced to the market in the Government's quest to transform the retirement

investment into the police system in England and Wales to £14 billion in 2019/20. The vast majority of PCC's are making use of their full precept flexibility and many are using this increase to support additional recruitment, including almost 3,000 new police officers.

Operation Brock

On 25th March 2019, Operation Brock went live on the M20. It is an extra tool for managing disruption in Kent and queues lorries bound for mainland Europe on the coastbound M20, using a contraflow on the London-bound carriageway to enable other traffic to travel in both directions.

In addition to the M20 contraflow, lorries can be routed to Manston Airfield and if needed the M26 motorway can be closed and used to queue HGVs too.

Since Operation Stack's 32-day deployment during the Summer of 2015, Highways England has been working to make Kent more resilient to disruption than ever before. Operation Brock strengthens this resilience and can be used to queue up to 11,000 lorries heading for mainland Europe, whilst keeping other traffic flowing for people living, working and travelling in and around Kent.

The contraflow will be in effect from north of Junction 8 to Junction 9 at Ashford. Lorries heading for mainland Europe will be routed down the coastbound carriageway with a

saving culture in this country.

The Collective Defined Contribution (CDC) scheme gives members more certainty in their retirement with regular pay-outs from the scheme. Unlike traditional final salary pension schemes, these pay-outs aren't affected if your employer goes under.

CDC pension schemes allow group contributions to be pooled together and invested to give members of the scheme a higher final benefit level. It also means much better long-term protections for members because risk is shared.

A consultation has

30mph speed limit in place. All other traffic will be directed onto the London-bound carriageway, with two lanes in each direction operating at 50mph.

Due to the UK not leaving the EU on 29th March or 12th April, Operation Brock has now been suspended but will be activated in the event of any disruption in the future.

taken place which confirms primary legislation will be brought forward to introduce CDCs as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Southeastern debate

I recently took part in a debate on Southeastern rail services and the continuing delays and cancellations.

During the debate, I raised the issue of the delay to the decision on the franchise, together with the extension of Crossrail to Ebbsfleet and whether smart ticketing will be included in the next Southeastern franchise.

The Minister stated that the current franchise agreement expires on 23rd June. However, the Department for Transport is looking at extending the franchise to allow more time to review and award a winner for the next franchise as they want to ensure passengers get the best deal. He confirmed smart ticketing will be included in the next Southeastern franchise and that delay repay will kick-in after 15 minutes. He also confirmed the proposal to extend Crossrail to Ebbsfleet is being considered.

A link to the debate can be found below.

Southeastern debate

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