

REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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This has been a dramatic month in politics.

The good news is that the Commons voted by a large majority to protect people from the smoke of others in public places. It is interesting though, that for an issue deemed to be very controversial, I received a huge volume of correspondence from people who supported the ban, with only the tobacco industry and private club interests opposed it. Our borough has some of the highest rates of smoking in the UK and I hope this will encourage smokers to think about their health and that of others.

The announcement of the transfer of the North London Rail network from Network Rail to Transport for London (TfL) is excellent news. For decades the North London line from North Woolwich to Richmond has suffered from under-investment and an inadequate service. The Barking to Gospel Oak line has been treated even worse than this, and was for a long time under the threat of potential closure. Well done to the Barking to Gospel Oak Line committee for keeping the faith. As TfL get the line we need, more trains, a more imaginative route planning (why stop at Gospel Oak?) and staff on the stations this should encourage a feeling of safety.

I voted to oppose part of the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill as I felt it was in danger of preventing any discussion on religion. Interestingly, the Lords amendments which the Commons

eventually voted for were supported by a range of people of all faiths and none.

The Identity Card debate returned to the House and I voted against compulsion, and for a serious and regular review of the extraordinary costs of this plan. The problem is that the proposal will cost upward of £16 billions; will not come in for ten years; will lead to compulsion; and will create a national identity register of extraordinary proportions.

I continue to be active in opposition to the war in Iraq, and supportive of the need to engage with Iran to implement the Nuclear Non Proliferation treaty. It follows that to prevent nuclear proliferation, the five declared nuclear weapons states (US, Russia, UK, France, China) should not develop any new weapons and should be prepared for nuclear disarmament.

I have raised in the House the issue of more troops to Afghanistan. We have lost over 100 British troops, 2000 US and possibly 100,000 Iraqis are dead. Is Afghanistan to become as bad as Iraq?

Events locally have filled me with hope. The very successful Islington Volunteer of the Year event thanked those hundreds of local people who do something to enrich and strengthen community life. The end of the Single Regeneration Budget for Finsbury Park has been replaced by Fin Future – much done and much more to do!

Below I list some of the events I have been involved with over the last month.

19.01: I attended the High Court to support the Chagos Islanders' challenge to the Orders in Council preventing their return to their Islands in the Indian Ocean.

21.01: With a heavy heart I attended the funeral of my old friend Tony Banks. Friends heard about a collection of different episodes in his life, including as Union worker, Sports Minister and as former GLC Arts Chair, his love of animals and his skills as raconteur and comic.

22.01: I also attended the funeral of K G Patel who for twenty five years had been Chair of Anand Madal, the Asian elderly group at Caxton House. He was a great supporter of the community.

Later that evening I joined in the Burns Supper at the Red Rose, held in aid of the Morning Star. It was a packed and enjoyable event; the radical Burns condemned landlordism and wealth and is a good lesson for this century!

23.1: I renewed my acquaintance with Hitip Dicle, a former Turkish MP who was arrested with Leyla Zana, and spent ten years in prison for arguing for recognition of the Kurdish community in Turkey. He came to parliament to thank those MPs who had supported them during the years in prison. It shows solidarity and campaigning makes a difference.

24.1: I entertained the Safer Neighbourhoods Team for Junction Ward on a visit and lunch at the House to discuss neighbourhood issues in that area. I really do welcome this scheme as being the best way of ensuring safer communities, and policing by consent.

26.1: Dalit Solidarity Network, of which I am a Trustee, continues to campaign to end caste discrimination and we met in parliament to build on a successful

adjournment debate regarding the implementation of the Ambedkar principles on employment rights. We also supported actions to be taken at the UN Human Rights Commission.

On the same evening I spoke at an enormous meeting of Better Archway Forum, held at Hargrave Park School to plan for developments that people actually want, and to support the Sustainable Communities Bill in Parliament later this year.

27.01: A lively and inquisitive group of City and Islington College Students came to Parliament on a visit, which was educational (for me), and I hope fun (and educational) for them.

Yet another funeral followed this event: what sadness to bid farewell to Robert Scott. Robert was a very active member of Highbury Community Association, architect, and friendly adviser and helper to many. His body was taken by horse drawn hearse from the clocktower which he supported the restoration of, to St Thomas's Church where Reverend Stephen Coles did him proud.

30.01: Tony Blair and Patricia Hewitt came to Islington to spend some time at Hanley Road Medical centre. This is a new medical centre with salaried GPs and on-hand nursing, support and advice staff. It is a model of good primary care practice and what the NHS should be all about. The event was designed to promote the new preventative health policy which I wholeheartedly support.

31.01: Today we had the Greater London Forum for the elderly meeting to discuss pensioners needs across London

01.02: I attended a seminar in Parliament by Professor Alan Fowler from South Africa, on issues of NGO (Non Governmental Organisations) opportunities and anti terror laws. The problems that some ethnic communities and NGOs are

experiencing with transferring funds abroad is one of the lesser known consequences of the restrictions on money transfers which are part of the existing anti terror laws.

I later attended Unison's Positive Public campaign event which was introduced by Fiona Millar, and included addresses from a series of Union speakers in favour of directly run and owned public services.

02.02: I sat on the Statutory Instrument Committee relating to Artists Resale Rights, and voted to ensure that artists receive appropriate royalties from their work, as the value of that work increases with time, and with resales. There are many local artists who will eventually benefit from this.

03.02: Andover Community Association will lose most of its funding because of the end of the Single Regeneration Budget and I am supporting them in trying to get continuation funding from the Government Office for London. This would enable them to continue their good work, especially liaising and monitoring the huge capital improvements that are going on in the Tollington Estates.

In the evening I attended the Nth London Prouathin Sangh, a Hindu community organisation that was having an event to celebrate the values of education.

04.02: This was a Saturday morning which I spent at Holly Park Estate with local councillors and meeting residents.

I later visited the Latin American Education Trust which uses the Whittington Park Community Centre for education and craft activities for different ages of Latin American people living in our community, and very impressive it is too.

07.02: I attended an All Party Parliamentary Palestine Group reception which was much better attended than in former years which is an excellent

indication that more people are beginning to show an interest in the Israeli occupation.

I met Peter Hendy and colleagues from the Executive Board of Transport for London (TfL) to press with them the need to improve the Nth London Line, and the need for Finsbury Park Station to be transferred to Transport for London rather than Network Rail, who have chronically underinvested in this facility.

I gave a speech at the celebration of Finsbury Park Regeneration at City and Islington College and welcomed the work they've done, supporting FinFuture and their activities and calling for more social housing to be constructed in the Finsbury Park area to deal with the overcrowding many people face.

08.02: I spoke at the Council Housing lobby in Westminster Hall in support of the 4th Option, making the demand for more social housing in London, particularly given that so many people have become victims of the property boom.

This evening saw a very important debate on restoring the allowances for Sinn Fein MPs and providing a small amount of money for Sinn Fein as a parliamentary group to support their work with central government. I spoke in the debate and my speech will make its way to the parliamentary website shortly.

I also chaired a Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) public meeting of a report back from 2 election monitors not long returned: Zoe Mars (PSC) and Richard Burden MP.

09.02: I attended an LSE briefing on ID Cards and notably, the extraordinary cost and the invasive nature of the database for this.

I was invited to present the Islington Volunteer of the Year award at Union Chapel to Shirley Haxell from New Park Day Centre.

10.02: I visited the Finsbury Park Street Drinkers initiative run by the Equinox Trust in Tollington Way to welcome and support this very positive initiative in helping people who suffer with drink related problems.

I later went to the handover of Mildmay Community Centre from the Council to the local community.

11.02: I spoke at the demonstration inspired by "the cartoons" in Trafalgar Square, organised by various Muslim organisations to oppose Islamophobia and indeed any kind of intolerances towards different faiths and ethnic communities in this country. I also undertook interviews with Al Jazeera, Dutch Radio and ITV on the subject.

I visited Better Archway Forum Open Day at Hargrave Park School which enables local people to have a positive contribution towards redevelopment of the Archway Tower area and improvement of their community.

I gave a speech at the PSC AGM, concluding the event. Among other speakers present were the Palestinian General Delegate, Mr Hassassian and Geoff Halper (Israeli peace worker nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in Israel/Palestine).

From the Middle East I headed to the "Wake up Congo" exhibition: one should never say my weekends are not international! This was an event to discuss Congolese history and the contemporary problems of outside interference in the Congo. The terrible conflict there has resulted in over 3 million deaths in the past decade.

12.02: I did a Sunday program interview for GMTV on the Week Ahead in Parliament, and later a telephone interview for Al Jazeera. The rest of the morning was spent visiting constituents in Finsbury Park and around the Andover area.

13.02: I voted to support the Lords Amendments on ID cards but was pleased that Frank Dobson had put down an amendment to review the costs. Well done Frank.

I visited the Greek Newspaper Parikiaki who have moved their offices to Haringey.

14.02: Today was a great day for public health and I was very happy to vote in parliament to have smoking banned in all enclosed public spaces.

15.02: Parliament discussed the Terrorism bill in which I supported the Lords Amendments which the government is resisting. They relate to the Glorification of Terrorism. I also had a meeting with Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights who is visiting London.

Before heading off to the EC I hope to attend a congratulatory event to mark the election of the Chilean President, Michelle Bachelet.

Advice Sessions were as busy as always this month with the most common problem people have being housing, the next immigration, and after that a variety of different needs. They continue each week and if you know someone who needs my help please ask them to telephone 020 7226 5775 and Ruth Clarke or Dave Horan can advise them on my behalf. END

