

CAROLINE DINENAGE MP

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR GOSPORT

NEWSLETTER

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Spring has sprung and it certainly feels as though we're making good use of the longer days in Westminster, with plenty of new announcements this month to keep us all busy!

One of the political highlights this month was of course [the Spring Budget](#). The Chancellor of the Exchequer laid out his plans for public spending, and there were some very welcome measures for constituents in Gosport. Top of the list is an extension of childcare provision to children from 9 months old.

I know the cost of living remains a prominent challenge for many households. It's therefore welcome news that the Energy Price Guarantee, which caps the price of gas and electricity, is being extended until the end of June. Inflation is also forecast to fall to 2.9% by the end of the year.

The first [Cost of Living Payment](#) of 2023/24 will start to be paid from April 25 to May 17. It will be paid automatically to everyone who is eligible, so no applications are necessary. Everyone on means tested benefits will receive £301, and is the first of three payments, totalling £900.

As I am sure many of you will know, Gosport has the largest proportion of veterans in England & Wales, with 12.5% of residents having served in the Armed Forces. The government is committed to supporting them, with an additional £33 million provided to increasing the service provided by the Office of Veterans Affairs. Defence spending is also due to get an extra £4.95 billion to improve our defence capability. I've captured some of the other key points from the Budget [here](#).

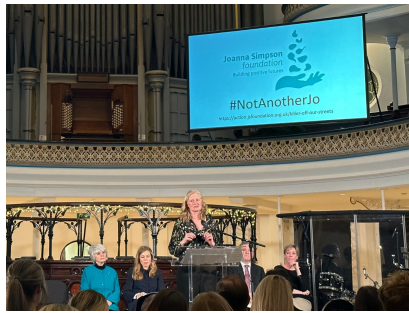


On a blustery day, I also met with the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Benjamin Key, to push further for improvements in local armed forces accommodation for both service families off site and personnel on site in HMS Sultan & HMS Collingwood. Our armed forces deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, I am determined to see accommodation standards improve.

The Home Secretary announced her plans to tackle the small boat crisis earlier this month too, with the introduction of the [Illegal Migration Bill](#). This includes measures to deport all illegal migrants to their home country or a safe third country to discourage the dangerous Channel crossings and to break up the business model of the criminal gangs who exploit vulnerable people. I expressed concerns to the Attorney General about the need for more effective safe & legal routes to be made available as part of this Bill. I look forward to seeing how this takes shape in the weeks ahead because I know so many constituents have concerns about this issue.

Later in the month, the Home Secretary also announced new

measures to [curb anti-social behaviour](#). This includes banning nitrous oxide (also known as laughing gas), increasing fines for crimes like vandalism, which are to be reinvested in the community, and swifter justice for victims.



This month we celebrated International Women's Day and, as a member of the Women & Equalities Select Committee, I attended the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women where I chaired a session on female innovation and entrepreneurship. My committee were also invited to meet a number of US politicians, policy makers and organisations to talk about our progress on issues like sexual violence and the menopause.



It was very moving to attend the [Joanna Simpson Foundation](#) reception to hear testimonies of those who loved Joanna, who was battered to death by her husband in 2010 after years of being victim to intimidation, coercive control and isolation. The campaign is attempting to prevent him securing early release from prison. The news that 123 women were killed by domestic violence last year is a sobering reminder of the importance of the [government's crackdown](#) on domestic violence. It is because of this that the government is introducing reforms that will allow [Ministers to veto parole](#) in forthcoming legislation.



This March marked 3 years since the first COVID lockdown. I took the opportunity to reflect on the lives lost to the pandemic, and with thanksgiving to those who worked so hard to save lives- in the NHS or through the development of the vaccine, and in acts of kindness across the community that brought us all together.

March 13 was Commonwealth Day - an opportunity to mark the special relationship shared between the UK and Commonwealth nations. Parliament Square was certainly well decorated for the occasion!

I spent a whirlwind couple of days in one of those Commonwealth Countries, Sierra Leone, at the invitation of the Coalition for Global Prosperity and the International Rescue Committee to see first-hand how UK aid money is spent in developing countries. 36% of Sierra

Leonians live their lives in extreme poverty (below \$2 a day) and UK aid provides a lifeline. I have written a blog on my trip, the memories of which will stay with me forever, you can read it [here](#).





Towards the end of the month, in [Prime Minister's Questions](#), I asked the Deputy Prime Minister, who was deputising for the PM, to restate the Government's commitment to a Childhood Cancer Mission.

Regular readers will know that I have been working alongside Charlotte Fairall, from Stubbington, whose 10 year old daughter, Sophie, died from Rhabdomyosarcoma in 2021, on a campaign to improve how we detect, treat and care for children with cancer.



Around 1500 residents of the Gosport constituency are living with Dementia, but with our diagnosis rate at only around 68% there is clearly more to do for people living with the condition. I made a fascinating visit to Imperial College London to see their 'living lab' - which uses digital tech to ensure that people with dementia can remain healthy and safe in their own homes. I met with Alzheimer's Research to talk

about two exciting Dementia drugs, due to finish trials this year, which could significantly slow the progression of the condition. I mentioned them in a Parliamentary Debate, which I had organised, on [Medical Technology Regulations in the NHS](#).



Back closer to home, I had one of my regular catch-ups with Fareham Borough Council Leader, Sean Woodward this month to ensure I'm fully up to speed with what's going on in the two Fareham Boroughs of my Constituency; Stubbington and Hill Head. We both attended the re-opening of the recently refurbished Cafe at 05 in Solent Airport on Daedalus.

It was a pleasure to join [Fairtrade Gosport](#) and [Level Up Gosport](#) in Gosport Town Hall for a tea party as part of Fairtrade Fortnight. This cuppa came with a very important message about the need to support the overseas communities that produce our food, especially in the face of climate change.



Good news for the constituency this month - Bridgemaury Library is set to receive over £150,000 as part of the government's [Cultural Development Fund](#). This is part of a nationwide investment of £200 million for libraries, museums, and cultural organisations.

I am also pleased that the Police & Crime Commissioner for Hampshire, Donna Jones, has confirmed that the [sale of Gosport Police Station will be halted](#), and public access to the station's front desk will be restored. It's important there is a public facing, visible police presence in our community.

If you have any police or crime related concerns, Donna Jones and Hampshire County Councillor Lesley Meenaghan are hosting a drop-in surgery session from 10am-12pm on Saturday April 1 at Gosport Museum & Art Gallery. This is an opportunity for you to put questions to our Police & Crime Commissioner directly.

There was also positive news regarding [Bury Road Surgery](#). The notice period for closure has been extended until June 30, to allow time for all options to be considered to save the surgery.

On the topic of health, I am running a survey to establish the priorities of constituents when it comes to health and care. You can complete the survey [online](#).

From tomorrow (April 1), Hormone Replacement Therapy pre-payment certificates will be rolled out across the UK. This will give women access to HRT for a year, for the price of 2 single prescription charges- currently £18.70. This is part of the government's wider Women's Health Strategy which I helped to develop as a Minister in the Department for Health & Social Care. Find out more [here](#).

Also, the government has agreed a pay offer for 1 million NHS staff to receive an additional pay rise, which the Agenda for Change Unions are urging members to accept. I am sure readers will join me in welcoming this as good news to end the strike action.



It was a delight to welcome winners of the Gosport Rotary Club 'Youth Speaks' debating competition, from Bay House School to Parliament. I also finished the month by visiting students at Bay House School for 'hot chocolate Friday'. I then joined the lower sixth politics students and answered their questions and queries about life as a politician and the hot topics of the day.

Popping across the harbour to Portsmouth, I attended the launch of the new [4D Mary Rose experience](#). This is an immersive showcase of the story of the finding, excavation, and recovery of the Mary Rose. I would highly recommended visiting if you get the chance!



I also met up with [Portsmouth City of Sanctuary](#). A grass-roots organisation who help local asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in the local area.

Other news:

-Portsmouth Water are [surveying their customers](#) to inform their spending plans for the future. Customers can express their priorities until April 7.

-I am looking for nominations for the NHS Parliamentary Awards. If you know who goes above and beyond for local health and care provision, please do nominate them. Categories can be found [here](#), and you can download a nomination form [here](#). Please email your completed nomination forms to caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk by April 20.

As ever, my team and I are on standby to help with any queries or concerns. Please do get in touch.

Best wishes
Caroline Dinenage

Caroline Dinenage MP
167 Stoke Road
Gosport
PO12 1SE
caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk



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