

CAROLINE DINENAGE MP

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR GOSPORT

LEE ON THE SOLENT • STUBBINGTON • HILL HEAD



My February newsletter lands in your inbox at a time when the arrests of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor and Peter Mandelson have dominated the headlines as revelations from the Epstein files continue to have repercussions in Westminster and beyond.

The Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch has been on the front foot since calling for Peter Mandelson to be fired as the UK Ambassador to the US. Indeed, I was one of the many Conservative MPs who questioned his appointment when it was very first announced. You can watch Kemi's remarks [here](#), the Minister's statement on Peter Mandelson [here](#), and the debate on Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor [here](#).

Closer to home, a deeply distressing case touched our local area directly. Richard Elkin and Hayley Bell, funeral directors who were operating in Gosport for years, were each sentenced to 4 years in prison on charges of preventing a lawful and decent burial of a body, intentionally causing a public nuisance by keeping bodies in unrefrigerated conditions and fraudulent trading, between June 2022 and December 2023.

This case has been ongoing for a long time but throughout the investigation and trial I was not permitted to comment publicly. However, I have been working behind the scenes to push for the Government to introduce the necessary regulation, accreditation and inspection of the funeral sector and those who work in it. Over the last couple of years I have met with reputable businesses, trade bodies, the Chair of the Fuller Inquiry, and successive Justice Ministers including the current one, Alex Davies-Jones MP, to discuss the urgent need for legislation in what is, appallingly, a virtually unregulated and un-monitored profession.

I have developed a list of recommendations together with our Police and Crime Commissioner, Donna Jones and applied for a debate in Parliament, to make sure that those are firmly put on record and acknowledged by the Government. My thoughts are with all the families who were affected by this truly disturbing case. The PCC and I will be hosting a meeting in March for families who were impacted, so please get in touch via caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk to register your attendance. You can read the BBC article about the case [here](#) and listen to my interview on the matter [here](#).



This month I was also extremely concerned by the data from the Center for Countering Digital Hate stating that Grok had generated 23,000 sexualised images of children over an 11-day period. The current safeguards are clearly not working, and we need to change our approach to dealing with generative AI. I signed a letter to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology calling for the introduction of stronger protections against the harms caused by AI. You can read it [here](#).

I explored the role of social media, internet and AI in my latest Southern Daily Echo column arguing that while the online world has become an integral part of our lives, measures to keep children safe haven't kept pace with the risks. You can read the article [here](#) and sign the petition to restrict social media to those who are 16 and over [here](#).



It was a pleasure to drop by the "Show the Love, Share the Love" event at the Lee Hub arranged by Gosport and Fareham Friends of the Earth.

This initiative encourages children and adults to say what they love about our local environment and wildlife.

I think it is a beautiful way of teaching young people about the importance of protecting nature.

I was delighted to welcome Miss Sweetland from Crofton School to Parliament as part of Parliament's Teacher Ambassador Programme.

The aim of the programme is to bring teachers together and give them a deeper understanding of how Parliament works to ensure that they are well equipped to support the learning of students back in the classroom.

I am looking forward to meeting some of Crofton's students in Parliament very soon.





It was also great to see King's Academy Bay House being recognised at the British Council International School Awards in Parliament. Such a proud moment for the school and all members of staff who made that happen. Well done to them!

Back in Gosport, I met with the Director of Children's Services & Deputy Chief Executive at Hampshire County Council for one of my regular meetings to discuss the performance of each local school line-by-line.

We talked about recent Ofsted reports and assessed what actions might be needed to further improve the quality of education and experiences of our pupils in the classroom. I also brought up the recently published Government's White Paper on SEND and its potential impact on our education facilities. You can read the White Paper [here](#) and listen to the Opposition's take on it [here](#).

Education plays a crucial role in the lives of children and young people, but going to university and taking on student debt might not be the path suitable for everyone.

Thousands of apprentices from Gosport, Lee-on-the-Solent, Stubbington and Hill Head decided that earning while learning valuable life skills is a better option than a university path. February marked National Apprenticeship Week and you can hear from [Ben](#), [Adam](#), [Chantelle](#), [Katie](#) about their apprenticeships on my social media and check out how to apply [here](#).

Student debt has become a real burden for those who have graduated from University, especially on Plan 2 loans. I am glad that Conservative Leader Kemi Badenoch has announced a raft of measures aimed at helping young people enter the world of work, which you can find out more about [here](#).

Big congratulations are due to STS Defence for winning Employer of the Year at the South Hampshire College Group Apprenticeship Awards. Their apprentice, Katie, also picked up Engineering Apprentice of the Year – what a brilliant achievement! It is wonderful when local individuals and businesses are duly recognised for their hard work in the community. I remember visiting the team and meeting Katie at STS Defence just before Christmas, so I had a chance to see for myself just how well deserved those awards are.

Talking about amazing local businesses, it was lovely to catch up with all our runners-up for my Best Independent Shop 2025 competition. My team and I were super-impressed to see over 2,500 votes submitted, showing just how much support businesses across the peninsula have from our community. Congratulations to T By The Sea, Lilly's Gosport, Pauper to King Barber's Shop, and of course, our winner, Finishing Touches!



My regular readers will know that issues with the administration of the Civil Service Pension Scheme have been on my radar for the last couple of months. My letter to the Cabinet Office and the Government's response is available [here](#). I was told that

an expert recovery team is overseeing a structured improvement plan; additional staff have been deployed to clear backlogs; priority cases are being fast-tracked, and interest-free transitional loans are available for certain recent retirees facing hardship. If you are a constituent and would like me to raise your case with relevant authorities, please contact me via caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk

In the Parliament Chamber, I spoke about the need to end lousy leaseholds. The Government has introduced their own Bill to tackle this, and a Parliamentary Committee is keen to hear from leaseholders to ensure the legislation is properly scrutinised. You can submit evidence [here](#).

I met with the Managing Director of RMG to raise constituents' concerns about the properties they manage locally. We discussed the company's complaints procedures, online portal and other ways of improving communication with residents. If you would like to hear more about this meeting, please contact me via caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk.

I asked the Minister for Museums, Heritage and Gambling, Baroness Twycross, why heritage buildings cannot be used to solve the Government's housing target dilemma. We cannot afford heritage buildings to rot away at taxpayers' expense when they could be repurposed. You can follow our discussion [here](#).



In Parliament, I joined Women in Sport, to discuss their “Reimagining Sport Coaching” report.

The document lays out how the number of hours playing sport as a child impacts future professional success and outlines that twice as many women still experience bullying as coaches than men. You can read the report [here](#).

And finally, as regular readers will know, I have been working for many years with Stubbington's Charlotte Fairall, the Founder of Sophie's Legacy, pushing successive Governments to meaningfully improve how we detect, treat, and care for children and young people with cancer.

Our campaign led to the establishment of the Children and Young People Cancer Taskforce, a group of experts, including Charlotte, which I Chaired, who submitted recommendations to the National Cancer Plan. I am delighted to say that this month the plan was published with a dedicated chapter for children and young people, for the first time ever, that was drafted by us.

Among the many things secured in the Plan is a £10 million travel fund for children and young people's cancer treatment travel costs, higher-quality hospital food and play facilities, more action to raise awareness of signs and symptoms, better psychological care and support during treatment and beyond, and greater access to research and clinical trials. You can read the NCP [here](#), listen to the interview with me and Charlotte [here](#), and watch a video about our journey [here](#).



Charities play a vital role in assisting patients and, if you would like to support a wonderful local organisation, you need look no further than the Spring Gala arranged by Sheldon's Shooting Stars on 18th April. Join for dinner, live entertainment and fundraising for secondary breast cancer patients. You can find more information about the event [here](#).

So that's it for February! As ever, my team and I are here for any questions, thoughts or concerns you may have. Please do get in touch via caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk.

Best wishes
Caroline Dinenage

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