

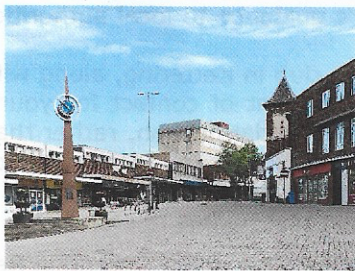


KETTERING AT WESTMINSTER



... MAKING SURE THE CONCERNS OF LOCAL PEOPLE ARE HEARD AT THE HEART OF GOVERNMENT

Entrepreneurialism Alive and Well in Kettering



25 November: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: I have good news from Kettering. To highlight that, may we have a debate in Government time on private enterprise? So many new businesses have opened in Kettering that this week it was named the UK's second most entrepreneurial town by the business insurers Superscript. Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the number of firms in Kettering is now 4,475, up from 4,120 last year, and in the past three years there has been an explosion of independent shops opening in the town centre.

Rt. Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, Leader of the House of Commons: That is the great draw for businesses and shops, and all that is going on there. To go from 4,120 small businesses to 4,475 in a year is a great triumph, and it shows that free enterprise is the way in which we pay the bills for everything else, because without the private sector, the public sector has no money. There is no Government money, only taxpayers' money.

What About All the Good News?

Philip Hollobone MP writes: The Prime Minister is going through the toughest political moment of his premiership and our incessant rolling 24 hour broadcast and print media is rubbing its hands with glee at the potential prospect of his downfall. The publication of the investigation into 'partygate' by the senior, independent civil servant Sue Gray is likely to be the pivotal moment in this affair.

Whatever the outcome, it is important not to lose sight of all the good news about the Conservative government's record over the last two years since the December 2019 General Election. And let's not forget that at that election a record 29,787 local people voted Conservative, a massive 60% of the electorate. Here's just some of the good news:

- ✓ The Conservatives got Brexit done and have taken back control of the issues important to the British people. 61% of voters in Kettering voted to Leave.
- ✓ Leaving the EU gave the UK the freedom to roll out the fastest Covid vaccine programme in Europe. Over 130,000 lives have been saved by the vaccine programme. In total almost 1.5 million Covid jabs (first, second and booster) have been given in Northamptonshire.
- ✓ Since Brexit, free trade agreements have been negotiated with 70 countries and no other non-EU country has a zero quota, zero tariff free trade agreement with the EU.
- ✓ Unemployment was widely predicted to rise to 12% as a result of the pandemic. Instead it peaked at just over 5%, has been falling for the last eight months and is one of the lowest rates in the G7. Unemployment in Kettering is 3.9%; the national average is 4.4%.
- ✓ Employment is at record levels with over 400,000 more people in work now than before the pandemic.
- ✓ Low income households have been helped by a 6½% rise in the National Living Wage to £9.50 an hour and a cut in the taper rate for Universal Credit will give a £1,000 a year pay rise to 2 million of the lowest paid.
- ✓ 11,053 new police officers have been recruited, well over half way to the target of 20,000 new officers by 2023.
- ✓ Through the new Nationality and Borders Bill new measures to control immigration will include a one-stop appeals process to prevent endless, repetitive appeals and facilitate swift deportation, the ability for asylum claims to be heard offshore in a third country, the ability to declare those who passed through safe countries inadmissible to our asylum system and quicker returns of foreign national offenders.
- ✓ Business rates are being cut by at least 50% for 90% of retail, hospitality and leisure businesses and all other rates are being frozen. Combined with Small Business Rates Relief this will help 700,000 eligible businesses and is the biggest business rates cut for 30 years.
- ✓ KGH had all its £167m of debt written off in 2020 and has won a pledge for £46m for a new Urgent Care Hub (to replace the A&E) and a further £350m as part of the national hospital redevelopment programme for the period 2025-30. This £563m is the biggest investment KGH will have ever received.

IN THE HOUSE Standing Up and Speaking Out for Kettering

Just a sample of the issues Kettering MP Philip Hollobone raised in the Commons recently

Lifting of Covid Restrictions 19 January: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: I warmly welcome the Prime Minister's lifting of the covid restrictions. At the present time, 70% of those in Kettering General Hospital with covid are unvaccinated and the vast majority of those could have had the vaccine but made the wrong choice in not doing so. May I urge the Prime Minister, when the daily hospitalisation cases are published, to emphasise the fact that the vast majority are unvaccinated, as an incentive to get more boosters done?

Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister: Yes. I thank my hon. Friend. He is spot on. He is absolutely right in what he says. I have tried to draw repeated attention, in what I have been saying, to the sad fact that 90% of people in ICU have had no booster and 66% of people are unvaccinated. Omicron is not a mild disease for everyone and it can be particularly nasty if you are not vaccinated.



Covid Grant Funding 18 January: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: Our much-loved Kettering gymnastics club provides sporting facilities for about 1,000 local young people every week. It is a not-for-profit club, registered with HMRC under the community amateur sports club scheme, and it operates as a club and not as a business. It has previously received covid grant funding from the council, but the later schemes issued in December 2021 seem to refer just to businesses, rather than to clubs. Can the Minister clarify the Government's guidance to local authorities about whether clubs are eligible for the new funding?

John Glen MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury: I recognise that the gymnastics club in Kettering, along with so many other clubs of that type around the country, provides an enormously valuable point of contact for young people. I should be happy to examine my hon. Friend's point in detail and write to him with clarification, rather than dealing with it from the Dispatch Box. The principle of giving discretion to local authorities in order to meet the needs in particular communities has guided the Government throughout this process, and we have used this grant channel a number of times for that reason, but I will look as sympathetically as I can at the question that he has raised.

Migrant Crossings: Role of the Military 18 January: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: This is not Operation Red Meat; it is Operation Dog's Dinner. If the mission statement were to reduce illegal people trafficking across the channel, I would support it, but, as far as I understand it, the mission statement is to lower the number of people landing on their own terms on UK beaches. With the deployment of royal naval vessels, the Minister has effectively announced that asylum seekers need get only halfway across the channel before being intercepted by the Royal Navy, under royal naval command. This will incentivise people traffickers. They will see the Royal Navy ship on the horizon and say, "Point your dinghy in that direction. You only need to get halfway," and the Royal Navy will pick them up. The only way this will work is if the Royal Navy intercepts asylum seekers and returns them to France. Without the second bit, this simply will not work.

James Heappey MP, Minister for the Armed Forces: My hon. Friend knows that the last bit would be impossible without French permission, and French permission has not been given. I do not accept his characterisation of what is being spoken about today. The Ministry of Defence mission is to make sure that nobody arrives in the UK on their own terms. That means that nobody arrives in the UK without having been intercepted at sea or as they land. What happens next is that we will just have to wait a short while, and I am sure all will become clear.

Hospital Discharges 18 January: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: Kettering General Hospital is a 500-bed medium general hospital, and I am afraid that too many, mainly elderly, people who have completed their medical treatment still await discharge back into the community in a safe way. Will the Secretary of State ensure that the national taskforce is sent to Northamptonshire to help us deal with this issue?

Rt. Hon. Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Health: My hon. Friend is right to raise this issue. It is of increasing concern, especially as we have seen hospitalisations rise because of the omicron wave. I believe that the national taskforce is already looking at Northamptonshire. If it is not, I will certainly make sure it does.

Vandalism of Statues 6 January: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: Statues and monuments located in the public realm are an important part of our cultural heritage. May we have a statement from the Leader of the House and the relevant Departments about the ongoing presence of these statues and monuments: that their reappraisal or removal needs to be determined by lawful means, not by mob rule? If the Government do not make this clear, those monuments that some people do not like are now, as a result of the recent court case in Bristol, at greater risk of defacement, destruction or removal.

Rt. Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, Leader of the House of Commons: I do not think the result in Bristol does do that, because the decision does not set a precedent. It was a case decided by a jury on the facts before them. I shall therefore not be going out of here immediately afterwards and drawing a moustache on the statue of Oliver Cromwell outside, much though I am opposed to regicides in principle and think that they deserve to be removed from pedestals broadly speaking. I think we should recognise our history even when the figures in that history are not ones that we individually admire. Our island story is a complex one, and there are varieties in all people of good and less pure intentions. My hon. Friend is right that we should protect monuments and that they should be removed only by a due process, but one of our greatest monuments is the jury system, which is the great protector of our liberties.