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Back to Westminster with local priorities in focus

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Parliament recently returned after the summer recess, and the mood in Westminster has shifted considerably since we left in July. Labour now has its second Prime Minister since the General Election, with Andy Burnham entering No 10, alongside reshuffles on both the Government and Opposition front benches.

But the noise from No 10 does not change my focus: representing Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead and Leatherhead. My priority this autumn is making sure the Government is held to account on the issues that matter to my constituents – NHS access, train frequencies, e-scooters and the state of our water supply.

I am continuing my work as Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Primary Care and Cancer, pressing the Government on delays in securing GP appointments, cancer treatment waiting times and the need to improve access to dental care.

Alongside that, I am taking on a new responsibility after being selected by my party to sit on the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy. I will be putting my experience of serving in the military abroad to good use in scrutinising our security at home.

The publication of this column follows an Epsom and Ewell tradition that was supported by Helen Maguire's predecessor Chris (now Lord) Grayling and prospective Parliamentary candidates of other parties.

This addition does not mean any of my other work as your MP is being put on the back burner. I will shortly be hosting a roundtable of police chiefs to press the Government for clearer guidance on e-scooters.

I will also be working with a research group to launch a report in Parliament on disinformation – a subject I take very personally following the unrest our constituency experienced earlier this year.

Party conference season is under way, and I will be in Brighton later this month for the Liberal Democrat conference, making the case for stronger action on primary care.

Once the conferences conclude, attention will turn to the Autumn Budget. My Liberal Democrat colleagues and I will be watching closely to see whether our new Chancellor, John Healey, will deliver on defence spending and hospital funding without placing a greater burden on taxpayers.

It is a tall order, but we Liberal Democrats have plenty of ideas about how to improve services without leaving taxpayers to foot the bill.

I also want to use this column to highlight something closer to home. Horton Cemetery in Epsom is the largest abandoned hospital cemetery in the UK. It is the resting place of more than 9,000 patients from the old Epsom Cluster asylums, most of whom lie in unmarked graves and have long been forgotten.

Earlier this year, I brought campaigners into Parliament to meet the Justice Minister, who confirmed that the site is protected from development under the Burial Act.

That was welcome news, but there is still work to do before this place receives the recognition and public access it deserves. I am thrilled that it was recently shortlisted in Findmypast's Everyday History Heroes awards, and I know that meant a great deal to the families who remain connected to this history.

Finally, an update on a topic that dominated many of my conversations this summer: Thames Water.

The constituency has been consistently plagued by leaks and burst pipes, with interruptions to the water supply affecting homes and businesses across our area.

The irony is not lost on me that the worst of these failures peaked at the same time as Thames Water introduced a hosepipe ban during one of the driest summers on record.

I brought Sir Ed Davey to the constituency to see the effect on local businesses first-hand and have raised the issue directly with the company on several occasions.

Thames Water's finances remain precarious and its infrastructure is ageing, but my constituents continue to pay more for a service that repeatedly lets them down.

I will keep pushing for a Westminster Hall debate this autumn to put that accountability on the record. I will not stop

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arguing that customers should not have to foot the bill for years of underinvestment.

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