

Edward Davey MP's Annual Report

Summer 1999

Kingston & Surbiton
Constituency General Election
Result, May 1997

Edward Davey (Liberal Democrat)	20,411
Conservative	20,355
Labour	12,811
Majority	56

Near Constituent,

Being MP for a seat near Westminster helps in my work for you as I can combine parliamentary and constituency duties more easily.

Sometimes I travel between Surbiton and Waterloo several times a day, if, for example, I've a committee sitting, then a school visit plus a vote in the Commons at 10pm. So I do monitor the trains!

But the link isn't just geographical. I am struck by how much I learn from my work for local people, and how this helps me form views in Parliament.

This is my second annual report. I hope it gives you a feel for what I've been up to. A longer version is in local libraries. The additional material can be accessed from this page wherever you see the symbol. Please do contact me if I can help or even if you just want to tell me your views.

Edward Davey

Kingston Hospital Success

The campaign to win new investment for Kingston Hospital's Accident and Emergency has been a long one, but I'm delighted to report that at least two million pounds will now be spent to provide a modern casualty department.

The hospital has been under particular pressure since Queen Mary's, Roehampton, closed and it has been apparent for some time that the existing Accident and Emergency is simply not large enough to cope. In my first year as MP I raised my concerns with Health Ministers and flagged this in my first annual report as one of the major battles for my second year.

So I'm grateful to the many people who helped win this funding.

Of course, the health campaigns must go on. We need to reduce staff shortages, tackle rising waiting times for consultant appointments and win more capital to expand units like the maternity wing.

Improving all aspects of the local NHS remains a top priority. I was delighted to support a Surbiton GPs' practice in its successful fight for modern premises. Campaigns for a new medical centre for Chessington and a new bus service to link the south of the Borough with Kingston Hospital are well on the way to success for later this year.



Opposing Police Cuts

Scotland Yard helped stave off cuts to Kingston's police.

This year the news is not so good. In fact, I have to report that this year Kingston will lose another 22 officers. Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has slashed the Metropolitan Police budget despite huge opposition, most notably in a special debate I called in Parliament.

I am appalled by Government police cuts: the number of beat officers patrolling Chessington, Hook and Malden Rushett, for example, is down to just one.

While levels of crime have fallen, they are still far too high, with crimes like vandalism and graffiti all too obvious.

So I will continue to fight police cuts. I have also launched my own anti-crime scheme - "Safer Stations" - to improve security at train stations. I'm grateful to the Police, Council, South West Trains and Chessington World of Adventures for their help. Safer stations can encourage people to use public transport, take cars off roads and lead to better services on branch lines like Chessington South.



In Parliament ...

In Committee

In Parliament I speak for the Liberal Democrats on Treasury issues. So I am particularly busy around the Budget and lead for my party on the Finance Bill Standing Committee. This considers the Chancellor's new tax proposals.

Last year I focused my criticisms on the negative effects of Gordon Brown's tax changes for small businesses and pensioners.

I also served three months on the Committee considering the Greater London Authority Bill.

The new Mayor and Assembly you will vote for in May 2000 will have major powers over transport, police and economic development.

I do believe London needs a strategic authority, but I opposed giving the Mayor so much power and argued that Government plans for the Underground will not raise the capital needed.



Campaigning at the House

Campaigning in the House takes many forms - meeting lobbying groups (like the Kingston midwives pictured above); signing Early Day Motions to highlight particular problems or exceptional achievements (like Kingstonians!); arranging meetings with individuals or groups of constituents; researching issues in the Commons' library; and having a quiet word with Ministers during a vote! Last year, for example, I signed over 130 Early Day Motions, including calls for:

- * Royal Commission on Animal Experimentation
- * Moratorium on genetically-modified crops
- * Improved pay for nurses, midwives & health visitors
- * Leasehold reform
- * Action against antisemitism in Russia
- * Reform of law on wheel-clamping on private land

Voting in the House

From May 1998 to April 1999, I voted 174 times. That figure represents nearly 64% of all votes and an above average voting record for a MP. Notable votes included:

Supporting the Government on:

- * Good Friday Agreement
- * Northern Ireland Bills
- * Scottish Parliament & Welsh Assembly
- * Abolition of Hereditary Peers

Opposing the Government on:

- * Disability Benefit Cuts (Welfare Reform Bill)
- * Immigration & Asylum Bill
- * Changes to Legal Aid

Speaking in the House



Over the last year, I've spoken in the Chamber once a week, on average - and many more times in committees.

Subjects have included opposing cuts to the Metropolitan police budget; pensioners and dividend tax credits; London Underground; NHS waiting lists; and Kingston Council's budget.

Below, are a few extracts from contributions I've made.

Taking on Tony Blair at Question Time



"In Kingston we have felt the reality of [police cuts]. Constituents tell me that when there are problems in Chessington, say from a gang of youths on Hook Parade, or problems in Worcester Park around the station with vandals and graffiti, the police response time has dropped... We must recognise that places like Kingston are not over-staffed, whatever the formula says. I urge Ministers to revisit the London police resourcing formula to make sure that success in reducing crime in areas like Kingston is not punished."

Hansard 23.4.99 Cols. 332-3 Adjournment debate on Metropolitan Police Budget led by Edward Davey.

"Pensioners in my constituency feel completely betrayed by the Labour party. They hear that there is a minimum pension guarantee, but when they read the small print they realise that they are not eligible and that there is no guarantee at all... Instead, some pensioners in my constituency are having the dividend tax credits, that they used to get every year from the Inland Revenue, taken from them."

Hansard 20.4.99, Col.792 Finance Bill Second Reading

"Will he review the criteria now used to prioritise safety improvement schemes will he now take another look at the case for safety barriers on the Kingston A3 bypass?"

Hansard 31.7.98, Col. 673 Statement on Roads Review

... and locally

The more groups and organisations I visit in the constituency, the more I realise how many people I've not yet met!

I learn a lot from these meetings and many raise issues directly relevant to my work in the Commons.



Edward Davey helped save Alfriston, Surbiton's day centre for the elderly

For me personally, I've had most to learn about issues around mental health. I have been astonished by how prevalent mental illness is, how randomly it can strike and the gaps in services for sufferers.

Like last year, a focus of my visits has been local playgroups, schools and colleges.



I was pleased to help in the campaign that saved the Willows PlayGroup in New Malden. This provides excellent help for children with special education needs,

dealing with problems early on. However, I didn't win the MPs' painting competition organised by playgroups nationally, despite enthusiastic help!

Meetings with businesses, including Chambers of Commerce, revealed a number of key issues. Concerns included the local postal service. Royal Mail have now made improvements and more will follow once Surbiton's sorting office moves to a purpose-built unit at Feltham, probably in the next 18 months.



Meetings with South West Trains also stimulated improvements and they are now supporting my project to upgrade security at local stations.

On housing, I proposed and secured community compensation from the Chief Executive of EDS, for the mistakes his firm made over managing housing benefit in Kingston. After last year's success of reducing speed limits on the A3, it's pleasing that early indications show a 55% drop in accidents.

Without doubt the most fun events were Kingstonians' triumphs and visits to Alfriston, where I was delighted to support the successful campaign to protect day centre services for the elderly.



I know that there are still many groups I've not yet visited, so do please contact me if you would like me to drop in.

On the High Street

My team and I are now well established in my Surbiton high street office (23a Victoria Road). You can visit me there Monday



mornings at one of my advice sessions (8to10am) and I'm in and out during the rest of the week. I'm lucky that my house is less than 5 minutes' walk away, which makes life a bit easier.

On a more regular basis, the office is run by Belinda Eyre-Brook (Office Manager) and Keith Reed (Caseworker), who deal with all the letters, 'phone calls and visitors.



I share the 2 floors of offices with Kingston Liberal Democrats, so the place is often "buzzing" with lots of volunteers. If you ever hear a "bark", that's just Bobby, a very friendly dog! Thanks go to my staff & the helpers.

For more information about how my office is financed click below



Issues & Replies

I try to respond to all letters, calls and emails as fast as possible, but more and more of you are contacting me! So apologies for any delays. Last year, I received over 1600 constituents' letters alone, plus many petitions. In response, I have written over 9000 letters - to government ministers, departments, councils, schools, transport officials, the police and, of course, to the constituents who raised the issues with me. This year I will publish a "MP's Charter" to set targets for the service quality you can expect.



Housing is the most common issue raised, but problems with the NHS, Immigration and Child Support Agency occur frequently too. People also raise policy issues. Sometimes they raise national policies like NHS funding but often I'm asked about local issues - like the campaign I support to stop Thames Water building on the Surbiton filter beds.

