

Visit by Local MP

On Thursday 18 October, Mr O'Connell took a group of fourteen Year 9 students to Dacorum Borough Council Chambers to learn about democracy.

We left school at 9am and returned at 3.20pm. During the day we were mixed up into groups of ten including students from other schools in Hertfordshire. In our groups, we attended six different workshops.

For the last hour and a half, we were all seated in a great hall with podiums and microphones. There were five people who were elected to make a speech to try to win our votes. There was a voting booth and it was all taken very seriously.

The following day our local Member of

Year 9 Panel Question and Answer Session for David Gauke MP

Question 1 Michael Turnbull 9HY

How are you making it easier for us to get wind turbines and solar panels to help the environment?

Answer

David Cameron wants to do everything possible to move to renewable energy sources. It may be possible to do that through the tax benefit system. I am keen to encourage ECO homes in the constituency there is a house outside Watford that has no carbon footprint at all.

Question 2 Annabelle Wright 9HY

What steps are you taking to reduce your carbon footprint?

Answer

Personally I use public transport as much as I possibly can. I try to switch off lights and all standby buttons and recycle as much as possible. And I make an effort not to drive whenever I can.

Question 3 Becca Pavlik 9HX

Do you believe that the Iraq war was really necessary?

Answer

I take an unfashionable view on this question and yes I think the war was necessary. Of course lots of things have gone wrong since the war started. But I think Saddam was a threat and that western values and democracy are important. Saddam Hussein was a threat to the stability of the Middle east region and we did the right thing.

Question 4 Ashlee Young 9CX

What is Britain doing about the crisis in Dafur?

Answer

Not enough. We should be tougher on the Sudanese regime. Maybe because the war in Iraq went wrong we haven't put enough pressure on Sudan. China has stopped progress at the United Nations because they want to obtain natural resources such as oil. Appalling crimes are being committed in Darfur and we should use stronger action with diplomatic pressure.

Question 5 Michael Turnbull 9HY

How bad do you think gun and knife crime has to get before something big is done?

Answer

Clearly this problem is getting worse there was a murder in Sheffield only yesterday. It is not just a question of banning guns and knives. There needs to be more visible policing and we should make effort to stop gang culture related to drugs. We should not allow certain places to be no go areas.

Question 6 Bryony Milne 9AX

Will the current Year 7 have to stay in education until they are 18? What do you think about this?

Answer

Yes I think the school leaving age should be 18. If we need to prosper in the 21st Century and compete with China and India whose economy's are growing very fast then the population needs to be educated. It is not always the best method to stay on in school for everyone a certain amount

Parliament, David Gauke, came to Tring School. A few weeks before there was a questionnaire passed around the Year 9 form bases. Fourteen students were selected to ask their question to David Gauke. During fourth period we all met at the Conference Room opposite Reception. Individually we asked our questions, he had no idea what to expect but he answered with compassion and it was obvious that he loved his job. I really enjoyed these two days and I learnt a lot. I met lots of people who I really respect, especially David Gauke.

Bryony Milne, 9AX



of flexibility is needed. And I am not totally convinced that raising the school leaving age will be the answer. But undoubtedly education is a very important area of young peoples lives.

Question 7 Amy Walshe 9AX

Do you think childhood obesity in young people is getting worse?

Answer

Yes I do, that's a very topical question in light of the recent news reports. It is pretty clear that childhood obesity is getting worse. There are a number of reasons, lack of exercise being one. Who walks or bikes to school (show of hands) And there are some indications that diet is better than it has ever been but exercise is less. Personal responsibility is needed. And we should certainly encourage more school sport.

Question 8 Sophie Lowry 9WX

Do you believe young people cause problems? If not how can the teenager's image be improved?

Answer

No not all teenagers. It is the activities of a minority that label the majority. One or two who cause problems always get noticed. Teenagers have always had an image problem but we certainly do need to tackle anti social behaviour.

Question 9 Tiffany Choules 9AX

Why do the Government and many other people think University is so important?

Answer

This goes back to the point I made earlier. China and India are major nations and we need to compete with them. We will only succeed if we have an educated work force. I am a bit sceptical of some of the targets but education is vital. I know some people are concerned over the size of the debt they may incur by going to university but if we are to have good universities then they need to be funded properly. It is a burden to the tax payer. But if you have a degree than you earn more over your working life in order to pay student loans back.

Question 10 Katy Turner 9WX

What do you think about changing the driving age to 18?

Answer

There is an issue with the number of accidents and fatalities where drivers of 17 are inexperienced. And I certainly think there is an argument to raise the driving age to 18.

Question 11 Jack Easton 9HY

Do you believe that exams are getting easier and if so what would you like to do about it?

Answer

I think there has been some independent research that say maybe exams are getting easier which is not fair because I know that students do work hard. The pressure to lower standards has faded. But I think we should have an independent body to check on standards. The current system does not distinguish

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excellent from very good so we do need to make some changes in that area.

Question 12 Katie Vest 9WX

What are the reasons or and how will the smoking age going up help?

Answer

We are not doing terribly well in reducing teenage smokers. It seems to be justified to raise the smoking age. I did not vote against the ban because I think it is justifiable.

Question 13 Hannah Leeson 9HY

What do you think about building on fields and the countryside?

Answer

We live in a lovely part of the world here in Hertfordshire. There is a balance to be kept between housing development and keeping the countryside. Obviously we do need to build more house but we don't want to turn the whole of the South East of England into urban sprawl. We need to keep an eye on that. Don't let Tring, Berkhamsted, Hemel spread into each other. We should be building on brown sites not on green belt. We do have a large population here and we might be at risk of losing the attractiveness of the area.

Question 14 Rhuvi Wickramasingha 9AX

How can we stop discrimination in schools?

Answer

This should be done by teaching in schools. We should be enforcing suitable behaviour and coming down hard on anyone who displays inappropriate behaviour. We should all be aware of what is suitable and acceptable and thankfully discrimination is now less tolerated and not acceptable to most of us.

Question 15 Jonathan Downes 9AX

Why has the government decided to put an incinerator just outside Aston Clinton?

Answer

Bucks County Council are looking at this. I personally have been lobbying very hard against this. What do we do with our rubbish – bury or burn? We will ultimately run out of space to bury our waste and obviously there is a problem with CO2 emissions if we go down the burn route. The answer is to try and produce less waste. I am certainly lobbying against the incinerator.

Question 16 Chris Hall 9CX

What is the main worry you what to tackle in the area?

Answer

Without a doubt the biggest problem in the health service in West Herts. The Local Hospital Trust has been rated low in cleanliness. This is a big problem within hospitals. Also Hemel Hospital will be moving to Watford which is not big enough, and in the constituency as a whole the state of our health provision is an on going issue.

What do you feel about Euro integration?

I am a Euro sceptic not anti but I think the EU was set up to deal with issues in the 50's such as the Cold War and the rearmament of Germany. We've moved on since then. But Euro integration is not an answer to 21st Century problems. I think is autocratic and undemocratic, there is little you can do with EU legislation. I think it's the wrong direction for this century. And I certainly think we should have a referendum on the latest EU treaty.

