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My first 100 days as East Hampshire's MP

I cannot imagine there are many feelings comparable to the moment the Speaker of the House of Commons calls your name for the first time. As you rise to your feet it is impossible not to see the ghosts of Pitt, Disraeli, Gladstone, Churchill and Thatcher cooling weighing you up as you glance furtively at your suddenly indecipherable clutch of notes. But by the time you sit down and the ringing in your ears starts to subside you cannot help but smile knowing that in a smallest of ways you have made your mark on the same history of that chamber.

The pressure of speaking in the Commons for the first time is just one of many challenges that we new MPs suddenly find ourselves confronted with. In the campaign, I have to admit, I spent as little time as possible speculating on the practical realities of being an MP, if you get ahead of yourself at all it is to compose a long list of the local issues you want to follow up on as soon as possible. The reality comes very close to being overwhelming.

In the first week of the new Parliament all of the new MP's (which make up about a third of the House, the highest turnover in a generation) were thrown in at the deep end. Office space is allocated in a slow time honoured process by the whip's office and can take weeks. The work of an MP however begins right away. The various committee rooms of the Commons we turned into open plan office space for us and we spent the first four weeks and sometimes more, working side by side in what looked like the most grandly decorated call centre you have ever known. The post arrived (and still does) twice a day, amounting to hundreds of letters from constituents each with a real and compelling call on my attention and efforts. And then there were the emails. With no full time staff and still learning the way to the Commons Library it could all seem a little overwhelming.

If those frantic first few weeks are the sink or swim test I am happy to say am I paddling along more comfortably now. My small but perfectly formed office in the red brick Norman Shaw North Building came as a welcome change of scene from the initial bedlam of committee room 19 and I am relishing the daily challenges of serving the people of East Hampshire.

I also found myself elected by my peers to serve on the Education Select Committee which is a very real honour. Education is the policy area most dear to me and the issue I tried to define my campaign by; I really do think that we have a chance to completely shift how we provide education in this country, to empower parents and teachers and to infuse the whole system, and most importantly the students, with the ambition to achieve which makes education the most potent tool for change we have.

It is easy to think of the work of an MP as falling into two distinct categories; Westminster and the constituency. One focuses on scrutinising national legislation, debating in the Commons, constant dashing to the division lobby to vote and schooling yourself in the peculiar language of parliamentary debate and the other on helping constituents communicate with local authorities, advance new cause or initiative or be an advocate for those who find themselves unable to be heard.

But what I have discovered is that really there is no distinction between the two. At the moment I am preparing for a Westminster Hall debate which I have been granted by the Speaker; far from just being an exercise in parliamentary form I am looking forward to leading a debate on how we tackle the pressing local problem of unauthorised development and encampments and abuse of our planning system. In our last meeting of the Education Select Committee I was able to press Michael Gove about the case of Mill Chase School in Bordon and promised funds for renovation. The way in which I can see, every day, how an issue which I first encounter in a letter from a constituent leads to a Parliamentary Question, which leads to a meeting with a minister, which leads to a speech which leads to a debate which (hopefully) leads to a change in the law and the solution to the problem.

If my first hundred days as an MP has taught me anything, apart from the relative luxury of five hours of sleep, it is that everything that happens in Westminster spring from a local issue; national politics is just the sum total of our local priorities. I have also had confirmed the one expectation I did have about being an MP; your chance to make a difference every day is unparalleled, it really is the best job in the world.