

# Tamworth Conservative Association

## Update from Christopher Pincher

Parliament has been sitting now for ten weeks yet the time is really flying by. But I thought I would mail you a brief update on some of the key issues facing us and give you a flavour of the things I have been focusing on.

### Budget

Last week the Chancellor, George Osborne, delivered his “growth Budget” to get our economy moving again after the recession. The focus of the Coalition government in 2010 was to tackle a disastrous budget deficit (the £156 billion each year the government spends more than it earns) which was stacking up our national debt with terrible consequences for interest payments – we have to spend over £120 million on interest payments alone EACH DAY.

Having taken the difficult decisions to get rid of the deficit by 2015, George Osborne targeted this year’s budget on helping business growth and supporting hard pressed households, motorists and first-time buyers. I joined the crush of MPs to listen to this important announcement and took some notes. These are the key points I think come out of the Budget:

- Taxes are cut for businesses, with extra rate relief for small firms whilst onerous regulations have been scrapped. This will help businesses grow creating more jobs and prosperity.
- The Chancellor not only replaced the fuel duty escalator with a “fair fuel stabiliser” but also cut fuel duty by 1p per litre – all paid for by a tax on oil companies. The last government had planned a 5p fuel price hike this year. That plan was scrapped by George Osborne.
- The increase in personal allowances will make a real difference to hard working families. From April next year the personal tax allowance will increase by a further £630, to £8,105. So every taxpayer keeps more of their cash before tax. Together with this year’s rise, that means a total of £326 extra each year for those working hard to support themselves and their families. And it means, just ten months into office, this coalition Government has taken 1.1 million low paid people out of tax altogether.
- Finally, first time buyers will also receive help with a new £250 million programme to help them get on the housing ladder.

### Military Covenant

In January I asked to join the Armed Forces Bill Select Committee which is looking at government plans to rebuild the “military covenant” between the country and our armed forces – a covenant which has been stretched to snapping point in recent years. I believe it is vitally important that every year the Defence Secretary should report on the progress he is making to improve health services, housing and education for our servicemen and women, and their families. The Committee has already spoken to senior military chiefs as well as the Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes and Service families associations and shortly the Commons will look at Committee’s report and debate the proposals again.

### Supporting Local Soldiers

I was really pleased to visit the Staffordshire Regiment’s museum and learn more about the regiment’s history. My great grandfather served in the South Staffordshire regiment so to see some of the photographs and memorabilia from World War One now in the museum’s collection was fascinating. Thanks to Major Massey for showing me around. We should be especially aware of the tremendous history of the Staffordshire’s as early last month their successors, the Third Battalion of the new Mercian regiment, went out to Afghanistan. I am sure we wish them all a successful tour and a safe return home.

### Speaking Up For Schools

Education is also an important issue for me and also for Tamworth. So earlier this month I spoke in the Education debate calling for more discipline in schools, more support for the teaching profession and for a major change to university applications. I do believe that A level students should apply for university after they get their exam results rather than before. I think that change will cut out a lot of bureaucracy, make the unpleasant "clearing" system a thing of the past and help the most disadvantaged students many of whom lose the opportunity of a university place because their predicted results are lower than their actual results. By making applications based on actual rather than predicted results, the chances of disadvantaged students going to university will improve. It seems to me this is a sensible move. But let me know what you think.

### Votes For Prisoners?

At the same time, the House of Commons debated the controversial issue of giving prisoners the vote. I voted "no" as I firmly believe that if people have committed crimes serious enough to warrant a prison sentence they should lose their vote as well as their liberty. I am very pleased to say that the vote was overwhelming with 234 MPs saying "no" and just 22 saying "yes" to change. The vote also sent a clear message to the European Court that the British parliament is sovereign and that it, not the European Court, must decide what our laws should be.

### Tinkering With The Voting System

In less than 40 days we face another big constitutional issue – the Alternative Vote system referendum on which we all must have our say. As many of you will know I am very much opposed to "AV" – a European style system which is complicated and unfair. I am very pleased to say that over 200 Labour MPs have also joined the cross party campaign to keep our tried and tested "most votes wins" voting system. The only parties keen on changing to "AV" are the very Euro-federalist parties that want to Europeanise our politics. I fear that will give too much power to wheeler dealing politicians and less to the people. But my major objections to "AV" are that:

- it breaks the principle of one person one vote because supporters of fringe parties end up having their vote counted several times while supporters of mainstream parties only have their vote counted once. Under "AV" the candidate that comes in third place can end up winning. I think voters themselves should decide who the best candidate is, not the voting system.
- it is a politician's fix, taking power away from voters and allowing the smaller parties to choose the government after each election even though they have much less support. Our current tried and tested "most votes wins" voting system is simple and clear, it generally delivers clear outcomes and everyone's vote is equal.
- it will also be very expensive, requiring councils to spend more time and money on vote counting, which would increase your council tax.

You will hear much more about "AV" over the next few weeks. I urge everyone to read the small print about this European style system very carefully and use your vote to say "no thank you".

Meanwhile, we can all look forward to lighter nights and hopefully warmer weather. In the last few days we've some bright spots. So perhaps spring has sprung!

Let me know what you think. If you have any issues or concerns, please let me know.

### Christopher Pincher

Christopher Pincher MP  
[Member of Parliament for Tamworth]  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Tel. 0207 219 7169

