

## The mood amongst Wokingham Conservatives

Mrs May is consulting the party and the wider electorate about her Withdrawal Agreement. I have been taking soundings for some time, ever since the Chequers climb downs exploded into the media. On Friday I had the opportunity to sound out 100 Conservatives at a party lunch, on top of the many conversations, emails and comments I have received in recent weeks.

The opposition to the Withdrawal Agreement is very strong, and there is overwhelming support for the stance I am taking in proposing to vote against the Agreement. Very few party members believe this is the best we could do, and a majority of enthusiastic leavers think leaving without an Agreement will be considerably better. The minority in the local party that regret the decision of the referendum are also against this Withdrawal Agreement, but want a return to negotiations or a delay in the Article 50 process following the vote against the Agreement.

Opinion on Mrs May herself has been more mixed, but recently the majority has moved against her continuing in office. There is a general feeling that she should not continue if the Agreement is voted down, a mood I have voiced in interviews. I would assume she would want to resign if her Agreement is defeated by a substantial margin. Were she not to I expect more MPs would send in letters requiring a vote on her continued leadership. I have urged her not to proceed with the Agreement in the interest of the nation, the party and her own future. I did not vote for Mrs May to be the Leader of the Conservative party and do not support the course she is taking.

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## How do I represent my constituents on the issue of our exit from the EU?

A whole series of emails are arriving in my email box and doubtless in the email boxes of other MPs drafted to ask How will I represent the constituent, given their view. There are different versions, with some of the drafts used by people who want to leave, some who wish to remain, and some who want a second referendum. Some are individually worded by constituents. There are several different views, but an MP of course only has one vote.

There is, however, common ground in the vast majority of the emails I receive. Whether coming from Remain or Leave supporters, the big majority dislike the Withdrawal Agreement. Both sides sees this as an attempted compromise which suits few. Both see the Agreement turns us into a rule taker and bill payer. It removes our bargaining levers by legally binding us to

give the EU what it wants before we have secured what we might like. Most people see this rightly as a very bad deal, with no agreement on what we might get out of an eventual Future Partnership Agreement. Some Remain voters think it would better to stay in the EU to have vote and voice as well as taking their rules and paying the bills. Leave voters say the Withdrawal Agreement is not leaving, as we stay in the single market and customs union and carry on paying large sums to buy more time for talks.

This makes my task that much easier. My judgement has been throughout that this Agreement has to be voted down. In the light of the extensive correspondence I have received I do not have to worry about whether I am speaking for my constituents in so doing, as a majority tell me they too want it voted down. The question of what we should then do produces a variety of answers amongst constituents. I will return to these issues over the period of the vote and the sequel to the vote. I feel I need to honour my promises to electors in the 2017 General Election when I said I would support carrying out the will of the nation in the referendum.

The resignation of yet another Minister, the eleventh to go on this matter so far, is a reminder of how Mrs May cannot win this vote unless Labour change their minds. Ministers give up interesting jobs reluctantly, in order to vote against the government. That is eleven more votes against the Agreement so far. It is difficult to see how the Prime Minister could carry on if she goes down to defeat on this central policy she has designed.

The sooner we tell the EU we cannot sign the Withdrawal Agreement the better. The sooner we table a proper Free Trade Agreement and see if they want one the better.

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## [Advice to Michael Gove](#)

The Withdrawal Agreement you are recommending denies us the Brexit you campaigned for. The alternative cannot be staying in the EU , which would be against everything you promised and against the Manifesto you and I stood on in the 2017 General Election.

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## [Leave voters are fed up with continuous Project Fear in Parliament](#)

## and on much of the media

When a General election changes the governing party the media changes its mainstream agenda from the preoccupations of the outgoing government to the priorities of the incoming government. Media reflects the will of the people and the shift of power. Of course it allows the Opposition a say, and the Parliamentary Opposition battles to get some of its priorities onto the media as a challenge to the government. The Opposition gets more attention as the unpopularity of a government increases and or as another election approaches.

Most of the media have failed to reflect this sensible democratic approach to news over the Referendum. Most of them have carried on accepting as news and stories a series of tendentious or mendacious forecasts, predictions and non stories from the Project Fear stable as if the Referendum campaign were still underway or as if Remain had actually won. In this they reflect the Labour opposition. Elected on a Manifesto that said they accepted the result and would work towards the UK leaving the EU, Labour has instead spent the last seventeen months putting the case in the Commons for staying in the EU directly, and being remorselessly negative about leaving the EU at every available opportunity. Within the government the Chancellor and the Business Secretary have also delighted in highlighting gloomy and inaccurate forecasts of what might happen instead of seizing the many opportunities Brexit brings to lower taxes, cut tariffs, improve laws and promote more domestic business.

It is no wonder there is an ever growing gulf between most Leave voters and the Parliament and media which talks at them daily in discordant tones. We are constantly being told we were too stupid to understand what we voted on, that we never voted to leave the customs union and single market which were always an integral part of EU membership which we rejected, and that we should be asked again because we must by now have changed our minds. If an entirely false forecast of a mild recession after the vote would not make us vote Remain in the Referendum, maybe a even more false forecast (called a scenario) of a massive recession after we leave will force us to cry out for a second ballot.

It's high time those of us who believe in Brexit and have many positive things to say about our regaining our freedom and lifting our growth rate once out were allowed some airtime. There is no indication that this will happen, leading to more people to turn off the BBC news and cancel their subscriptions to the Daily Mail. It as if all the opportunities from Brexit did not exist for most of the media and all too many MPs. The Leave voting public have more vision than the establishment.

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# Minister Perry visits Peach Place Wokingham

I was pleased to welcome Minister Perry from the Business Department to Wokingham to see the new Peach Place development and to meet new tenants taking shops there. She was full of praise for the new development and talked about business rate reductions and other measures to promote stronger High Street shopping. Leader of the Borough Council Julian McGhee Sumner also attended.

We met and talked to some of the builders of the scheme, saw the new Waterstones and spent time discussing the outlook for the Leafy Elephant, a new Gin bar that should be opening in March after fit out.

I wished all involved every success with their ventures, and hope the Council will be announcing more tenancies soon. This development should add to the range and choice Wokingham provides, and help create a bigger platform for events and community activities as well as shopping.