



April 2022 Newsletter

The **cost-of-living crisis** is an overwhelming priority for me at the moment.

Everything is going up except incomes and we are currently facing the fastest fall in living standards since records began. I ran an **Easter cost-of-living survey** which collected more than 650 responses from local people. This incredible response goes to show how many people are finding it hard to make ends meet.

These voices need to be heard and I am determined to use local voices and stories to make as much noise as possible up in Westminster and demand change.

My team are currently working through the results and we are thinking about how we can use the information we have gathered to make the most impact. If you have any ideas or would like to be involved, please email me.

While living standards plummet, the Tories are sitting on their hands. They are mired down in 'partygate' and desperate to distract from the lawbreaking and lying of the prime minister and the chancellor. As my colleague Ruth Jones said at PMQs, the PM 'is not fit to run a bath'.

This cost of living crisis is a political choice. If the Tories treated it like the crisis it is, they would be taking urgent action to protect working class people. Instead, in the last few days they have started to speak about reviewing nursery staff ratios and extending MOTs. **They don't get it and they don't care.**

We need a Government that is not distracted and is relentlessly focused on the interests of the working class. **We need a Labour Government now.**

The TUC are organising a demonstration **in London on June 18th**. I will be looking to organise a coach from Cynon Valley, please let me know if you would be interested in attending and I will put your name on the list. In the meantime, if you are struggling to pay the bills, please contact me. I will do what I can to help.

As well as a Labour Government in Westminster, we need to return another Labour Council here in RCT so that they can get on with delivering their manifesto pledges. Next week (5th May) we will go to the polls for the **Council elections**. I have loved getting out with our brilliant Labour team up and down Cynon Valley and the reception on the doorstep has been extremely positive.

I must take this chance to pay tribute to our **outgoing Labour councillors** Sue Pickering, Elaine George, Anita Calvert, Linda de Vet, Mike Forey, Helen Boggis and Graham Thomas. Immeasurable thanks for your friendship and for the hard work you have put in over the years in your communities.

Good luck to all our new and returning candidates. Thanks to your enthusiastic campaigning, I am convinced that we will have a fantastic result.

In Cynon

With the bulk of April taken up by the **Easter recess**, I took the opportunity to campaign on the cost of living in the constituency.

I spoke at a **cost of living demo in Cardiff** and organised a mini-roadshow to take my cost of living survey out to the various communities in Cynon, trying to make sure our information is as representative as possible. Parliament is now 'prorogued' for the Queens' speech and will return on 10th May. I will return to the House armed with a huge amount of qualitative and quantitative data on the impact the cost of living is having in Cynon Valley.

As well as campaigning on the cost of living and for our Labour candidates, I was able to spend a bit more time this month speaking to people & groups up and down the constituency. That's what it's all about for me, and **the best part of my job!**

Over Easter I met the Gadlys OAP group at one of their regular meetings at Cynon Linc; the Cynon Valley Women's Institute at Aberdare Golf Club; Girl Guides from Hirwaun and Cwmbach at the Cwmbach scout hut and Hirwaun Men's Shed at the YMCA. I met the committee at Aberdare Islamic Centre to mark the start of Ramadan and I met children from Our Lady's and Pengeulan primary schools at Cynon Valley Organics. I met with WASPI women in Abercynon in the latest of my WASPI street stalls across Cynon Valley.

Along with the cost of living crisis and climate change, the most common thing I heard over and over from people was about **access to health services**. People across Cynon are reporting struggles contacting their GPs, with appointments scarce and huge difficulty getting through on the phone during the narrow windows given. I've also heard from a lot of people about extremely long wait times for ambulances, and at A&E. We need a step change in the service being provided. I recently wrote to the Chair of the Health Board and asked about all of these issues.

I also asked for an update on the **Minor Injuries Unit** at Ysbyty Cwm Cynon. I was reassured that this would be re-opening in early 2022, and at the time of writing we are now almost in May and I have received no updates on when it is likely to open. This is extremely concerning. I will share any response I receive from the Health Board.

At the start of April, I brought together artistic and cultural organisations from across Cynon Valley to discuss joint working, but also how we can add value to **Caradog Fest** which is set to take place in July. Find out more about Caradog Fest [here](#).

I have continued to host advice sessions for Cynon Valley residents both in my Aberdare office, and in our communities. This month I held sessions in Penywaun and in Cwmdare. As I am in London from Mon - Thurs, my brilliant casework team now run advice sessions without me every other Wednesday in the office. **If there is anything we can do to help, please get in touch.**

Finally, I was delighted to be invited to speak at the first ever **Cardiff Transformed** this month. Hopefully the first of many!



Speaking at the cost of living demonstration in Cardiff



At the amazing Hirwaun YMCA with the Men's Shed & YMCA staff



A zoom call with arts and culture groups in Cynon Valley!

In The Bubble

Whilst the cost of living is my overwhelming priority at the moment, it seems to be something of an afterthought for the callous ruling party. The Tories are mired down in 'partygate' and desperate to distract from the lawbreaking and lying of the prime minister and the chancellor. As my colleague Ruth Jones said, the PM 'is not fit to run a bath'.

It's important not to get drawn into the narrative that this is a couple of bad apples. The whole **Conservative party is rotten to the core**. The working class need and deserve better.

This month the Tories tried to rush through the final stages of a series of draconian bills, with the Policing Bill which is trying to clamp down on protest and the inhumane Nationality and Borders Bill both returning to the Commons. I spoke against both in the Chamber. You can watch those speeches [here](#) and [here](#).

They also announced their plan to 'offshore' asylum seekers to Rwanda. This cruel and barbaric plan must be opposed.

The **Welsh Affairs Committee** this month held its first evidence session on tourism in Wales. I hope to have more to share with you about this in a future update.

Another recent session the Committee had was a one-off session about **the state of policing in Wales**. I chose to ask the various police chiefs whether police forces were institutionally racist. Each of the police chiefs pushed back against the term institutional racism. Jeremy Vaughan from South Wales police said that they were not institutionally racist but that there were 'deep-seated systemic issues of bias and racism'. I fail to understand why the term institutional racism shouldn't apply in those circumstances, and I worry we will get nowhere if we are still arguing about definitions 29 years after Stephen Lawrence was killed. Read my article in Voice Wales on this [here](#).

I also asked about the police's consistent failure to deal with violence against women and girls. Not only do we only have a 1.6% rape conviction rate in Wales, only 5 stalking protection orders were issued out of 7000 complaints. You can see my questioning from 11:22 [here](#).

In a Westminster Hall debate this month I called for the **renationalisation of Royal Mail**. £1,725 million has been paid out to shareholders since privatisation. Nationalisation would allow that to be reinvested and pay for a proper pay rise for hardworking Royal Mail staff.

Research from CPAG was published recently which concluded that the **2 child limit** was driving hundreds of thousands of children into poverty. This is a disgrace; no child should suffer because of the number of siblings they have. I spoke against the limit at a recent Westminster Hall debate.

As usual, I have tried to use **Written Questions** to gather information from Government departments. You can read my recent questions and the answers provided [here](#). If ever you have any questions you would like me to raise with Ministers, please **get in touch**.

Finally, the campaign for a UBI continues and I had the privilege to speak at a couple of **UBI Lab Network events** this month.



Speaking against the Policing Bill in Parliament



Jeremy Vaughan from South Wales Police responding to my question



Speaking at a recent UBI Lab Network Event

Rob's Review



Rob Hope
Senior
Caseworker

The ongoing **cost of living crisis** is the primary focus of the whole team and is our foremost priority for the period ahead. In order to assess the spiralling cost of living on our constituents in the Cynon Valley we drafted a **questionnaire** about the impact of these rises so that we could use the results to fully understand how individuals and families are being affected and also to use the evidence to enable Beth to make interventions in parliament.

We will be assessing the survey results this week but the fact that we have received over 650 responses is extraordinary and it is clear from some of the comments provided that many people are already struggling desperately with the basic

need to pay for food and heating bills with incomes that are not keeping pace with the cost of living.

We will be publishing the results of the survey as soon as possible and we will keep you informed of further measures that we will be taking to raise awareness of the problems and to offer support to constituents in need.

One of the aspects of our work that we have finally been able to introduce over the last few months is incorporating **volunteers** into our team. This has long been something that we all have wanted to support and a number of members of the team either are volunteering themselves or have significant experience of working with volunteers.

It has been great to see volunteers work with us on a number of diverse and varied tasks from researching information, editing texts and proofreading articles to leafletting, attending events and working on admin tasks in the constituency office.

We are still looking for volunteers so if you are interested please get in touch and let us know what kind of work you'd be interested in doing!

Rob
robert.hope@parliament.uk

Beth Winter MP

Cost of Living Crisis
Cynon Valley Survey



 01685 243166

 beth.winter.mp@parliament.uk

 @BethWinterMP

 @BethWinterMP