

## **Holyrood Briefing – September 2009**

### **EVENING TIMES COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARDS**

Pollok Community Centre was 'jumping' recently as the Greater Pollok Community Champion Awards were announced.

This event, like its equivalent held in the Pearce Institute in Govan for Govan and Craigton, recognised and celebrated the fabulous work done by individuals and groups across the constituency to make a difference to their neighbours.

It was a privilege to be part of such excellent occasions and to be able to add my thanks to all those who were nominated and who won awards.

The winners will now go to an all-Glasgow event later in the year where they will compete with Champions from across the city. If there is any justice, our Champions will sweep the board!

### **CHANGING PLACES**

I have added my support to the campaign for accessible toilets across all of Scotland's local authorities.

Around 3,500 people in Scotland with profound and multiple learning difficulties, as well as many thousands other disabled people, cannot use standard disabled toilets and need toilets with more space for their carers and the right equipment.

We need to raise awareness of this important issue to ensure that large buildings and shopping complexes provide for the needs of **all** their customers.

### **LOTTERY FUNDING WELCOME**

I was pleased to hear that Greater Pollok Carers' Centre has been successful in applying to the Big Lottery Fund for a grant of £375,000.

This money will benefit young people in Pollok through supporting a wide variety of activities including homework groups, lunchtime drop-ins and residential trips. Over a 5 year period, the project will benefit 280 young carers.

Such excellent work well deserves generous funding.

### **BETTING SHOP ANGER**

I can only express myself as angry that a decision has been made to allow a third betting shop to be set up in Nitshill.

This is despite the objections of local people, Councillor Alex Glass and myself.

Glasgow City Council's licensing board rejected the application but the appeal by Coral was upheld by the Scottish Government reporter.

The reason given was that the area looked 'dead', as the premises were empty. I have to ask - would any application be granted on that basis?

I believe local people should be able to have more say where there appears to be over-provision of particular kinds of shops.

### **TACKLING SEXUAL OFFENCES**

Speaking in a debate in the Scottish Parliament on the Sexual Offences Bill, I highlighted the importance of the Bill in tackling the problems of the low rate of convictions for rape in Scotland.

The Bill makes it clear that a woman must give her consent to having sex, otherwise a rape has been committed.

The Bill also provides protection and sanctions in cases in which men are the victims of such attacks, as well as when women are victims.

In my speech, I expressed regret that the First Minister, Alex Salmond, chose not to be present for this important debate but decided to go to Westminster to vote for a motion of no confidence in the UK government.

### **JOHANN LAMONT SPEAKS OUT**

#### **Older People's Champion**

I had the enjoyable task recently of addressing the Scottish Pensioners' Forum in my role as Labour's Older People's Champion in the Scottish Parliament.

There are real challenges facing older people and it was good to have the opportunity to discuss the areas for which the Scottish Parliament has responsibility.

Transport, housing, health and care services are all areas where older people have particular needs that must be addressed.

#### **Panorama: Home Care Scandal - Punish the real wrongdoers**

I was appalled to hear that Arifa Farooq - the young female journalist for Panorama who went undercover as a homecare worker to expose cruelty and neglect of elderly people - had been arrested and charged.

Her actions were in the finest tradition of investigative journalism and deserve praise, not punishment.

I am delighted that the charges have now been dropped but I shall continue to press the Chief Constable about why she had to suffer this ordeal and what action is being taken against the companies which presided over this neglect.

**SURGERIES**

Friday 11th September - 2.00pm - The Wedge, 1066 Barrhead Road, Pollok

Friday 18th September - 2.00pm - 996 Mossspark Drive, Cardonald, (Paisley Rd West junction)

Saturday 19th September - 10.00am - Pollok Civic Realm, 27 Cowglen Road, Pollok