

## **Holyrood Briefing – November 2008**

### **Crisis at HBOS**

These are fast-changing and challenging times for us all. The banking system came close to meltdown and there has been widespread recognition and approval of the actions by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, to prevent a banking collapse.

The banks, having been given such significant financial support, must now take action to prevent any further crises. The banks have a critical role, for example, in supporting businesses and families threatened with repossession. Co-operating with plans which will help people through these difficult times is the least we can expect.

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As Britain's economy - and the global economy - enter rocky waters, it is essential that individuals and communities are properly supported.

The Scottish Parliament has important resources and powers to support people to develop new skills and retrain; equally it can fund organisations and groups - like Citizens' Advice, credit unions and many advice centres - which can help people who are facing money and debt problems.

I shall be pressing the Scottish Government to use the substantial powers it has to sustain this important work.

### **Missed Out; Missing Out**

Quarriers, the organisation which supports people with disabilities, has produced a report, 'Missed Out; Missing Out', which examines how much is being done for people with learning disabilities who live at home with their family.

The report shows that unfortunately the provision for such people varies widely across the country. It was very disturbing to read that one local authority admitted, "we don't know if people are dead or just not getting a service". In fact, only 11 of the 32 local councils responded to the survey. I am glad that Glasgow was one of those.

I am supporting a motion before the Scottish Parliament calling for action on the report and I intend to continue to pursue this issue.

### **Awards for All**

I was delighted to read that 3 groups in the constituency have been successful in applying for Awards for All which awards grants for a wide range of community based activities.

Sandwood Primary has received a £5,000 award which will be used for outdoor centre and sporting activities.

Rosshall Nursery got £6,567 to provide educational projects.

Crookston Speech and Language Unit was granted £9,475 to help fund a wide range of pursuits.

I would like to congratulate all of those involved in securing this funding which will help support the young people of the area.

### **Johann Lamont Speaks Out**

In these gloomy times, this month's column is given over to some good news - activity in the constituency which can cheer our hearts.

Firstly, congratulations to all those at St Paul's High School who organised and participated in its Pupil Parliament elections. I visited the school as voting was taking place - and it was good to see such energy amongst the candidates and enthusiasm by the electors. Last year's Parliament has a proud record of keeping its election promises, most notably by helping transform the school's lunch service. As someone who is often involved in elections, it was heartening to see real evidence of political engagement - a lesson to us all.

Secondly, I had the privilege along with Harmony Row Boys Club in meeting Aileen McGlynn, our own local paralympian, who won 2 gold medals in cycling in Beijing. It was a fabulous occasion when all of us, old and young alike, were able to congratulate and express our admiration for this unassuming, dedicated and talented athlete. And the gold medals are stunning.

Thirdly, we are lucky in this constituency to have some truly exceptional people working to make our communities alive and interesting, including those art clubs which allow people to discover artistic talent they never knew they had.

In Pollok's Storytelling Project, based in St James' Church, we have a gem of a group which is renowned well beyond Glasgow. One of the driving forces behind its unique success is Rachel Smillie - a woman of vision and warmth. Rachel is moving on and I wanted to take this opportunity to wish her well. Her impact on Pollok has been massive - and she leaves behind an immense legacy to us all.

Finally, thanks again to all those individuals and groups who have invited me along to events this month. Great fun - and plenty of food for thought.