

This week saw the Chancellor outline his Autumn Statement and Spending Review in the House of Commons. They are two separate but equally important announcements. The Spending Review sets out the so-called “envelope” of spending for each government department for the next three year cycle. Each department was asked to make savings in order to help reduce the overall government deficit bequeathed by the last Labour government.

This all sounds very Whitehall bubble-ish, but its relevance to residents is enormous. The savings made by each department then gets filtered down to its local spending areas – such as local government, police forces etc. These in turn then decide which areas are prioritised; sometimes directed by central government, sometimes not.

This year was the first time I have been inside the machine of government for the spending review for my own department and it is an incredibly difficult process. There is simply no pleasure in trying to balance budgets as many ordinary folk know from their own household expenditure.

While the Chancellor outlined a number difficult decisions to be made in public spending there were also several positive announcements. Police funding has been protected and counter terrorism funding increased, health spending will increase over the Parliament and the schools budget has also been protected. Also, because of an improvement in the public finances, proposed changes to tax credits have been cancelled. In my own portfolio sport funding has been protected and a new outside of London tourism budget announced – good news for Kent!

Finally having met with the Chancellor along with Kent MPs, I was delighted he committed £250 million to relive pressure on our roads cause by Operation Stack, welcome news for communities and businesses in Kent who have suffered so badly this summer.

I’ve tried to summarise into my allowed word limit what this all means but as always if constituents have questions then please do get in touch.