

I've tried to use this column, which is due to finish at the end of this month for the pre-election period, to cover a combination of local and national issues as well as explain some of the parliamentary comings and goings. Having previously written about Bills and Committees, I thought this week I'd write about the various receptions MPs attend.

Parliament has over the past decade started to make the most of its estate and allowed organisations, such as charities, use its rooms to host information events for MPs and Peers which then often confirm or ignite an interest in an issue.

This week I attended three such events. One was hosted by Save the Children which set out their recommendations on how the next Government can both tackle child poverty overseas and give every child in the UK a fair start in life. I've been working with Save the Children on a related campaign on child literacy, with a view to launching something rather imaginative in the constituency after the Election (all being well)!

I also went to an event on Prostate Cancer. Often constituents will write and ask you to attend themed receptions and this was an example of that. Prostate Cancer, although gaining awareness, still kills 10,000 men a year. For all their idiosyncrasies I love our chaps and anything I can do to help this cause is worth the time.

Finally I spoke at a reception about companion animals and the elderly. Many older people fear going into a care home because they will be separated from their beloved pet. Sadly few care homes have a pet policy, something many charities and campaign groups are working to change.

Dozens of these types of receptions happen throughout the day and evening across Parliament. They are an excellent way of charities or organisations meeting a decent number of parliamentarians in a short space of time to get their message across, and long may they continue.