

Your columnists are back! Did you miss us? Probably not but I certainly missed writing my column each week because it always feels like a great opportunity to get some thoughts down on paper about what I have done or am doing here in Westminster.

It was an enormous privilege to be returned to Parliament on 8th June to represent Chatham & Aylesford in Westminster. There is nothing more humbling than people putting their faith in you to stand up for them. So now we are back and I'd be lying if things were not a little strange. Most of what I/we do has returned to normal, almost as if nothing happened. The office whirred back into life with a flick of a switch and the management of casework, diary, local issues and policy development continued where it left off. In addition I got reappointed as sports minister but with a slightly restructured portfolio that includes civil society. I walked back into my department, into my same office, with the same civil servants supporting me as if nothing had happened in between. So despite much of it being the same there is also something very different about Parliament this time. Some of my parliamentary colleagues lost their seats, but that happened in 2015 as well so sadly not a new experience. Our majority is wafer thin and the challenges ahead of us are enormous but that is the sort of adversity that our constituents expect us to overcome in the best interests of the country.

So despite the odd atmosphere in Parliament there is a real sense of heads down and getting on with the job and my what an almighty job it is as we navigate our way through Brexit and I am sure this column will cover the journey we have ahead of us on many occasions.