HAMPSHIRE CHRONICLE

Letter from Westminster



Steve Brine: Winchester MP

It's been said many times that a backbench MP has limited power but, potentially, a great deal of influence. More than five years in, I agree with that.

A good example of such, and the ability of this role to make a real difference, came last week when

many years of work and campaigning saw the Psychoactive Substances Bill clear its final stage in the House of

Constituents have consistently raised with me their concern about so-called 'legal highs' and, sadly, we have seen some tragic deaths (including locally) as a result of their use.

Because they have been legal, due to the chemists staying one step ahead of the law, the message went out that these party drugs are safe, harmless fun. They are not and the parents I have met who've lost children as a result of these drugs, know that better than anyone.

Years of pressure saw the proposal to introduce a "blanket ban" on psychoactive substances included in my party's manifesto last year and the Bill was a key part of the first Queen's

The opening of the 'head shop' on Stockbridge Road last year provoked a huge response (passed as it is by hundreds of young people and school children every day) in my post bag and was rightly covered by the *Hampshire Chronicle*.

There was of course relief just before Christmas when the shop was finally closed down using long-winded antisocial behaviour laws after many of us raised concerns with police, local authorities and trading standards.

As I said in Parliament, I know many of my constituents were pleased to see the back of this outlet and will welcome the new law which makes its return extremely difficult.

I have spoken at every step of the Bill's Commons' stages, including last week as it cleared the final hurdle, and it's now expected to receive Poyal

it's now expected to receive Royal Assent.

We need to now work with the police to bed it down and step up more than ever, sensitive and evidence-based education among young people of the dangers all drugs present to them and their future.

You can find out more, and follow the links to my work on this subject, via www.stevebrine.com/legalhighs

Finally, so much of the success of the British economy in recent years is down to the entrepreneurs who create the businesses, and become the employers, of tomorrow.

So it was good to visit IncuHive in Chandler's Ford which provides a safe space, backed up by mentors who already been successful in business, for future business leaders to work on their ideas.

It was created and developed by entrepreneur and senior business management lecturer at the University of Winchester, Steven Northam, and is well worth a look. www.incuhive.co.uk

You can find more information about my wider work as your local MP, in Westminster and the constituency at www.stevebrine.com or through 01962 791110.

Steve Brine MP for Winchester & Chandler's Ford

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