

Letter from Westminster



Steve Brine MP

IT has been said, there are no big arguments left in politics today. Both parties are apparently now the same.

You don't hear that so much these days and last week was,

for me, a good example why not.

This Government was elected to deliver a higher wage, lower welfare, lower tax country that finally lives within its means – and that's what we are delivering.

The new National Living Wage means that if you're 25 and over, you'll earn at least £7.20 an hour, by law. That means 1.3 million lower-paid workers will get a direct pay rise – the biggest jump in a minimum wage in any advanced economy since the financial crisis of 2008. The National Living Wage will increase each year, and by 2020 it is forecast to be £9 an hour.

Boosting pay and ensuring that more families have the security of a decent, regular pay packet – and making sure that people are always better off in work – is at the heart of what we meant by a long-term plan. But it must go hand-in-hand with an economy that creates jobs so an employment rate that remains at a record high (the out of work figures are down some 66 per cent in my constituency since 2010) is very nice to have.

Last month's Budget created many headlines but you may have missed another key component of our plan – the part that cuts taxes again for 31 million working people. From April next year the amount you can earn before paying any income tax at all will increase to £11,500, exactly as we promised in our manifesto. A typical basic rate taxpayer will be paying over £1,000 a year less to the taxman than they were five years ago.

And on the flip side of the earning scale, Budget 2016 should be remembered for finally lifting the higher rate threshold which will increase to £45,000. This isn't a "tax cut for millionaire's" it's delivering on a manifesto commitment for many middle earners, especially in our part of the world, and it's a tax cut of over £400 to middle Britain.

In recent weeks, we've had news that Winchester is officially the best to live in the UK and the second least affordable city. Those two accolades are of course linked and I don't hear from many of my constituents arguing for their property prices to drop or thousands of new houses to be built on our historic landscape setting but it's unfair to say everyone is deaf to the challenges we – and we are not alone – face.

Winchester City Council's New Homes Programme is building new council homes for local people – we saw the latest open in Stanmore very recently – and we have a signed off Local Plan that is more than doing its bit to increase supply.

Furthermore, we in Government are helping and intervening in the market. The Help2Buy ISA has made a terrific start and the new Lifetime ISA announced in the Budget is laser targeted at the under 40s who haven't had such a good deal from pensions. Google them both if you want more information.

Steve Brine
MP for Winchester and
Chandler's Ford

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