

Letters

THIS is it - the home straight of this issue's 'Letters dance'. We apologise again for the merry dance that following the letters has led you on, but the voice of Beeston will be heard in full!

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Policy, not party

DEAR EDITOR: It is heartening to read that Nick Palmer is a hard working MP, but most are (notwithstanding duck houses and moats). However, our parliament is based on a party system and has very few Independent MPs who are not there because they believe in a particular party manifesto.

As the body politic has proven to be in need of substantial reform, we need people who will deliver the right policies for our community and country.

We need positive policies rather than positive politics, and to vote for a party who will deliver the reforms needed: that party is not the Labour Party, no matter how pleasant the person is.

Terry Miller

Clumber Avenue, Chilwell

Right to Reply

DEAR EDITOR: There is a

certain irony in Bob Lilley, the chairman of Broxtowe Conservatives, accusing me of having a letter-writing team when he and Cllr Kerry write in the same edition in almost identical terms. To respond:

1. I don't have a letter-writing team. People who write to the *Express* presumably do so because they want to, not because I tell them what to say. The fact that the Tories haven't found anyone but party activists willing to stand up for them speaks volumes.

2. They say that I'm "certainly not local" because I was new to the constituency when selected in 1996. Yes, I was new then - I've lived in several countries and I don't think that's a bad thing. But 1996 is a long time ago, and it seems a bit desperate to try to smear me as some sort of mysterious stranger now.

3. As they say, I've moved to the city (for a non-political personal reason).

In fact, Miss Soubry lives opposite me. So neither of us sleep in the constituency, but I do most of my shopping in Beeston and there are few local events that I'm not involved in.

4. Mr Lilley defends the President of Broxtowe Conservatives, who, curiously, lives in London, where he is known as a derivatives trader with colourful views: he says "I eat what I kill" and supports ultra-monetarist economic policies. One might have expected Broxtowe Tories to want a President who lived in Broxtowe (Mr Lilley, perhaps?), but he has made up for it by donating no less than £55,000 to the party. Mr Lilley compares this to the cost to taxpayers of my employing staff to do casework. However, casework is strictly non-political (typically sorting out someone's CSA payments or problems with landlords), while the £55,000 has gone entirely

to the cause of enabling Broxtowe Conservatives to pay for giant posters, glossy leaflets and full-time political campaigners to try to get rid of me.

5. Both the Tories and the LibDems are basing their campaigns on attacking me as being insufficiently independent-minded, and the latest Tory email says I've only been a "proper rebel" once. I hate to take up *Beeston Express* space, but this is a flat lie that needs to be nailed. So, for the record: I've opposed the government on the Gurkhas (I said let them in), the Digital Economy Bill (I was one of the ringleaders of the rebellion), Royal Mail privatisation (I said don't do it), House of Lords reform (I voted for more democracy), transparency on MPs' expenses (I voted for more), chairmanship of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee (the whips wanted to remove an awkward chair - I disagreed), stricter carbon emissions (I worked

with Alan Simpson on this and we nearly defeated the government), hunting (I was for a ban before Tony Blair was persuaded), corporal punishment (I was for a ban), the Millennium Dome (I was against spending more money on it), asylum (I favour refugees working rather than being dependent), farm animal welfare (I support phasing out battery cages), prisons (intensive probation instead of short sentences) and numerous other issues. Some of these (36 in total) came to a vote on the floor of the Commons, others were in motions and committees. If I'm re-elected, I will be opposing continuation of Trident replacement, opposing continuation of the ID card project (both changes of mind in view of the need to address the deficit), opposing removal of the student fee cap, supporting a cap on our involvement in Afghanistan and taking an objective view of new proposals as they come, after consulting

constituents.

Meanwhile, Mr Lilley's favoured candidate, Anna Soubry, is unable to identify even two Conservative policies that she'd oppose if elected, while David Watts, so far as I know, only opposes one single LibDem policy. It's depressingly cynical that they both feel the need to spend so much of their energy campaigning against me personally - an echo of the childish Tory billboard campaign with made-up phrases about Gordon Brown.

I'm a Labour MP with a mind of my own, but more importantly, I'm someone who believes in positive policies and working for the constituency. Can we move on from the petty smears and hear what the other candidates would do better for Broxtowe? I don't care where they sleep - what I want to know is what they'll do when they're awake!

Nick Palmer

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