

Roger is back in Parliament as MP for Hall Green!

At the General Election Roger was returned as the MP for Hall Green with a massive increase in his majority. He gained an overall majority with 59.8% of the vote, up from 26.9% in 2010.

Roger and his team are looking forward to resuming our service for the people of Hall Green. Thank you very much for all the support that you gave to Roger during the election campaign and for your messages of support and congratulations!

After winning the election, Roger commented:

“I am very grateful to the people of Hall Green for returning me to Parliament with an increased majority. I will do my best to serve my constituents and will continue to campaign for a better, fairer UK.

I campaigned on a platform of publically owned essential public services, a living wage for all work, and a strong social safety net to protect those too ill to work and those looking for work. Despite the Conservative victory for the politics of fear and even harsher austerity, I received a clear mandate from my constituents to continue to fight against policies that victimise the most vulnerable in our society while allowing the wealthiest 1% and multinational corporations to avoid contributing anything like their fair share.



With a Conservative Government in power, it will be even more important to make a strong case for social justice and a fair society which protects the vulnerable and ensures a decent standard of living for all, rather

than ever-increasing wealth for a small minority. While the Labour party must, of course, support innovation and enterprise by small and medium sized businesses, we must not fall into the trap of blindly appeasing big business’ demands for ever-lower taxes, or allow workers’ rights to be continually eroded. I will continue to campaign for all work to pay enough to live on and



for small shareholders to have a majority on the remuneration committee of all public companies so that they can stop greedy executives from plundering profits.

The Tories now intend to cut billions from benefits including Working and Child Tax Credits. The brunt of this will fall on those too ill or disabled to work, and on working families whose wages are too low to live on. This will lead to greater poverty and misery for people who, through no fault of their own, are already struggling. The Conservatives’ constant mantra that the recession was caused by Labour’s overspending is simply not backed up by the facts—it was the greed and irresponsibility of many at the top of banks and other financial institutions, not the struggling poor, who caused the financial crash. I will not vote for any

legislation which inflicts further cuts on citizens who work hard in poorly-paid jobs, or who are trying to find work in a very tight jobs market, or who are disabled and cannot work.

I will campaign for clean, renewable energy, and against fracking and other forms of environmental destruction. I will also continue to oppose further privatisation and fragmentation of our NHS, and for our public services to be run for the public good, not private profit. The public sector is not a drain on the UK—it is a vital part of this country that we all rely on, and we need to protect it.”

Thoughts on the election results

Commenting on Labour’s defeat in the election, Roger wrote - in a paper sent to Party colleagues -

“You may ask what special insight I have that others don’t - and the answer is none. However, I have fought 14 General and Council elections and won 12 times, and in my Hall Green seat – which the Lib Dems expected to take in 2010 – my vote increased by 26.9% to 28,147; my majority increased from 3,700 to 19,818 and there was a swing of more than 12% from Tory to Labour.



Roger giving his acceptance speech after the Declaration of his General Election result.

First, the Ed factor. From the day of his election as Leader the wider public did not take to him and did not see him as ‘Prime Ministerial’. However, they did not particularly like Ted Heath when he was Tory Leader but he still beat Harold Wilson in 1970. Ed deserves credit

for keeping the Party together during the last five years – even if, in doing so, he made compromises which contributed to the defeat on the 7th May. There were certainly some strange decisions made by him and his closest advisors, such as the “Edstone”, but these were not the decisive mistakes.



Roger pictured with supporters at the General Election Count

The biggest mistake was putting forward a minimalist agenda – lots of ‘nice’ sensible policies which had won approval from ‘nice’ people in focus groups – while steering clear of bold radical policies for fear of alienating the electorate. The Tories had no such inhibitions. They offered pensioners ‘freedom’ to control their pension pots; promised to raise the inheritance tax threshold to £1 million; promised housing association tenants the right to buy their properties at a discount and the electors the right to a referendum on Europe. Radical policies did not do them any harm, but where were our radical policies? What vision did we offer the electorate to inspire them to vote for us?

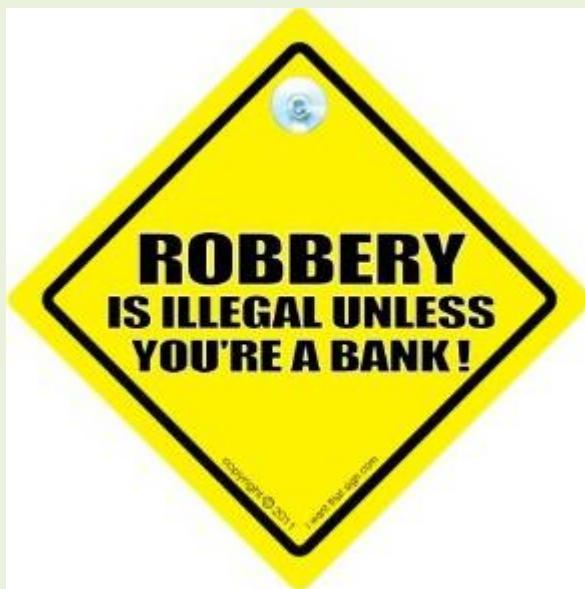
So far as the economic argument is concerned we did not just lose it – we did not even challenge the Tories and Lib Dems. I accept that during the six months after the 2010 defeat, when the Party was preoccupied with electing a new leader, the Tory/Lib Dem Coalition made hay with the phrase ‘we are having to clear up Labour’s economic mess’. But, crucially, during the next four years, and throughout the campaign, we refused to lay the blame at the door of those who caused the 2008 financial crisis – the bankers and financial institutions in America and the UK who gambled with ordinary people’s money and savings – and then had to be bailed out by the taxpayer!

Because we would not blame these City institutions – either for fear of being accused of being ‘anti-business’ or because we would have had to admit that we had been wrong to embrace the neoliberal economic

agenda introduced by Mrs. Thatcher in the 80s and carried on by Blair and Brown with their ‘light touch regulation’ of City institutions — we ended up in a ridiculous situation where the Labour Party took full responsibility for the 2008 crash. We accepted the Tory argument that the Labour Government had spent too much and we signed up to the ‘austerity agenda’! A fat lot of good this did us as the bankers, hedge funds and City institutions – who could not believe how naïve we had been in letting them off the hook – lined up to rubbish our policies and to back the Tories spending and tax policies and pour money into their campaign coffers.

In my election campaign I continuously used the following statement in nearly all my election material:

‘The 2008 financial crisis was not caused by ordinary people. It was not caused by nurses or teachers; local government workers; people working in the private sector; small businessmen; students or retired people. It was caused by the greed of a small group of individuals in the banking and financial sector –but everybody is now paying the price.’



For what it is worth, I also campaigned for a referendum on whether we should stay in the EU; for balanced migration; for taking the railways back under public ownership; for scrapping Trident and HS2; and for small shareholders to be given a majority on the remuneration committees of all publicly listed companies to stop the plundering of profits by senior executives. I don't know whether these commitments

had any effect – but they certainly did not do me any harm, as the result showed!



Our total failure to defend our economic and spending record from 1997 to 2010 and to place the blame for the financial crisis on the banks and City institutions who abused their privileged positions provoked incredulity among a diverse range of people. Paul Krugman, a renowned Nobel prize-winning economist, circulated an excellent rebuttal of the austerity agenda during the election campaign, while lamenting the fact that the Labour Party seemed incapable of challenging Tory myths. The Permanent Secretary at the Treasury gave an interview halfway through the campaign in which he categorically said the 2008 financial crisis was caused by the lack of regulation of banks and financial institutions and not by overspending. Kitty Ussher, the ultra-Blairite former Treasury Minister, recently said Labour was making a terrible mistake by admitting that the 2008 crash was caused by overspending – because it was simply not true!

Whoever is chosen to lead the Party is going to have to decide in which direction to take it. For what it is worth I think we should be bold and be prepared to embrace new, innovative and radical ideas while holding true to the core beliefs on which the Party was founded. Before the usual suspects jump up and say ‘this would be taking the Party to the left and from there it cannot win’, perhaps I can make it clear that being radical has nothing whatsoever to do with ‘left’ and ‘right’. For anybody to suggest that radical must mean ‘left’ is silly and factually incorrect as Mrs. Thatcher – very much a radical – proved.

What I am absolutely convinced of, however, is that if we plant our standard in the 'soggy centre' of British politics and try to be 'all things to all people' then we will end up like the Lib Dems and we will be outflanked on both the left and right by UKIP, the Greens and the anti-austerity and anti-neoliberalist SNP, and we would suffer a similar result to the one we have just experienced.

Perhaps we should remember what Harold Wilson – who won 4 out of 5 elections – said: 'the Labour Party is nothing if it is not a crusade'."

Roger spoke in support of tax credits and the living wage in a debate in the House of Commons on 7 July – the day before the Budget

He said: "A lot of my constituents are low-paid workers. Many are paid the minimum wage and, some receive even less. They work very long hours and some have two or three jobs to bring in enough money to feed their families and pay the bills. Even then, some of them cannot afford to put food on the table seven days a week and have to endure the humiliation of going to food banks with their families.

**"Pay my workers a living wage?
I'd prefer to dine out on your taxes!"**

The taxpayer gave an £11bn subsidy to businesses including, Tesco, Next and Sainsbury's last year, because they don't pay staff enough to live on

CITIZENS_{UK} Take action on low pay: www.citizensuk.org

These low-paid workers are not shirkers or skivers, lazy or feckless; nor, as a matter of interest, are they the people who caused the financial and banking crisis in 2008. If the curtains on their houses are drawn at 7 or 8 in the morning, it is not because they are skiving or being lazy, but because they only got home from work after midnight. These are the people in my constituency who rely on working tax credits to top up their poverty

pay, and it is they who will suffer if tax credit support is reduced or abolished.

I agree with the Prime Minister that employers should pay the living wage, but many of them do not and will not unless they are forced to do so. If the Government are serious and want to save money on tax credits, they must turn the statutory minimum wage into a statutory living wage. Indeed, the Prime Minister should understand that argument, because Steve Hilton, who was his adviser until recently, has advocated exactly that. I hope very much indeed that that is what the Government will do. I suspect, however, that they will offer incentives to employers to pay the living wage, but by doing so they would just be subsidising employers—they would not save money.

In a different world we would have unions that were strong enough to bid up their members' wages, but they are not strong enough. Conservative Members smile and laugh whenever unions are mentioned but Unions have a traditional role of negotiating better terms and conditions for their members. The Conservative party hates trade unions. Indeed, it has made it absolutely plain that it will bring in even more draconian restrictions on them, so trade unions will not be able to do their traditional job of bidding up wages. Therefore, it is down to the Government—if they are serious—to turn the minimum wage into a living wage. Is that what Treasury Ministers intend to do?"

He concluded: "Low pay is a national scandal. It is not the fault of hard-working, low-paid families in my constituency or anywhere else in the country. It is the Government's responsibility to address this issue."

The Budget – smoke and mirrors!

Speaking at an event in his constituency shortly after the Budget Roger said "There are certain elements of the budget which I support but there are many others which I am totally opposed to and will not vote for.

I called for the Minimum Wage to be made into a Living Wage in a debate in Parliament so I very much welcome the proposal. What I am opposed to, however, is the fact that the new Living Wage next year will be set at £7.20 at the same time as there are going to be big reductions in Working Tax Credits and this is going to

massively impact upon many working families in my constituency who are going to see a cut in their already meagre standard of living. If the Government was serious about not penalising working families then they would have brought in a Living Wage of at least £9 an hour next year to coincide with the reductions in Working Tax Credits.



Instead of doing this they are bringing in the Welfare Reform Bill which includes big reductions in Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits which will make 3 million low and middle income working families worse off while also abolishing child poverty targets and cuts to the support provided to sick and disabled people who are unable to work.”

Roger was one of the 48 Labour MPs who voted against the Bill.

Royal family must be financially accountable to citizens who pay for their lavish lifestyles, says Roger

Roger has tabled an Early Day Motion and a series of Parliamentary Questions to the Government to push them for action on the cost to the taxpayer of the royal family. Research by Republic found that the real cost to the hard-pressed UK taxpayer of the royal family’s indulgent lifestyles was an astonishing £334 million, around a third of a billion pounds. This equates to £18.5m for each “working” member of royal family.

Said Roger: “This is a huge amount of public money to waste on what is essentially a tourist attraction, particularly given the ongoing context of severe public spending austerity. As a country, how can we continue to pay these sums to a tiny group of super-wealthy individuals, even as we cut the services ordinary people rely on to survive? I know from my constituents how

much they are struggling with the rising cost of living. Why should they have to subsidise the royal family’s ridiculous lifestyles and undemocratic set of privileges?

I believe that we need a UK where all citizens are equal and hereditary privilege has been abolished. Everyone should have the same start in life, and no one should be able to live a life of massive luxury and extravagance which is funded by hard-working taxpayers.”

Roger has tabled Written Parliamentary Questions to the Government to urge them to provide full public disclosure of the royal family’s tax arrangements and to stop allowing the royals to pay tax only on a voluntary basis—a privilege afforded to no other UK citizens.



He has also tabled an Early Day Motion calling for publicly funded bodies such as the royal family to be subject to Freedom of Information legislation. This would mean that the public would be able to read all of Prince Charles’ lobbying letters to Ministers, and for the accounts and spending of the royals to be open to proper public scrutiny. You can read the full text of this motion [here](#).

Caffé Nero—pay your corporation tax!

Coffee chain Caffé Nero paid no corporation tax in the UK last year, despite making £20 million in profit. Said Roger: “This is a blatant and disgraceful act of tax avoidance. Companies which make a profit in the UK should pay their Corporate taxes here – not in some obscure tax haven. I, for one, shall be going elsewhere for coffee!”

Protect women's right to choose, says Roger

Roger is supporting the Back-Off campaign to create 'buffer zones' outside British abortion clinics to ensure that women who require abortions are not subject to threats or harassment.

Said Roger: "I have always supported the right of women to choose whether they wish to have an abortion and I deplore the intimidation being used by some groups which are protesting outside establishments where abortion services are provided. I most certainly support the 'Back-off' campaign to ensure that women's hard-won reproductive rights and freedoms are not threatened by abusive groups."

Voting rights for 16 and 17 year-olds in EU referendum

Roger supports the rights of 16 and 17 year olds to be allowed to vote in the referendum, and he voted for this proposal when it was debated in the Commons in June. He commented: "I regret the fact that the Government were not prepared to extend the franchise to 16 or 17 year olds. On such a momentous issue as our future in —or outside—the EU, it is only right that 16 or 17 year olds should have the vote."

DLA recipients will need to reapply for PIP

People who are currently receiving Disability Living Allowance, even those who have a lifelong or degenerative condition, will need to reapply for Personal Independence Payments over the next two and a half years. During this time, the new benefit PIP will be rolled out to all existing DLA claimants, who will receive a letter telling them that their DLA will be stopped and inviting them to apply for PIP.

Commented Roger: "It is really important that all existing DLA claimants keep an eye on their post, and take all the necessary steps to apply for PIP as soon as they are notified that their DLA will be stopped. Otherwise, they may find themselves in a gap between the two benefits, and temporarily not in receipt of either."



The Government is transferring people from DLA to PIP with the intention of cutting the bill for disability benefits, so it is likely that some DLA claimants will receive a lower rate of PIP than they did of DLA. My advice is always to challenge DWP's decision if people feel that it is unfair or based on an inaccurate assessment, and if necessary to go through the process of mandatory reconsideration and appeal. My office will be happy to provide advice and support to DLA claimants who are having problems with the process of transferring to PIP.

Constituents who have problems with the PIP application process are welcome to get in touch with me, either by email to roger.godsiff.mp@parliament.uk or by phone to 0207 219 5191."

Roger joins food bank collection drive in Birmingham

Roger has joined the Trussell Trust and FareShare in a food donation appeal at Tesco to support local food banks. The Neighbourhood Food Collection is aiming to provide at least four million meals to people in need this summer.

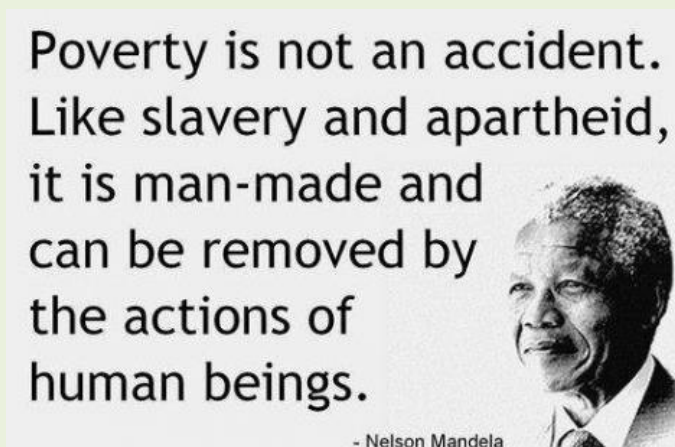
Volunteers collected food locally at branches of Tesco from Thursday 2 July until Saturday 4 July, and Roger joined them at the Sheldon store. The collection is particularly important in summer months, when many parents on free school meals face a tough time feeding their children over the long school break. Roger is encouraging constituents to join the volunteer teams or to donate food during their weekly shop.



Visiting a local Tesco store which is collecting food for food banks

Said Roger: “The Trussell Trust and food banks in Birmingham do vital work in feeding people who would otherwise go hungry, including some of my own constituents. I have had to refer some extremely vulnerable people to food banks after they were let down by state support systems that failed to function adequately. A particularly appalling case was a family with refugee status who had a severely disabled child who, due to DWP’s utter lack of care or responsibility, were almost left without food over a weekend. I was able to refer them to a local food bank, which responded with compassion and provided this family with the food they needed until their benefits were paid the following week.

Despite my great admiration for the work done by food banks, I do not believe that anyone should have to rely on food aid to survive, particularly in a country as wealthy as the UK.



No to austerity for Greece, says Roger

Roger was one of the signatories to a letter published in the *Guardian* which opposes any further austerity for Greece and calls for debt cancellation.

He commented: “The people of Greece have already suffered through years of incredibly harsh austerity. All this has brought to their country is more poverty and misery, with the economy shrinking and failing to function properly due to the savageness of the cuts.

I do not believe that there is any moral or economic case for inflicting more austerity on Greece. Any more cuts will be counter-productive, and will only cause the country and its people to become poorer and even less able to pay these debts.



Any further bail-out funds which Greece receives should now go towards investment, support for the poorest and building a productive, functioning economy and a tax system in which the richest and big business pay their fair share. These funds should not be gobbled up by the country’s creditors with no benefit at all to Greek citizens.”



You can read the article in the *Guardian* [here](#).



Put CCTV in slaughterhouses to ensure animals are not abused, says Roger



Roger is supporting a campaign for mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses to prevent cruelty to animals. A 2014 YouGov poll found that 87% support this campaign, which would both make discourage abuse and make it easier to prosecute those who break animal welfare laws in slaughterhouses.

Roger supports ‘Hear Me Now’ campaign to tackle prostate cancer

Roger is supporting the ‘Hear Me Now’ programme which is aimed at addressing prostate cancer in black Afro-Caribbean men in Birmingham.

He commented: “I very much support this campaign because there is a great deal of ignorance in the community about prostate cancer. It is particularly

relevant to black Afro-Caribbean men, who have a much higher incidence of prostate cancer than other ethnicities.”

Black men are more likely than white men to have prostate cancer, and the condition accounts for 22% of cancer deaths in black men. With Birmingham having one of the larger populations of black Afro-Caribbean communities in England - 9% of the population are black – there is a need for an improvement in prostate cancer awareness and care in Birmingham.

The ‘Hear Me Now’ programme – which is jointly supported by BME Cancer Communities, Cancer Black Care, NHS BME Network, Prostate Cancer UK and Janssen – is coordinating action and engagement with decision makers across a number of key black population areas, including Birmingham, in order to raise awareness and help ensure that commissioning priorities are aligned to meet these significant challenges.

Roger calls for reinstatement of Sotheby's workers who protested for a Living Wage

Roger is supporting Sotheby's workers who were suspended the day after they carried out a protest for sick pay and to keep the London Living Wage. Volunteer-run trade union UMW is continuing to fight for their reinstatement. Roger has tabled an Early Day Motion to support these workers, which has been signed by Labour, SNP and other MPs.

In a joint letter to Sotheby’s Chairman, Domenico De Sole, on 17 July, Dave Anderson MP, Ronnie Campbell MP and Roger Godsiff MP said: “We are writing to you as Members of Parliament to express our great concern about the treatment of low-paid workers at Sotheby’s.



“We understand that members of the trade union United Voices of the World have been suspended from their jobs for asking for contractual sick pay and to remain on the London Living Wage when it increases slightly in November. Without the living wage and sick pay, these cleaners and porters—without whose labour Sotheby’s would be unable to function—will be forced to work when ill or injured or allow their families to go hungry. We find it utterly deplorable that such a wealthy, profitable company, which deals in luxury goods, is willing to deprive these hard-working employees of the means to afford even the basic necessities of a decent life. While we are aware that these employees are contracted out by Servest, we do not consider that this absolves Sotheby’s of responsibility for paying them decently.



It is, quite frankly, obscene that a company which makes millions in profits and pays its CEO \$7 million per year refuses to pay its staff enough to live on with decency and dignity. A company’s reputation will not be enhanced by the public knowledge that it mistreats and impoverishes its own staff. We urge you to engage with the workers’ representation and work with them to meet the very reasonable request that staff will continue to be paid the London Living Wage and will receive decent sick pay.”

A petition on Change.org has over 25,000 supporters. It is time for Sotheby’s to start listening to their workers and treating them with respect!

For help and advice, please see the ‘Helplines’ section of Roger’s website, available at www.rogergodsiffmp.co.uk/helplineAdvice.php, or [here](#).

You can also follow Roger on twitter at [@RogerGodsiff](https://twitter.com/RogerGodsiff)