

I thank you Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to deliver my Maiden speech to the House as the newly-elected representative of the good people of Hove and Portslade.

Before setting out how I hope to best serve the residents of my Hove constituency, I would first like to pay tribute to the work of my predecessor, Celia Barlow. Celia worked tirelessly during her five year term on local and national matters. She was just as formidable in Parliament as she was on the doorsteps and I wish her well in whatever career path she now pursues.

I would also like to mention another former Member for Hove, Sir Tim Sainsbury, whose advice and support over the years have been invaluable to me. Thank you Sir Tim.

Members may be aware that I am one of three Members from the City of Brighton & Hove. Brighton & Hove of course takes its name from two neighbouring historic towns which are situated on a delightfully sunny – sometimes windy! – spot on the South Coast. From the inclusion of ‘Hove’ in the name of the city, it may rightly be assumed that those living in my constituency are mindful of our unique identity with respect to that of our larger neighbour, Brighton. Us Hove residents are often asked if we live in Brighton and our defensive response gives rise to the well-known local phrase ‘Hove Actually’.

I will be keeping a close eye on Hove’s individuality – and that means fine Regency and Victorian architecture, wide boulevards, and colourful beach huts – but I will be keeping an even closer eye on that of Portslade. Portslade’s history – and, indeed, its contribution to local affairs generally – is just as rich as Hove’s. I am so keen to see that fact recognised that I will be campaigning for the name of my constituency to be changed to ‘Hove AND Portslade’.

The bedrock of our community has always been our elderly population though Hove has changed much demographically in recent years. It’s a friendly place and many different cultures are represented. I would particularly like to pay tribute to my friends, Coptic Christians in my constituency from Sudan and Egypt, a thriving Muslim community which includes a number of entrepreneurial Iranians, and a well-established Jewish community whose roots date back to the 18th century. I’m also extremely proud to represent one of the UK’s largest LGBT communities.

I come to politics from a background in film and music and I will be channelling my passion for each into support for local talent. It is no secret that Hove is home to a great number of musicians, some of international fame. It is also home to the excellent Brighton Institute of Modern Music. Its cinematic past though is often overlooked and it has been forgotten that the pioneers of Hove developed techniques at the end of the Victorian era which are still in use around the world today.

The distinctive beaches and buildings of Brighton and Hove translate extremely well onto film which is why they have featured in countless films over the years. Classics include Brighton Rock, Oh! What a Lovely War, Carry On at Your Convenience, Carry On Girls and Quadrophenia. And in recent years, there’s been The End of the

Affair, Circus, London to Brighton and even the rather curiously-named Brighton Wok: The Legend of Ganja Boxing.

Promoting the City as a location for filming – and, indeed, as a place for media businesses to thrive – must be carried out in partnership with my Council colleagues. This will be just one area where we will be able to work together.

Another is the promotion of local businesses. As a qualified Management Accountant and past owner of one of the area's largest manufacturers, winning two Queen's Awards and Sussex Company of the Year, I will make supporting small to medium enterprises once of my biggest priorities.

I do believe that all councils should be handed back powers from London. If we are to fix our damaged political system, more people outside Westminster must be involved in decision-making.

As an example, Brighton & Hove City Council has limited powers to pursue owners of neglected listed buildings for reimbursement for costly emergency repairs so I have written to my Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media & Sport, to see if more powers might be handed to councils to deal with these irresponsible people.

With regard to sport, Hove is home to the well established and successful Sussex County Cricket Club, the winners of last year's Twenty20 Cup. On football, I have been a keen supporter of the 'Seagulls', Brighton & Hove Albion, for many years and remember watching the club as a teenager when their ground was actually in Hove. We should soon have our new stadium at Falmer – and deserved promotion in due course. Brighton and Hove don't do everything together though and Hove has the more successful rugby club which won the Sussex Cup just last month.

Secondary education in my constituency has been a hot topic in recent years. I have deliberately avoided putting a partisan twist on my Maiden Speech but one thing that I will say is that Hove and Portslade are just the sort of places that will benefit greatly from the policies of my Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Education. I look forward to being involved in any way that I can which includes supporting Portslade Community College being awarded Academy Status.

Hove needs a new primary school and I'm already working with parents and councillors to see what the best options are. The process has just taken an interesting twist with the news that the much-loved Connaught Centre is to be vacated as an adult education base. It began as a school in 1884 and I'm keen to ensure that a return to its original purpose is investigated in full.

There are so many local heroes that I could mention who have put their life into educating our children but I would like to mention one man, Bob Wall, who runs an extremely tight ship at Hillside Special School in Portslade. When I think of a model school head, I think of this man.

I would also like to single out several charities, and there are so many that I could fill my whole speech with fitting examples. But the Martlets Hospice, Impact Initiatives,

Off the Fence, Alzheimer's, Macmillan and Emmaus all stand out to me as beacons of excellence and I am proud that such institutions touch the lives of my constituents in so many ways so often.

Coming back to music, I perhaps bring something new to the House in the form of my huge passion for rock and heavy metal. I once rashly pledged that I would be the first Member of Parliament to wear an Iron Maiden T-shirt in the Chamber. Mr Speaker, I may be in touch soon to see how best I might deliver on that promise – without breaking too many rules!

The benefits of this country's musical success on the economy are often understated. In 2008 it rose 15% to 140m. I was therefore particularly delighted to see a specific commitment to live music in the coalition policy document.

On that musical note Mr Speaker, I would again like to thank you for allowing me the honour today of delivering my Maiden Speech to the House.