

Backbench Business Committee

Representations: Backbench Debates

Tuesday 3 June 2025

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 3 June 2025.

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Members present: Bob Blackman (Chair); Jess Brown-Fuller; Jonathan Davies; Mary Glendon; Alison Hume; Will Stone; Martin Vickers; Chris Vince.

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Rebecca Paul made representations.

Q1 Chair: Welcome to this meeting of the Backbench Business Committee. We will be considering applications from colleagues for debates in the Chamber and in Westminster Hall on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

First up is an application from Rebecca Paul for a general debate in the Chamber on property service charges. Rebecca, please present your application.

Rebecca Paul: Thank you for your time today, Chair, and for the opportunity to present my application for a debate on property service charges. I am putting this forward because in my constituency I see many, many residents—some 500—who are impacted by what they would describe as excessive service charges. This is an issue that is experienced in many constituencies, so many colleagues from all parties have this challenge. One property company that has come up several times is FirstPort, but it is not the only one—there will of course be others.

It is really important that we have the opportunity to identify the issues that our constituents are facing across the country. Not only do they feel that the charges are excessive, but they struggle to get information about what they are actually for. They often feel that they are not getting value for the charges. In some cases, people cannot sell their property because the charges are much higher than their mortgage. They are trapped in the property, which has a catastrophic impact on a person or a family. Imagine if someone has just bought a flat for the first time: it is meant to be an amazing thing, but then they get trapped by these excessive service charges.

Although a lot of it is often perfectly legal, we need to think about whether it is moral that we are seeing excessive charges. There are rules that allow you to exit a property service charge, but when you have a big estate with a huge number of residents, it is often hard to hit the threshold in order to exit the arrangement and set up your own property service company, so these people really are trapped.

I would like to give everyone the opportunity to share those issues. I want to be constructive about it, though, and think about what we can do to avoid the issue for future estates. The Government have rightly said that we should be building more houses—we need to do that—so we are going to see the issue coming up more and more on new estates on greenfield sites. One thing we need to think about is whether those common areas should be automatically assigned to local authorities so that the people who move in pay council tax like everyone else and do not have a service charge. I would like the opportunity for us to have that debate and share those ideas on a cross-party basis.

Q2 Chair: Thank you for your application. It is clearly well supported, and I understand why. What action do you want the Government to take as a result of the debate?

Rebecca Paul: The key action would be to try to avoid this happening in



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the future. I understand that the situations we have on a lot of estates across the country have been put in place, and they are legal. As I say, that is more challenging, but we need to think about how we stop this happening for future estates.

The other piece is that publicising some of the challenges and showing the human cost to families will, I hope, make some of these property companies reflect on the approach that they are taking. Although it may well be legal, they might like to adapt their approach, focus on improved customer service and ensure that they are delivering better value, because that is the right thing to do.

- Q3 **Jess Brown-Fuller:** You are absolutely right to bring this debate to the Committee. There was a similar debate in Westminster Hall brought forward by Caroline Voaden, which was about residential estate management companies, and it was incredibly well attended. The cross-party strength of feeling is recognised. Because a lot of the topic was covered in that debate, I wonder whether it might be worth attaching a motion to your application, so that we are moving the conversation on and, as you say, seeing a change for all those people who are adversely affected by these service charges.

Rebecca Paul: Thank you for that suggestion. I would be very open to doing that. It is really important that we get action; I do not want us to just talk about an issue and then be talking about it again in three years' time. I would happily take some advice on that and would be very open to putting forward a motion.

- Q4 **Chair:** It is your application. It meets all the criteria that this Committee would have, but obviously it will join the queue for the Chamber, which is extremely long. The alternative, which you might consider, is to have a Westminster Hall debate on this specific subject, hear what the Government have to say and then come back to us and ask for a debate with a motion in the Chamber. That is for you to decide, but you will be waiting some time—probably until November—before we get to any of these debates that are valid and on our list for the Chamber.

Rebecca Paul: Thank you for that information. My preference would be the Chamber: I think it is such a significant issue that it deserves the profile that comes from the Chamber. I recognise the timeframe, and that is fine. That will actually give some of the property service companies time to reflect and think about how they react to the issues that we have raised already in meetings. It gives them time to progress some of those things, so I am happy to wait.

Chair: The Clerks will be in touch with you to offer a date in due course, but it will not be for some time. As Jess suggested, you might want to consider a divisible motion that will get some impetus behind what we need to see happen.

Mr Alistair Carmichael made representations.

- Q5 **Chair:** The next application, from Alistair Carmichael, is for a general debate in the Chamber on the global plastics treaty.



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Mr Carmichael: You have the background to this. It would not be the first time that we have debated the global plastics treaty—we have been around the course a few times. The last round of negotiations failed to reach any agreement. The next round is due to happen in Geneva between 5 and 14 August.

I am pragmatic about whether we end up in Westminster Hall or the Chamber. The purpose of the debate is to bring attention to the issue, which in turn would generate a bit of pressure on the Government to put their shoulder to the wheel in getting other countries to come to this. In fact, the current Government and their predecessors have a pretty good story to tell on this, so in some ways we are pushing at an open door.

You will see that we have no fewer than 27 on the list. It gets a bit Lib Dem-heavy towards the end—I think that is a consequence of the invitation having come from my office. Ironically, when I was their Chief Whip I could never get them to do what I wanted, but now that they don't have to do what I tell them they are bending over backwards to please me.

The truth of the matter is that I am working with Greenpeace on this. They are well networked, and I anticipate that once we have a date, they will bring in others from their own network of parliamentary supporters, so I am reasonably optimistic that we could sustain a half-day debate if we get it into the Chamber. This is a moment when the views of Parliament need to be seen around the world, and to have the debate in the Chamber would allow that. What is really important, though, is that we have it this side of the summer recess so that any benefit is felt ahead of the Geneva talks at the beginning of August.

Q6 **Chair:** Thank you. You probably heard my plea at the beginning: the queue for the Chamber is huge, so your chances of getting a debate before the summer recess are limited unless everyone before you in the waiting list refuses, which is unlikely. The only way we are likely to get it in before recess would be to have it in Westminster Hall. Can we just clarify that you would accept Westminster Hall?

Mr Carmichael: My view is that it is more important that we get it before the recess, ahead of the talks, than that we have it in the Chamber.

Chair: Do colleagues have any questions? No. Thank you, Alistair. The Clerks will be in touch in due course.

David Mundell made representations.

Q7 **Chair:** The next application, from David Mundell, is for a Westminster Hall general debate, on either a Tuesday or a Thursday, on the future of terrestrial TV.

David Mundell: Thank you very much, Chairman. I am proposing this debate in order to raise the visibility of the issue. There is a proposal that in less than 10 years, terrestrial television will be turned off in the UK. We have all encountered issues with the switch-offs that have been ongoing, such as the radio teleswitch system, which mainly affects the north of the



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UK. It was to change electricity meters, but there was not the capability to deliver it within the timescale that was originally set. We saw the impact that the BT proposal to switch off copper wires would have on people—particularly Carecall.

I believe that the proposal to switch off terrestrial television has not been fully discussed and debated so that people can understand the implications of it. As we are all aware, terrestrial TV, which is sometimes referred to as DTT, is a universal, free-to-air service via an aerial, and is accessible to everybody who wants to access it. It is principally accessed by older people and more vulnerable households. I do not think that they fully understand or appreciate that there is even a proposal to turn it off.

Although I understand why broadcasters and others might want to promote the fact that we should all be moving to an internet-streamed television service, even within this timescale it is unlikely that everybody will be able to move to that system. If you are 85 today, you will be 94 when this happens.

Chair: I hope you are not looking at me.

David Mundell: I am not looking at your ever-youthful visage, Bob. I am suggesting that for many older people that is a relatively short timescale.

The principal aim of the debate is to highlight the issue among Members of Parliament, to alert the Government to the fact that there is concern among MPs, and to start thinking about all the implications of the switch-off. With the two switch-offs to which I referred, there were a lot of other issues that were not factored in.

Q8 **Chair:** We have to know the answering Department so that we can schedule the debate. Because you have applied for a Tuesday, I am assuming that it would be DCMS. Is that correct?

David Mundell: It would be DCMS, because ultimately it is within the bailiwick of the BBC.

Q9 **Alison Hume:** I think this is a very important debate. I do not think that many people are aware of the BBC DG's comments about the end of terrestrial TV in 2034, which is just a heartbeat away.

I note that you have only a couple of Government speakers down. We probably need another two.

David Mundell: Yes, we have looked to bring the debate forward within a good timescale, but I know from events that I have attended with Government MPs that there is a lot of interest on the Government side. I do not feel that we would have any difficulty in ensuring a full complement of participants in any debate that took place.

Jonathan Davies: You are very welcome to add my name.

Chair: I see that other Committee members would be willing to support it, too.

Martin Vickers: I have added my name already, because I am one of the elderly people you referred to.

Q10 **Chair:** Your application has been made in order. As 2034 is a bit more than a heartbeat away—several million heartbeats, in fact—is there any time sensitivity to the application?

David Mundell: There is no absolute time sensitivity, but it is important to get the issue out there to colleagues, so that it is more widely understood that it is in the pipeline.

Chair: Thank you. The Clerks will be in touch in due course.

James MacCleary made representations.

Q11 **Chair:** The next application, from James MacCleary, is for a three-hour debate in the Chamber on the impact of foreign interference on security, trade and democracy.

James MacCleary: I thank the Committee for making time for me this afternoon. I will give a little context, as I think it is important that we have a Chamber debate specifically on the subject.

As you will all know, in recent months it has become increasingly clear that the UK and its allies are facing changing and sophisticated threats from hostile foreign actors. It is not just about espionage in its traditional sense—James Bond and John le Carré, if you like. We are seeing the deliberate targeting of democratic institutions, the spread of disinformation to sow division, and cyber-attacks designed to weaken and undermine Governments around the world.

The SDR yesterday outlined a lot of the response that we are seeing from our Government, and it is something that we are seeing quite comprehensively around the world. We have seen credible warnings from NATO partners and intelligence reports concluding that foreign interference is escalating. We have seen that graphically in some recent elections, particularly in eastern Europe, where interference has been quite explicit. The actors we are talking about are actively trying to exploit polarisation, manipulate democratic processes and influence policy decisions at the highest level. Next year there are critical elections across Europe in particular, and the risk of interference has never really been higher.

Much of the world looks to the UK for leadership on these issues. We cannot afford to be passive, and I do not think we are being passive, but a debate like this in the Chamber would give us the opportunity to send clear signals to the rest of the world that the UK is leading on this. Sanctions have rightly been imposed on some of those responsible for malign activity, but there are some areas in which we can go further.

There are individual MPs who have real regional and country-specific expertise that they can bring to the issue. The debate would offer Parliament an opportunity to send a clear and united message to the rest of the world, and to people across this country, that foreign attempts to



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erode our sovereignty will not be tolerated. It would also allow us to push for greater transparency, stronger enforcement of existing countermeasures, and a renewed cross-party commitment to protecting the integrity of our democracy.

I am very pleased to say that I have had strong support for this application across the parties. I was very pleased to get the support of the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Emily Thornberry. I have also received support from Sir Iain Duncan Smith and some other prominent MPs. I have Conservative, Labour, Lib Dem and SNP MPs supporting the application. It is important that we make it clear that this is an issue that affects absolutely everybody, and it is something that we are united in talking about.

I hope that the Committee will consider a Chamber debate, notwithstanding what you said about the waiting list. I am very happy to answer any questions that the Committee may have.

- Q12 **Chair:** The key is what you want done as a result of the debate, which is one of the reasons why we often encourage people to come forward with divisible motions. If it is really a general debate on the issues, we understand that, but it is your application. It conforms to our standards, so there is not an issue there; it is just a case of what you want to see happen as a result.

James MacCleary: I am happy to consider a motion. I have quite a clear idea that this would be an opportunity for Members across the parties, including a lot of Back Benchers who do not necessarily get a lot of time to speak on foreign affairs, to express individual views. There are MPs who have real expertise and incredible backgrounds working in regions that have been threatened by foreign interference in their internal democratic processes, whether that is in eastern Europe, central Asia, south-east Asia or Taiwan. They also have some incredible academic backgrounds. That was one of the purposes of the debate, and it is why I thought it would be particularly relevant for a Chamber debate: to give it that exposure. I would be very happy to consider a motion, but I felt that that in itself was a reason to do it.

Will Stone: To be clear, you do not have to attach a motion to get a Chamber debate. It is not going to speed up the process, so do not feel pressured by Bob to put in a motion there.

James MacCleary: I am not feeling pressured by Bob, but if somebody has a bright idea and wants to share something, I am very open to it.

- Q13 **Chris Vince:** I never have any bright ideas. Your application was very well pitched. You mentioned trade as well: there is an impact on business as well. As you said, we have seen some very serious cyber-attacks in recent weeks. Will there be an opportunity for Back Benchers to bring in the experiences of their constituents?

James MacCleary: Yes, 100%. That is why I deliberately made it quite broad in that regard. The threats are very wide-ranging at the moment.

We have seen high-profile attacks on some of our largest retail businesses in this country in recent months. When we are trying to reassure the public that we are aware of the issue and MPs across the House are on it, this is one of the ways in which we can really express that. That is why I thought it was particularly relevant.

Chair: Thank you. The Clerks will be in touch in due course.

Bradley Thomas made representations.

Q14 **Chair:** The next application, from Bradley Thomas, is for a general debate in the Chamber on improvements to regulations for non-surgical aesthetic and cosmetic treatments.

Bradley Thomas: My application is quite straightforward. I wish to host a Backbench Business debate calling on the Government to introduce or improve regulations for non-surgical aesthetic and cosmetic treatments.

In recent years, we have seen a real uptick in the normalisation of non-surgical treatments. They often take place in high street environments. I am sure we could all point to examples in our constituencies. It is particularly linked to a rise in social media and body confidence issues, especially among young people, and the increasing accessibility of technology that promotes it. There are lots of stories of people seeing this on YouTube or TikTok—there is all of this societal pressure.

If any of us were to search online for Botox or dermal fillers while standing on our high street, we will find lots of examples, probably within a very short walking distance. In the UK, there is no regulation for the conduct of aesthetic treatments, and there are no training requirements for beauty and aesthetic practitioners either, particularly those who want to provide Botox or other fillers. That is causing lots of serious medical complications. Quite a few people have contacted my office since I raised this via a question in the Chamber a few months ago. It has also led to deaths. In particular, there was the tragic case of Alice Webb, who died after receiving an unlicensed and dangerous cosmetic procedure in Gloucestershire, having had no understanding of the risks involved.

The reality is that any one of us could go on the internet, watch a YouTube video on how to do this, and start injecting people tomorrow. There is no licensing regime or regulatory standard sitting behind it. More importantly, there is no means of recourse for those who are severely affected.

I believe that this is an emergent healthcare crisis that is affecting the country. It has a high cost not just to society, but to the NHS. In 2023, Save Face, a Government-approved register of medical aesthetic practitioners, received reports from more than 3,000 people of complications or unwanted outcomes following cosmetic procedures, and 48% of those came from women between the ages of 18 and 25 years old. This problem is only getting worse.

The Health and Care Act 2022 gave the Government the power to introduce a new licensing scheme and age limits for non-surgical cosmetic



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procedures, but no licensing scheme has yet been introduced, following a consultation that took place under the last Government. I believe a licensing regime would help to improve standards. It would protect people from unqualified and negligent individuals, and from the potentially harmful physical and mental impacts of poorly performed procedures.

The other side of the coin is that a licensing regime would provide certainty for those who are looking to provide these treatments in a safe manner. Many of the practitioners who provide these treatments are CQC-accredited. They go to great lengths to ensure not only that the service they provide is safe for the public, but that there is widespread consultation with those wanting treatments, so that they get the right treatment for their skin condition, for instance. This would provide safety and certainty not just to consumers, but to those who seek to conduct procedures. This was brought to my attention by Nicky Robinson, a CQC-registered practitioner in my constituency.

As I mentioned, I have raised this in the main Chamber via a question to a Minister. The Government have signalled that they wish to introduce, and plan to introduce, a mandatory licensing regime, but I believe this House needs a debate to keep the topic on the agenda and to chivvy the Government along, so that they introduce this sooner rather than later to prevent the problem from getting worse.

Q15 Chair: Do you know why the previous Government did not introduce the licensing regime? Was that a result of the consultation?

Bradley Thomas: I think they ran out of time.

Chris Vince: I declare an interest: one of my best friends works for a cosmetics company. I remember you raising it in the Chamber, because my friend made a point of lobbying me following your question. I think there is a recognition from industry that this is a problem. You have these—I would not say rogues, but unregistered people doing these treatments. I recognise that there is a whole conversation to be had about body image and so on, but this is a separate conversation about how the people doing these treatments need to be registered. That is more of a comment than a question, but I think it is a very welcome debate.

Mary Glendon: I have not signed your application, but this was raised with me by an approved doctor. They pointed out the dangers, and how easy it is for people to set up a business doing these procedures. The debate will probably be welcomed by the professionals who are carrying this out properly, as it will alert the public to the dangers of getting stuff online or going to people who set up in a hairdressers' or something like that.

Chair: It is frightening, really. If there are no other questions, let me thank you for your application. The Clerks will be in touch in due course.

Q16 Chris Vince: The only other thing is the usual question. I think this is really important. You put in for a Chamber debate, and I recognise why, but the caveat is that it is likely to be in November. Would you rather wait

and get a Chamber debate?

Bradley Thomas: I would be happy with a Westminster Hall debate. It is important, and I think we have prevaricated on this as a country for too long, so the sooner we can have the debate, the better. If that means Westminster Hall, then great.

Chair: By the way, if you take a Westminster Hall debate and do not get the answers you would like to hear, you can come back to us and request a Chamber debate with a motion.

Bradley Thomas: That is great. Thank you, Chair.

Matt Western made representations.

Q17 **Chair:** The next application, on consumer affairs, is from Matt Western. This is for a 90-minute debate in Westminster Hall on a Tuesday or Thursday.

Matt Western: I thank the Committee. It felt strange to sit through other people's presentations; I was struck by how good their submissions were and how important their topics are.

My request is for a debate, ideally as long a debate as possible, in Westminster Hall. So many people are suffering under the cost of living crisis—90% of people say they have been impacted—that we should bring it to the fore. So many sectors of the consumer market are not working for the public.

Everyone's attention will have been caught by the Oasis ticket scandal last summer, but it is not just that. It is the variable pricing models online, whether for flight tickets or hotel rooms, but it is also the lack of transparency and the opaque supermarket pricing in different sites and different parts of the country—even two sites within the same town.

The sense of dishonesty is such that a Competition and Markets Authority survey found that 85% of people believed that businesses were being dishonest to consumers. Some 83% of consumers said that they were less likely to shop or purchase from certain suppliers or retailers in future. About half of consumers say there is a lack of price transparency.

I mentioned live events: we are about to go through summer, when there will be a lot more live events—tickets and so on. People up and down the country will have found, like me, that when they try to book a flight or hotel room they are told that there are only two or three left. Curious, isn't it? Probably all of us around this table have come across that. And when you click on it, the price has just changed. There is also a lack of transparency about the add-ons and so on.

I simply believe that, whether it is supermarket pricing or how things are promoted, sold and detailed to the consumer, this is wrong. The great British public also think that. The issue is more about "rip-off Britain". I could go into algorithmic pricing and some of the other findings, but for

the moment my wish is that, as Back Benchers, we put pressure on the Government and the CMA to start looking at this very closely.

Q18 Chair: The application meets all our criteria. If it is a Tuesday debate, which should be the answering Department, from your perspective?

Matt Western: It would probably be the Department for Business and Trade.

Chair: Okay. Obviously, we can only schedule it for when the relevant Department is answering that week.

Matt Western: I completely understand.

Chair: Thank you very much. The Clerks will be in touch with you in due course.

Darren Paffey made representations.

Q19 Chair: The next application, from Darren Paffey, is on water safety education. This is a request for a debate in either the Chamber or Westminster Hall on a Thursday. Over to you.

Darren Paffey: Thank you, Chair. It is a pleasure to propose this debate. The motivation comes from the tragic death of a young constituent of mine, Joe Abbess, who just over two years ago, aged just 17, was looking forward to a great day out at the beach with his friends but, despite being a strong swimmer, got caught in a freak rip tide. I have been working with his mother on this campaign and would like to secure a debate to coincide, if at all possible, with the Royal Life Saving Society UK's Drowning Prevention Week, which is from 14 to 21 June. I realise that puts a constraint on the timing, but even if it is not possible, I would like to pursue a debate.

This debate would be a chance to raise the profile of this issue, to explore steps to prevent further such tragedies, and hopefully to affect legislation and save lives. There are statutory guidelines on, for example, learning to swim, but there is no form of water safety education in the national curriculum, despite the fact that nearly 350 people a year drown in the UK. This is not just about beaches, as 60% of those who drowned last year did so inland, and 44% never intended to enter the water. This is about more than just learning to swim; it is about the unseen and often unknown risks faced by children and adults.

I am pleased to have committed cross-party support from 27 MPs—in fact, a 28th offered their support in the corridor while I waited to come in. That number includes many MPs representing constituencies with inland waterways, as well as many representing coastal seats, so the application draws on a wide range of geographical representation. The signatories also include the officers of the new APPG on water safety education, which is launching during Drowning Prevention Week, and the Chair of the Education Committee.



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I thank the Backbench Business Committee for considering this application, which I hope you agree is worth while.

- Q20 **Chair:** Thank you for the application. It is well subscribed, as you rightly point out. If we were to grant a 90-minute debate, then, allowing for Front Benchers and the introduction, it would mean that each speaker gets less than two minutes each if everyone turns up—you might want to consider that issue. Secondly, how important is it for you to have the debate in Drowning Prevention Week?

Darren Paffey: It would coincide well with the launch of the APPG and the various events that the Royal Life Saving Society is running, but as I said, it is not essential. Certainly for Joe's mum, it is more important that we have a debate in which MPs can talk about how to make sure this kind of thing is as avoidable as possible in the future. On that basis, as things will be going on during Drowning Prevention Week, I would be willing to wait for the debate if I had to.

- Q21 **Chris Vince:** A boy from my constituency died while swimming in a quarry outside the constituency, so there is a wider conversation to be had about water safety, signage and those sorts of things. Chair, you will probably hate me for saying it, but this is a hugely subscribed debate, probably because so many MPs could tell a story like the one I have just told. Is there a possibility for a double-length Westminster Hall debate?

Chair: There is, and we will consider that.

Chris Vince: We could have a three-hour Westminster Hall debate. That is just a thought.

Darren Paffey: Thank you, and I appreciate that.

Chair: There is another alternative, which I will present to the Committee in a minute.

- Q22 **Jonathan Davies:** You are right to say that children are expected to leave primary school with 25 metres of swimming proficiency, but I suspect nobody ever checks up on that. I wonder whether, through this debate, we could ask about requiring Ofsted to ensure that is happening. I know we have lost more than 1,000 swimming pools in the last decade. Some great work was done in the 1960s and '70s, when children regularly swam in canals and quarries, but do the Government have a national strategy for swimming? That might be a more salient question to ask.

Another question might be with regard to the growth of academy schools. Obviously, they are not required to teach the national curriculum. I know that the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill seeks to address that, but there are still a great many questions. I wonder whether that might be a more precise focus for discussion.

Darren Paffey: I would certainly be open to considering that. The focus on water safety education at this stage is designed to coincide with the fact that Professor Becky Francis will be delivering her next report—on current timetables—around August or September on the curriculum and

assessment review. I hope this would feed into that, but you raise the really important point that in either this debate or a future one we should ask about a revised Government strategy. That is a really helpful point. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much for the application. The Clerks will be in touch in due course.

[Martin Vickers took the Chair]

Bob Blackman made representations.

Q23 **Chair:** The next application, from Bob Blackman MP, is for a debate entitled, "Adequacy of funding to support homeless people".

Bob Blackman: Thank you, Mr Chairman. This application is submitted on the basis that the cost of dealing with homelessness is huge. Almost every local authority in the country is struggling to deal with the costs of homelessness. The situation is getting worse in terms of the number of people who are applying to local authorities and being granted access to homeless accommodation, and rents in the private sector are going up all the time. There is also the question of what the Government are going to do to combat this crisis.

This application is for a Westminster Hall debate. It is extremely well supported on the Government side, you will be pleased to hear, but at the moment it is a bit short on Opposition names. This application was submitted while I was away, and I will therefore work to make sure we add Opposition names to support it. Obviously, it would be MHCLG answering the debate, if and when time is granted.

Chair: You have pre-empted my question about having a more balanced list of signatories.

Q24 **Jess Brown-Fuller:** My only question would be how you think this debate differs from the one titled, "Progress on ending homelessness", which is also in your name.

Bob Blackman: This is specifically on the funding issues. One of the problems we know we have in society is that people's needs are increasing, and because homelessness is still increasing, private sector rents are going up. In London alone, 28 local authorities are saying they have inadequate funds to deal with the homelessness they are currently facing, which means they are exporting homeless people further and further north or west in order to find accommodation. It is specifically about funding—we need to highlight this as a major problem in local authority finances.

Q25 **Chair:** You have not indicated that the alternative of a Thursday debate would be acceptable.

Bob Blackman: No, but I am happy for it to be a Thursday debate if necessary. Obviously, our preference is a Tuesday debate.

Chair: The Clerks will be in touch.