



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr. Michael Garnett  
Chair, Harlow Conservative Association  
Harlow Study Centre  
Harlow, CM18 6BW

26<sup>th</sup> March 2024

*New Mike,*

Almost twenty-four years ago, in November 1999, I was selected to be the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Harlow. It was a long road to getting elected; battling three General Elections to eventually win in 2010 with a majority of almost 5,000, increasing to over 14,000 over the past fourteen years. During my time in Parliament, I have been honoured to serve the House as the Chair of the Education Select Committee, and the Government, twice as a Minister of State in the Department for Education, now as the Minister for Apprenticeships, Skills & Higher Education, and previously as the Deputy Chair of the Party attending Cabinet.

I have done everything I possibly could to work hard for Harlow. I always have been touched by the kindness and encouragement from residents. In Parliament, I have campaigned on three main areas: championing apprenticeships and skills, cutting the cost of living, and building an even better Harlow.

Education, skills and particularly apprenticeships have been the bedrock of my whole parliamentary life. It is of huge personal pride that since 2010, we have seen over 5.4 million apprenticeships nationally, and 9,500 in Harlow. Visiting our wonderful Harlow College over one hundred times and holding my tenth Jobs and Apprenticeships Fair this year, demonstrates the importance and value of technical education in our town.

During my time in Parliament, I have campaigned to cut and freeze fuel duty. I am proud of the campaign's success and the financial benefits it has brought to Harlow residents, and hard-working people across the country. I am grateful to those Prime Ministers and Chancellors who have recognized our efforts to continue the fuel duty freeze.

Since 2010, we have seen almost £1 billion of investment come to our town. The Enterprise Zone, the Advanced Manufacturing Centre at Harlow College, Junction 7A on the M11, over £60 million of Levelling Up funding to renew our town centre, and, of course, the pledge for our new Princess Alexandra Hospital.

It was a childhood dream to be an MP. It has been the honour of my life to be the longest-serving MP for Harlow - being part of the Harlow Conservatives is like being part of a family. However, after almost three decades as the Parliamentary Candidate and as MP, I feel that it is time for me to step down.

Political life, while fulfilling, has its ups and downs. At these times, I read J.R.R. Tolkien both as a great source of comfort, but also for some good advice. As I move towards stepping down at the General Election, I am reminded of what Gandalf said to Frodo Baggins after the defeat of Sauron in the Lord of the Rings:

*"I am with you at present...but soon I shall not be. I am not coming to the Shire...My time is over: it is no longer my task to set things to rights, nor to help folk to do so. And as for you, my dear friends, you will need no help...among the great you are, and I have no longer any fear at all for any of you."*

Although I often feel more like the character Bilbo Baggins than Gandalf, I believe these words have great resonance, and perfectly capture my feelings as I move onto my next journey in life.

Yours sincerely,

*Robert Halfon*

**Rt. Hon. Robert Halfon MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Harlow**