

Earlier this week I had a meeting with businesses to discuss key national and local issues. We face interesting times both now and in the future which will affect business regardless of size, and this in turn has an impact on the wider community in terms of employment and spend in the local economy. It is for this reason that I wanted to convene a group to provide me with the information, advice and guidance that they feel I need in order to represent them in Parliament but also that I can provide clarity on forthcoming parliamentary occasions which many might not understand the technical processes surrounding them. One such issue is of course Brexit where parliamentary and political language can often confuse even the most savvy person and yet its significance is great and needs to be understood.

Many will be unsurprised to learn that the meeting on Monday focused very much on the three Bs – business rates, Budget and Brexit. Alas the deadline for this column was before the Budget so I cannot write with certainty the outcome of the Chancellor's statement but clearly pre-Budget speculation already indicates that the Chancellor has a difficult job ahead with balancing books while stimulating growth.

Business rates have been in the national news recently so I was unsurprised by some representation I received on the crippling impact that the revaluation of rates will have on some businesses. Additionally the ongoing issue of Brexit is clearly providing some challenges to business. It was clear that these challenges don't necessarily mean an attack on the bottom line but the uncertainty and the volatility caused by Brexit discussions is making planning harder to do.

It was a useful two way conversation with a variety of businesses across the area and I look forward to the group growing and evolving over time so that I can continue to represent everyone who works and lives in the constituency.