

Quotes from Just Listening MPs

Huw Irranca-Davies MP - Ogmore

“Every opportunity to communicate more fully with constituents is welcome, but the unique thing about Just Listening is that it allowed MPs to sit back and hear the frankest of views without trying to inform or challenge them. This has the advantage (and sometimes the disadvantage) of hearing raw and unfiltered views, that can be stimulating, sometimes painful to hear, and occasionally objectionable.”

Kitty Ussher MP – Burnley

“I think what I have learnt is that people’s expectations of what politicians want from them is so low that they can be pleasantly surprised if we find new, relevant and interesting ways of communicating with them. They presume that politicians only want their vote and will then speak at them, rather than listening to them. I’ve been pleasantly surprised by the reaction I get if people genuinely believe I am sincere about wanting to understand their views.”

Gordon Marsden MP – Blackpool South

“I found these sessions very valuable, energising and a vital counterpoint to the media frenzy of the Westminster village. They are remarkable to the extent that they look beyond the ‘hot button’ stories that dominate the national media day after day and show much more concern for the broader social and community changes and challenge (in fact they are often – young and old – trenchantly critical of the hype and trivialisation of the media agency on politics).”

“People still – by and large – trust the motives of Government initiatives (quite an achievement given the relentless media battering since the General Election) particularly in helping the less well-off and socially excluded, but they are sharply critical of some of the mechanisms and unintended consequences. ‘Follow initiatives up and keep checking them out’, ‘don’t think legislation of itself solves everything’ – ‘do fewer things better’, ‘cut the complexity, the bureaucracy and the gobbledegook’ are the sharp messages they are sending out.”

Madeleine Moon MP - Bridgend

“We need more space to do face to face meetings with people. A rolling programme freeing people from the whip to engage in community consultations should be considered. Less gloss and more substance is called for”

Eric Joyce MP - Falkirk

“People living in Falkirk have the same concerns as those elsewhere in the UK. Asylum and immigration permeates most discussions on public policy, whatever the actual policy area under examination. Concern about anti-social behaviour is also strongly in evidence.”

Sadiq Khan MP - Tooting

“The answers were all so individualistic, yet similar, that it exemplified the reality that many people, whilst acknowledging that the big things matter, only want to know that their ‘small’ issues are not forgotten. Thus, traffic, lighting, cleanliness of streets, transport and youth facilities were all issues raised in the five consultations held.”

“On Britishness - in answer to this final question there was consensus that Britain is so great because of our acceptance of other cultures.”

“Interestingly, however, people believe that fairness was about not losing what Britain as a country had developed over a number of years; i.e. customs, values and norms. What upset many people was the apparent increase in ‘political correctness’. So, for those who had heard or had been told that they should not say ‘happy Christmas’, but to say ‘happy holidays’; or for those who had heard that local schools were no longer putting on a Nativity play in place of a more acceptable play, the resentment was noticeable. It has to be said that a lot of this was hearsay. People had ‘heard’ this was happening, although they had not experienced it themselves.”

“In every consultation event, the media was berated for delving too far into politician’s private lives, for spinning stories how they want to and for being a ‘problem’ in the world of politics.”

“The consultation was a huge success. It has shown that public education is the key to understanding how much a Member of Parliament can do for his or her constituency.”

“It was also clear that constituents are political and interested in politics. There is little doubt that we are seen as ‘the establishment’. This should pose both a challenge and an opportunity”