



Stuart Black
Chairman
Surrey Heath Conservatives

24th May 2024

Dear Stuart,

Thank you for your kindness earlier. As we discussed, I have decided today not to seek to represent Surrey Heath at the forthcoming General Election. This election comes almost twenty years after I was first adopted by this fantastic association as your candidate. Together we contested and won five General Elections. You, and the association, have been there for me and my family through good times and bad. I am so grateful for your friendship and support. Thank you.

Having the chance to serve as a Member of Parliament and Minister has been a profound privilege. As a child in Aberdeen I could never have imagined I would have the opportunity to sit in the Commons, let alone around the Cabinet table. My parents, who adopted me when I was four months old, brought me up to believe that the chance to help others is the greatest gift you can be given. That four Prime Ministers asked me to serve the country in their Governments has been the honour of my life.

I am grateful to them all: David Cameron who gave me the chance to pursue the education reforms in which I passionately believe, Theresa May who asked me to support her in challenging times, Boris Johnson who delivered Brexit and set out the levelling up vision which is so important for our country, and Rishi Sunak who asked me to return to Government when I believed my ministerial career had ended, enabling me to deepen and intensify the levelling up programme. His support has ensured we can deliver projects which are benefitting towns and communities in all parts of the country. Having seen up close the demands of the role I know we all owe them so much.

I also know the toll office can take, as do those closest to me. No-one in politics is a conscript. We are volunteers who willingly choose our fate. And the chance to serve is wonderful. But there comes a moment when you know that it is time to leave. That a new generation should lead.

The next Conservative MP for Surrey Heath will inherit the best constituency in the country. Over the past 19 years, and working with our brilliant team of councillors, we have saved local A&E services for Surrey Heath, and protected our green spaces. We have secured quiet-surface treatment across all eight-lanes of the M3 and funding for a brand-new state of the art hospital. And, following changes I led as Education Secretary, almost all schools in Surrey Heath have taken up academy freedoms, with nine out of ten schools in the constituency rated good or outstanding by OFSTED. But undoubtedly the most satisfying part of the job is the help I have been able to give individuals fighting for a fairer deal for their families. Securing better NHS care, the right special needs support for children in schools or redress from companies which have treated people unfairly has been deeply rewarding. I know I could not have achieved what I have for individual constituents without my dedicated team – Becs, Frances, Karen, Susannah. Their willingness to help those in need knows no bounds.

Reflecting on my time in Government, I am proud to watch the reforms which I introduced at the Department for Education bear fruit. When I became Education Secretary, England's secondary



schools were ranked 27th for maths, 25th for reading and 16th for science. Now that reform has bedded in, England has risen to 11th for maths and 13th for reading and science. At primary level, England's children are now the best readers in the Western world. I am so grateful to the inspiring and dedicated members of the teaching profession who made this happen.

In the Ministry of Justice, I refocused the Department on the moral and practical necessity for rehabilitation, secured new funding for building a more modern prison estate, set in train a vision for One Nation Justice, and – working closely with the outstanding British judiciary – drove forward the introduction of virtual hearings which are commonplace today.

At the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, I put in place progressive farming and fishing policies to ensure a Green Brexit, secured historic legislation to raise animal welfare standards, banned the abhorrent trade in ivory, and introduced our landmark 25 year Environment Plan to crack down on harmful single-use plastics and protect our oceans.

In the Cabinet Office much of my time was overtaken with the sad necessity of handling the Covid-19 Pandemic, but I was also able to outline plans for Government reform, and to spearhead a programme which brings civil servants closer to the communities they serve in all parts of our country. I was able to support Boris Johnson delivering a Brexit deal which honoured the wishes of the British people and enabled us to grow the economy and strengthen our democratic institutions. And, as a Scot, I am delighted that we have strengthened the Union with new powers to support culture, economic development and the improvement of public services across the whole United Kingdom.

In the Levelling Up Department, our White Paper built what I believe is an unanswerable case for strengthening local communities and shifting power closer to the people. This Government has delivered the biggest transfer of powers from Westminster to local people in England for more than a century. Two thirds of England now benefit from strengthened devolution with powerful metro mayors across the Midlands and the North able to supercharge economic development and growth.

I was also pleased to be able to introduce the most wide-ranging reforms to leasehold, social housing and supported housing in a generation. We have built a million new homes in this Parliament. But just as important as increasing the supply of new homes is work to make sure every existing home is safe, decent and warm. That is why we have introduced measures such as Awaab's Law, to protect social housing tenants, and given tenants everywhere a stronger voice.

In this role I have also been moved by the testimony of the bereaved, relatives and survivors of the Grenfell tragedy. I am glad we have been able to legislate and act to make buildings safer, to learn from the tragedy and secure funding for a permanent memorial to those we lost.

I was also privileged to help introduce the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the British public, 150,000 have found refuge here in the UK.

I am proud to have led the Vote Leave campaign alongside Boris Johnson and Gisela Stuart – which secured the largest mandate in modern British history for a vote to Leave the European Union and take back control of our political destiny. Fundamentally our country is stronger with politicians in Westminster able to control our laws, our borders and our money. Since 2016 we have also increased NHS funding by considerably more than £350 million a week.

Throughout my time in politics, although I have undoubtedly made mistakes, I have always tried to be a voice for those who have been overlooked and undervalued. I have tried to fight for greater social justice. My education reforms were designed to build a country where everyone – no matter their background – can become the authors of their own life stories. For me that is what being in Parliament and being in Government is all about.



I have been privileged to work with many brilliant ministerial colleagues. I am grateful to them, as I am to so many superb officials and advisers who supported me and to my fantastic Surrey Heath team.

I shared with you a few weeks ago a ConservativeHome article in which I outlined why we have a record in Government of which we can truly be proud. And we have a Prime Minister who I know exemplifies the patriotism, hard work, sense of selfless service and clarity of purpose which are the very best virtues of our party. Rishi has the plan our country needs at a time of global insecurity and growing challenge. He also has the policies which will guarantee a brighter, more prosperous future. I will do everything I can to support him, and every Conservative candidate, in this election.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is fluid and cursive.

The Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP
Member of Parliament for Surrey Heath