

AAFDA

Minutes/Notes from AGM

Held on 7th January 2011 at Swindon Council Offices

Robert Buckland, MP for South Swindon

Political View

Robert Buckland paid tribute to Frank and his work and the positive effect this has had.

He remarked on how good it was to have people together in one place from agencies, services and organisations that represent all experiences of domestic abuse. This happens on too few occasions. We had heard from the Police, a victim of domestic abuse, an agency representing victims, a politician (who has 20 years experience as a criminal barrister and is a part-time Judge).

He will be having his first meeting with the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses very soon.

He recognised Frank's acknowledgement that Teresa May had withstood some challenge to protect some funding of £28 million over four years for domestic abuse! He said he had no argument with Frank's supplementary point that it wasn't enough adding that no amount of money will totally solve the problem. What will solve the problem is talking to one another, and using the combined experience and knowledge.

Today domestic abuse is not taken as lightly as in earlier years, when it was often classed as "only a domestic". Historically domestic abuse was seen as a minor offence, whereas today it is seen for what it really is, ie a serious offence. Domestic abuse diminishes us as a society.

Should the victim have an unfettered choice? Robert discussed the point with regard to the victim testifying. His view was that once the victim had made a statement to the police, then the only way of stopping the case is for the victim to say "I lied". Robert thought that the Court should use all possible routes to get the victim to testify and use special measures, for

example video links or indirect questioning.

What do we mean by domestic abuse?

There are so many differing definitions. For example, ACPO's and the Crown Prosecution Service's definition is "violence between adults". However, what about the effect on the children in the family ?

Robert has raised this issue with the Lord Chancellor who response included a request for a clear definition. Robert said he thought AAFDA could have a role helping here and he said he would welcome AAFDA's help to find a proper and fair definition.

Robert mentioned that Swindon has an active involvement on the nationally important issue of domestic abuse. Robert said that he would do his part in championing AAFDA and Frank's work.

Robert stressed that he thought we need to understand that we cannot eliminate the risk, but can minimise it. We need to be realistic.