

Tommy Sheppard MP on drugs....

Tommy Sheppard is the SNP MP for Edinburgh East. Not a man to sit in the background he always has something to say. This month he is on drugs. That is to say he is on about them. He is fed up of the way they have been dealt with up till now and wants that to change.



Tommy writes : “A couple of months ago I put my head above the parapet when I decided to start talking about drugs. It’s a conversation that’s long overdue.

“Let’s be honest, the so called war on drugs simply isn’t working.

“Fewer people are taking illegal drugs but deaths are increasing. We are criminalising some of the most vulnerable in society – from those who find cannabis relieves a medical condition that no other treatment has touched to vulnerable addicts leading chaotic and challenging lives. And the rigid zero tolerance approach means it’s hard to even talk about harm reduction – making sure anyone intending to take drugs knows what’s in it and where to get help.

“So we need to start thinking differently. And we need to start talking and listening. I’m in the process of meeting with those who know this field inside out – the police, health workers, voluntary organisers, drug consumers. For years public policy has amounted to a collective sticking of fingers in ears and shouting “la-la-la” at anyone presenting evidence for reform. We can’t afford to carry on with that attitude.

“Most laws governing drugs are reserved to Westminster but while MPs in London decide on drug classification, it’s the Scottish Government who have to deal with the fall out through the health and justice systems. To me, that’s yet another anomaly in our devolution settlement I’d like to have reconsidered.

“A Scottish government adviser has called for a system that focuses on supporting rather than penalising people and for us to stop putting people in jail for the possession of drugs for their own personal use.

“I’m inclined to agree and I’m glad we’re starting to have the debate. I’d like to know what you think too – please do get in touch tommy.sheppard.mp@parliament.uk.

“One thing’s for sure – too many people are dying to carry on as we are.”