



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

2 May 2020

**An open letter to the people of Heywood re the Centre for Towns' report:  
The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on our Towns and Cities**

The local press has reported this week on a report published by the Centre for Towns Think Tank which speculates about the future of towns across the UK after lockdown. In this report Heywood was named in a section about socio-economic decline based on data from 1981 to 2011. Whilst I understand that there is a purpose for these kinds of broad, statistical reports, I also know that snapshot statements from them, especially when reported with little or no context, can make for concerning headlines.

I want the people of Heywood to know that as your MP I am here for you. In the short time between my election in December and the lockdown I had already begun to take action on issues in Heywood, such as crime, employment, housing and economy.

I have met with the Chief Inspector at Police Headquarters to discuss issues of crime and anti-social behaviour and the action plan that we need to tackle those issues.

I have met with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) to discuss plans for housing development in the town and have seen some of the excellent projects that they are proposing for our area.

I was inspired when I met traders at Heywood Market who shared their plans for how they want to see the market develop and grow.

In January I invited the then Minister for the Northern Powerhouse to visit Heywood, and with the help of local businesspeople I showed him first-hand the challenges that our highstreet is facing. I have also been involved in meetings of the Town Centre Development Board to ensure that the needs of our town are always included in discussions about regeneration and investment.

It is clear that the coronavirus pandemic, lockdown and social distancing are having an effect on every aspect of our lives at the moment and it is reasonable to expect that what we are experiencing now will change our lives in the future too.

The people of Heywood can be confident that my commitment to our town is absolute, before, during and after this pandemic. Even in these challenging times my team and I are working around the clock to make sure that we are responding to questions and issues as quickly as possible, helping with problems and standing up for local people, and we will continue to be here for anyone who needs our assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Clarkson'.

Chris Clarkson MP