Conversation with Stephen Jones, Defence Committee re meeting on Tues 16 Jan

The session will be an opportunity for us to express our views of what we think of the White Paper. The MPs will be listening but may also wish to challenge our assumptions.

They will start by asking for our overall reaction to the White Paper. Also what do you think of the decision making process, should there be a decision at this time ?

Aside from general opposition are there specific aspects that youobject to ?

Then they will focus on the political rationale for replacement. Do you accept that conventional weapons can't have the same security capability ? If not why not ? Do nuclear weapons have any role ? Are there any weaknesses in the argument that the nuclear deterrent is an insurance policy ? And will the public buy into this argument ? How do you balance the benefits and risks over 40 years or maintaining nuclear weapons ?

If Britain gave up its nuclear weapons what effect will that have ? Given the situation with Iran and North Korea why should the UK give up ? Would it have any effect on what Iran and North Korea decide ? If the UK gave up to what extent would this enhance non proliferation ? Is it enough for the UK to give up ?

What do you think of the steps that the Government has made towards disarmament, such as the reduction in warheads ? How does this compare with others ? Do you accept that this is a minimum deterrent ?

What do you think of the deterrent options ? Is this a comprehensive study, are their other options missing (such as abandoning nuclear weapons) ?

Do you accept the figures in the White Paper ? What do you think of the estimate that the running costs will be between 5 and 6 % of the Defence Budget ? Is affordability alone sufficient grounds to reject the proposal ? If it was cheaper would it be any more palatable ?

Then they will ask about legal issues. How do we argue that renewing Trident is a breach of the NPT ? What would be the implications for the NPT of Britain not replacing Trident ?