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The town of Upton is one of the most vibrant communities in the County. This does not mean to say that it is without problems. Sadly, rural crime, and in particular petty vandalism, seems to be on the increase. I was pleased to hear that West Mercia Police are taking this issue seriously and, in an effort to help alleviate the problem, are giving a higher profile to neighbourhood watch schemes by establishing an Association of Neighbourhood Watch Groups. In Parliament recently we have considered the need for tough measures to tackle anti-social behaviour which can often lead to the creation of an environment in which more serious crime takes hold. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act seeks to increase the powers given to the police to protect the lives of law abiding citizens.

I was delighted to hear of the introduction of broadband in Upton at the start of the New Year. This affordable, un-metered, high speed means to access the internet is a significant move forward in technological terms and can be extremely useful for local businesses and indeed local residents. As broadband technology expands it is essential that rural areas do not miss out and it was particularly good to see sufficient interest being registered around the town to encourage the supplier to make this service available. I understand that those outside the current coverage area may well be able to access wireless broadband in the future.

Pressure on rural businesses seems to grow day by day, not least for our farming community which has in recent years been at the front of what seems to be an assault on the rural way of life. In recent months I have questioned Ministers over the vexed issue of Bovine Tuberculosis in Worcestershire. I am particularly concerned that although the actual incidence of TB discovered in cattle is still low, many farmers are worried about the possible link between TB in badgers and cattle. Because of pasteurisation of milk there is no threat to humans but the debilitating effect on British agriculture, coming on top of the Foot and Mouth outbreak is clear. This unease has been increased by the recent decision to suspend reactive culling of badgers. I will continue to take up this matter in Parliament.

This is a good moment to remind everyone that I can best be contacted by writing to me at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA, or by attending one of my interviews at the Memorial Hall in Upton. Details can be found in the local press, by calling 01684 573469 or logging on to my website www.sirmichaelspicer.net

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