



Bim Afolami MP

2 November 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you to all those who have shared your views with me about the new lockdown.

As I have made clear over the past weeks, I believe that a localised, regional method was most the correct and fair approach, with local authorities working with central government (mostly with consensus) to decide when tiered restrictions were imposed. This national lockdown for is hard to accept, particularly as we have the lowest infection rates in Hertfordshire and the mortality rates are extremely low.

However, with deep regret, the statistics from SAGE presented to us all showed us a stark and bleak outlook if further measures are not enforced. I don't believe that any responsible Prime Minister could ignore the statistics and he is right to put the trust of the nation in the expertise of the SAGE recommendations. There is a real chance that the NHS could reach breaking point and for many lives to be lost if we don't do something drastic now. Therefore, I will not vote against the lockdown.

I have also been encouraged by conversations with colleagues in the Treasury that, thanks to the return of the furlough scheme, the self-employed income support scheme and other successful financial interventions, businesses and professionals in our constituency will have the support to survive this next phase.

However, we cannot go on like this.

First, we need to allow more competing scientific advice to reach the Prime Minister. He needs to have access to a wider range of scientific opinion to allow him to make sound judgements.

Secondly, we need a sustainable plan to keep us functioning whilst living with this virus. s not going away for a long time. The emergency measures implemented this year were necessary but are not sustainable.

Thirdly, we need to work on trying to quantify the losses from lockdown. Not just the financial losses and the millions of people who will be out of work or the families struggling to get by, but the legacy issues such as our mental wellbeing, suicides, missed health treatments and other impacts.

The terrible health impacts of Covid 19 are clear, digestible and recorded every day. The consequences of lockdown are not as immediately obvious. We need that balance to be redressed.

I have requested a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss these matters.

Yours,

**Member of Parliament Hitchin & Harpenden
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