



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

First and foremost, I want to thank those of you who have taken the time to write to me on this issue and for your patience in awaiting my response.

I have read and listened to the thoughts of my constituents, colleagues in Westminster, the Prime Minister both publicly and privately, the media and of people across the nation. I have heard representations on both sides of the argument and I know that some of the people I represent will be glad to hear this and others will be disappointed. But I wanted to let you all know that last night I voted in support of the Prime Minister.

I was concerned and embarrassed by the 'Partygate' revelations. I took the votes on lockdowns and restrictions imposed by the Government very seriously. It was an unprecedented time and tough decisions had to be made by myself and my colleagues. As a country we all made unprecedented sacrifices.

On a personal note, when I voted for the second lockdown in November 2020 my Grandfather was gravely ill and sadly passed away shortly after the vote. The restrictions I voted for meant that I was unable to say a proper goodbye, attend his funeral and support my Grandmother. So, I completely understand and appreciate the anger surrounding this issue.

For myself, last night's vote of confidence in the Prime Minister extended far beyond 'Partygate'. I thought about every decision taken for our nation: how committed he was in delivering Brexit, a highly successful vaccine rollout, funding for health and social care and – at this very moment – in ensuring people up and down the country are protected, as most economically responsibly as the Government can, against increases in the cost of living, especially targeted towards those who most vulnerable.

I have also seen how the Prime Minister has been in his support of our friends in Ukraine. By any yardstick the Prime Minister has led from the front on the international stage against Russian aggression, and I believe this to be significant.

But I also thought of the current unease and upset that the Owen Patterson and the Westminster revelations have brought forward. There was a lot to take into consideration.

More personally, I have spoken at length with the Prime Minister about my body image campaign which is designed to help protect the mental health of our young people who are too often looking at images of unrealistic body shapes online. Many of you may know that the Prime Minister recently supported my work in the House and pledged to look at incorporating a label on such images in the Government's mental health plan. I have progressed so far with my work on this important issue under the Prime Minister's leadership and I am keen to keep the current momentum.

The question put to me in the vote was do I have confidence in the Prime Minister, yes or no. I voted yes. My confidence in the Prime Minister has been shaken, I am happy to admit that, I have said as much to the Prime Minister as I have to any constituent who has contacted me on this issue. However, I believe changes have been made and that delivery is key, and that is what I am keen to see.

It would be remiss of me not to comment on the reports leading up to the vote. Last week I took the time to comprehensively read and think about the report by Sue Gray.

I have also been completely clear from day one that the rules are there for everyone as are the punishments, that applies to you and I, the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister. Everyone.

The Police have acted in some situations, and not in others, and some are still under investigation. I trust the Police with their judgement, and respect their conclusion.

There are parts of the report which make for sobering reading. I was particularly disappointed to learn of the mistreatment of some cleaning and security staff at Number 10. I want to be clear when I say this is not behaviour I condone, nor is it something I have witnessed when visiting Number 10 or working on any part of the Parliamentary Estate.

Sue Gray wrote the following on page 36:

“I found that some staff had witnessed or been subjected to behaviours at work which they had felt concerned about but at times felt unable to raise properly. I was made aware of multiple examples of a lack of respect and poor treatment of security and cleaning staff. This was unacceptable. I am reassured to see that steps have since been taken to introduce more easily accessible means by which to raise concerns electronically, in person or online, including directly with the Permanent Secretary in No 10. I hope that this will truly embed a culture that welcomes and creates opportunities for challenge and speaking up at all levels.”

I will be writing to the Permanent Secretary at Number 10, as mentioned in the report above, for assurances that this implementation has taken place.

And I was pleased to read that Ms. Gray recognises Number 10 is improving on this front:

“I am pleased progress is being made in addressing the issues I raised. I commented on the fragmentary and complicated leadership structures in No 10. Since my update there have been changes to the organisation and management of Downing Street and the Cabinet Office with the aim of creating clearer lines of leadership and accountability and now these need the chance and time to bed in.”

I feel that the following, specifically, has been overlooked by some members of the public and the media. And so, I wanted to highlight this paragraph from page 37:

“Many will be dismayed that behaviour of this kind took place on this scale at the heart of Government. The public have a right to expect the very highest standards of behaviour in such places and clearly what happened fell well short of this. It is my firm belief, however, that these events did not reflect the prevailing culture in Government and the Civil Service at the time. Many thousands of people up and down the country worked tirelessly to deliver in unprecedented times.”

It can be easy to focus on the negative, especially when this has dominated public discourse for so long. But when posed with the question of whether I had confidence in the Prime Minister, I thought of the contributions and difficult decisions that have been taken and I would like to see the Government, his Government, deliver on the promises made in the 2019 manifesto and subsequently.

I hope that my constituents can understand and accept my support of the PM. For some they can't and won't, but I have always said I would be honest and open with my decisions and the reasons for making them.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Luke Evans
Member of Parliament for Bosworth