



DR DAN POULTER MP

Member of Parliament for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich

December 2021

In what has undoubtedly been a challenging year, dominated once more by the Covid pandemic, many of us are now turning our thoughts to Christmas. As I reflect on the past year, I am proud of the successful vaccine roll-out here in Suffolk. I am also proud to have played my part working on the frontline of the health service during the pandemic and shall be supporting our emergency services during the busy Christmas and New Year period.

One event that stood out for me during 2021 was the murder by a lone extremist of my Parliamentary colleague, Sir David Amess. I knew David, and it was his faithfulness to his constituents and to his constituency that animated him. Sadly it was his dedication to his work as an MP that proved his vulnerability and also killed him.

The link between an MP and our constituents is the very soul of our representative democracy. It would be hard to exaggerate how much it means to me to be a point of contact, of appeal, of sympathy and understanding, often a last resort, for some 90,000 people. Many constituents who I help may well not have voted for me, but honestly, I don't care. In my 11 and a half years as your MP, I have never met a colleague - Labour, Liberal or Conservative, who did not take pride in being open to everyone on their home patch.

Nor in this new virtual age can I exaggerate how important real-time, face-to-face meetings with residents has become to me. We chat on the streets; I call in to shops, factories, pubs, farms, schools and local charities. I do this mostly alone, with no security, no bodyguards, with little or no vetting of who I meet. It really wouldn't work if the layer of plate glass that has had to be placed between "strangers" in the Strangers' Gallery and MPs on the floor of the House, were to be carried with me into Suffolk.

For some of my Parliamentary colleagues, Sir David's awful murder, like that of Jo Cox, has thrown all this — this politically life-giving point of contact with all or any of our constituents — into doubt. Every local MP knows this. The death of David, who was a lovely, kindly, good-natured and deeply conscientious man, threatens to call time on some of the things a constituency MP cherishes the most. I, for one, won't let it. I live in Suffolk. It is my home.

In closing, I wish you all a very happy Christmas and my thanks go out to my colleagues in the NHS and emergency services who will be working hard to keep us all safe whilst we enjoy the festive period.