

Lock down rules

I was working with a group of MPs led by Sir Graham Brady to secure debates and votes on the Rule of 6 and the 10pm curfew, which the government conceded. Both votes were to be held this week.

Following my consultation on the Rule of 6, and following discussions with other MPs, it seemed best to vote against the Curfew measures. These do more economic damage than the rule of 6, and are opposed by the Opposition giving us a real opportunity to win the vote. The Rule of 6 was not opposed by the Opposition.

The consultation showed a predictable split of opinion, with some favouring laws and strong guidance over conduct to try to control the spread of the virus, and some wanting the controls removed to allow people to make their own decisions.

I did not vote for the Rule of 6, wanting to see more evidence of how it would reduce the spread. Many people think, for example, that it should be amended to exclude young children. Yesterday we did not get a vote on the curfew which I wished to oppose. The government is presumably thinking again about the wisdom of this measure. It needs to bring this for ratification or defeat soon. Many think forcing people out onto the streets all at the same time at 10pm, with knock on effects on pavements and public transport in busy locations, is not a good idea. It can also transfer drinking from pubs to private homes which may not be as well set up to limit the spread of any airborne disease.

The Rule of 6 passed by 287 to 17 with most of the Opposition abstaining but not against the measure in principle. If all the Opposition join Conservative opponents of the curfew it should be defeated. It is interesting that the Rule of 6 did not command a majority of the possible votes in the Commons.