



June 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for taking the time to outline your views on Dominic Cummings.

Firstly, I strongly sympathise with your position and remain equally indignant with the situation that the Government now finds itself in. Nor do I underestimate the depth of feeling out there. For what it's worth, my position on Dominic Cummings is already in the public domain and I empathise entirely with those who are rightly angry. I am personally livid that his actions have caused such a loss of public confidence and I am on record as stating that I do not agree with the judgements he made. As you will appreciate, I have been contacted by hundreds of constituents on the issue of Dominic Cummings' actions over the last few days. I can assure you that I have read each and every email you have sent, and I have passed on your views to senior members of the Government.

As I am sure you will understand, the huge volume of correspondence I have received means that I am not able to answer every question raised. Therefore, I have set-out my views via a statement which I have published on my website (linked below). Since my statement was published, Durham Police have considered Dominic Cummings actions as legal, although his trip to Barnard Castle 'might' have warranted police intervention. Nevertheless, they have concluded that no action is deemed necessary.

<https://www.jamessunderland.org.uk/news/response-constituents-regarding-dominic-cummings>

As you will have spotted from my statement, I do not wholly approve of the judgements that Mr Cummings made and would not have made the same decisions myself. I also do not believe that there is one rule for the few and another for everyone else. This is not the way of the Conservative Party and my colleagues and I are rightly concerned that this is the perception that people have been given. The Government is actually working really hard right now under serious pressure to do the best it can for the nation.

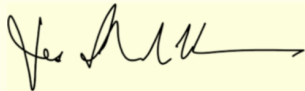
For what it's worth, my humble view is that there has been a commendable, pragmatic and entirely conditions-based approach to the pandemic. The word unprecedented is often over-played but there is no policy precedent for Covid-19 and the Government has rightly needed to feel its way. I am therefore satisfied - from my own close scrutiny - that every decision has been made in good faith, under significant pressure, in accordance with the prevailing advice

and against the weight of an unknown enemy. I also do not believe that any other Government in living memory would necessarily have done better and it is impossible to deduce whether many more lives might indeed have been lost without the robust response that has been taken. So my view is that we should stay together to fight this virus off.

Lastly, I am disappointed that Mr Cummings has failed to apologise for his actions and there is a strong argument that he should have resigned. Given that the Cummings issue is so divisive, I absolutely accept that the position I have taken will not find favour with everyone, but it is one that does resonate with many who have written to me. The majority of my colleagues and I are also rightly irritated that we have been placed in this difficult position but there may be deeper and more subtle forces at work. I just do not know what has been discussed in Downing Street.

Given too that any public call by a new MP for Dominic Cummings to be sacked is tantamount to a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister, I have rightly kept my powder dry and stayed loyal. This has nothing to do with self-interest and I have stated that Mr Cummings could do the right thing, but I just do not know what has been said in Downing Street nor the reasons for it. I have also needed as a new MP, to take a balanced perspective that does not fan the flames of further media emotion, cause dissent or bring further division within my Party. Noting that he is an unelected adviser on the personal staff at No.10, I regret that this remains a matter for the Prime Minister and him alone.

Thank you once again for taking the time and effort to contact me. I wish you and your family all stay safe and well in these challenging times

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Sunderland', is written on a light yellow rectangular background.

James Sunderland MP
Member of Parliament for the Bracknell Constituency
Bracknell, Crowthorne, Finchampstead, Sandhurst and Wokingham Without