

# Johnson has waited till the eleventh hour to act

This is the public health policy the Prime Minister should have announced before Christmas.

But yet again, Boris Johnson ducked the difficult decisions, failed to listen to experts and acted too late.

**Just yesterday morning Johnson was telling parents that schools were safe and children should definitely go.** Today he is telling us that they must all move to remote learning but without any proper future plan.

The Prime Minister's **failure to act** earlier means we are seeing record numbers of new infections, a rising death rate, hospitals overwhelmed and NHS and care staff exhausted.

With this new lockdown, Liberal Democrats believe it's urgent that the Government:

- announce a new comprehensive economic plan for businesses and the self-employed
- introduce a plan to increase Carer's allowance in line with the increases in Universal Credit
- and fully take account of the impact of these developments on the mental health of young people and vulnerable individuals who are going through an incredibly difficult time

All around the world, the evidence is that acting early is critical to minimising damage to the economy and protecting public health.

**We need a Prime Minister who can act in time, not one who acts when it is too late.**

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# Attempting to put Parliament in the driving seat on Brexit

Today, we have tabled a series of amendments to the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill that demand the Government protect British businesses, the rights of UK nationals and ensure Parliament has proper scrutiny over the

future relationship agreement.

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## **Unpaid carers at Christmas**

**2020 has been an extremely difficult and upsetting year for everyone.**

The extra pressures carers face over the festive season can be exhausting.

While people up and down the country typically use the festive period to relax after a busy year, **the Government's continued failures have caused further heartbreak and stress.**

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## **Boris Johnson has yet again caused more upset by acting late**

My heart goes out to the millions of families who after a very tough year were looking forward to Christmas with some sense of normality.

**The sad fact is the Prime Minister has caused more upset by yet again acting too late.**

The writing was on the wall last week when we asked Boris Johnson to listen to the scientists. He was warned that, if he had to cancel Christmas, he mustn't leave it to the last minute.

Yet Johnson ignored our warnings and refused to take the tough decisions he is paid to take.

**Let's be clear about why we are in this mess.** From the late first lockdown in March, to the delays sorting out PPE, test trace and isolate and the care home tragedy, Boris Johnson has never got a grip, and his Government has left

our country with one of the worst death rates and most damaged economies in Europe.

Boris Johnson is truly a hopeless Prime Minister. He and his party have **totally failed our country** when all people wanted was strong leadership through this crisis.

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## **Alderdice and beyond – the future of the Vice Presidency**

At a recent meeting of The Federal International Relations Committee, I had the chance to recount what I've been doing in the past couple of years (almost!) as party Vice President.

It's been my privilege to serve since first being elected to the role in 2019 and then again, in 2020, and I had been invited to speak on how we, as a party, can reach out to ethnic minority and other minority group members, how we handle situations where two opposing groups want exclusive public support and how we can cross cultural divides.

At that meeting, I had the chance to thank two of the attendees – Lord John Alderdice, whose Alderdice Review called for the establishment of my role – and Baroness Sal Brinton, who ensured that the role was 'activated' before the end of her term of office as Party President.

**But as well as thinking about the past, the event galvanized me to think about the future. The future of my role, of the party, and of what we can collectively do to be the most diverse, inclusive and forward thinking party in the UK.**

As Vice President, I have worked on so many projects, launching our first webinar Party campaign with Ed Davey: "Stand up for Carers", campaigning for Parliamentary and Council candidates and holding outreach events such as "What does it mean to be Black in Britain?" geared towards non-Party members.

I also do a huge amount of internal work – 'arbitrating' for Local Parties when there are internal contentious issues, advising on equality messaging and, since the Summer, acting as a member of The Steering Group, which supports the more operational work of the Federal Board.

The role has become increasingly embedded in, and vital to, how the party works. **I believe that direction of travel is right, because I believe that**

**ethnic minority voices must be at the heart of what we do.**

To push forward, therefore, I believe now is the time to update the office of Vice President. I worked hard to be elected by the Federal Board (there was some tough competition for my role!) but I remain conscious that I was elected by a subset of the membership. With that in mind, I'll be proposing a Motion at Spring Conference calling for my office to be directly elected and, consequently, to have a vote on the Federal Board.

There are a number of reasons why I think that my role should be directly elected by the Party membership. Not only does this strike me as the most democratic means of filling my role, but it also gives it legitimacy and wider recognition.

But this role is not about me, it is about the ethnic minority voices which are not heard enough. So I want to know what you think. Would this be a good next step in the evolution of the role? Can you see difficulties with this proposal?

If you would like to feed back, please send any comments to our Company Secretary: [jack.coulson@libdems.org.uk](mailto:jack.coulson@libdems.org.uk).

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