

I spent lockdown in the constituency, in the home we got in the Didcot area in February. Whilst none of us have enjoyed lockdown, it was nice to spend an extended time in our new home. Having lived in Oxford for 6 years I was already somewhat familiar with Didcot, but spending an extended period here – rather than just the Friday-Sunday as is usually the case when parliament is sitting normally – helped us to get to know it better still.

Virtual parliament was smoother than I had expected – despite me thinking it would feel strange speaking into a webcam and having it beamed into the House of Commons. You get used to asking questions and even giving speeches from your desk, as I did on legislation such as the Domestic Abuse Bill and the Agriculture Bill.

But parliament has now returned. We still can't have more than 50 people in the House of Commons at any one time and our staff are not allowed to return yet. Some of you will have seen the very long queues when we first had to vote, but they have now come up with a much better system. Our staff can't return yet and like a lot of people they miss being in a different environment to home and seeing their colleagues, but for MPs it has been nice to be back for the same reasons.

There is plenty on our plates. We have been debating a number of pieces of legislation, including the Counter-terrorism and Sentencing Bill, designed to prevent the sort of attacks we saw at the end of last year and beginning of this year. There are ongoing debates both in the House of Commons and in the Education Committee (I am a member) about the reopening of schools. I am firmly on the side of seeing all schools open for all children as soon as possible: the Children's Commissioner told our Committee that we are on course for 8 million children to be out of school for 6 months which will be damaging to all children and the most disadvantaged will suffer most.

As shops start to reopen, I'll be returning to spending at least every Friday visiting local businesses, charities and, if we can make it work, schools – keeping my distance, of course. I'd encourage everyone to try and support our local shops if they can, so they can hopefully survive what has been a very tough time. I recently invited people to nominate their volunteer hero – the individual or organisation they feel has really made a difference lately. I was pleased to see such a huge range of people and organisations nominated. The top 3 were the Ray Collins Charitable Trust, Helping Hands and Maymessy – congratulations to them all.

As ever, do get in touch if I can help via [david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk)