

Next week residents of my neighbouring constituency will vote in a by-election. It is an election I never thought we would have. I had worked with the former MP on a number of local and national issues and believed we wanted the same thing for our towns and our country. Alas it was not the case. He made his decision to join UKIP and has in my view jeopardised the future progress of many of the issues we stood shoulder to shoulder on.

What disappoints me most, however, is that right on our doorstep is a groundswell of opinion that frankly I find frightening. I love my country. And do you know what, I like living in a multi-national multi-cultural society. Uncontrolled immigration is an issue that many are rightly concerned about. It can be managed with the right policies and support for the relevant organisations and I believe the Government is doing that, whether that is through changes to the benefits system or implementation of the visa rules. It may not have been as swift as some as many may have wanted but then no magic wand can reverse the policies of uncontrolled immigration of the last Government.

What worries me most is the fear and loathing that some UKIP politicians are cynically spreading. The hatred towards those who were not fortunate enough to be born in the UK is frightening. I shudder as I recall a man telling me he was voting UKIP because he didn't "see a single white face" outside a school in Chatham. What are we becoming?

I voted against my Government to give residents an EU referendum and to freeze the EU budget. Both subsequently became policy. I have fought for stricter access to welfare for those who do come to the UK. But I will not side with those who want to change our tolerant society into something horribly insular. And I loathe a party who groups with an MEP who believes it is OK to hit women, and that Hitler was misunderstood.

I believe in tolerance, fairness and indeed democracy. Some in UKIP do not stand up for all that is great in Britain.