

Votes in Parliament which are a matter of conscience are easy to do but are sometimes more difficult to explain to those with differing views. The vote on Equal Marriage in the last Parliament was a classic example of that. I had no problem with supporting Equal Marriage but many people did write to me with their own views, often based on faith. I perfectly respected those views but was able to justify my opinions through my own beliefs.

However last week's vote on the Assisted Dying Bill was more difficult. I could have not been in Parliament – none of us had to be – but I felt it was such an important issue for many people that it would have been wrong not to have attended. I genuinely had an open mind on this issue, although I've always thought I know what I'd like if circumstances were similar to those who have fought for this change in the law.

The debate in Parliament was excellent. It was passionate on both sides (and by passionate I don't mean angry shouting). It was well informed and informative. There were contributions from members who had seen partners die and members who had helped people stay alive. Most of all it was respectful of different opinions.

In the end I voted for the Bill. I noted the safeguards around the proposals and that the majority of my constituents who wrote to me were in favour. In the end the legislation did not pass. The majority in Parliament had a different view. Some might be disappointed with my vote but pleased with the outcome, others vice versa. I felt perfectly comfortable with my decision but the issue has now passed and instead it is time for politicians to turn their attention back to making sure that those who are suffering can be helped and comforted in their last days of life.