

Business of the House

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

On one of the busiest Saturdays in the run-up to Christmas in Totnes, local activists—including, sadly, the local Labour party—decided to parade with a real coffin and leave a large and carefully constructed model of a coffin at my constituency office. Does the Leader of the House feel, particularly in the light of the report on intimidation in public life that was published yesterday, that the line of decency was overstepped? There are real dangers in using the imagery of death and directing it against individuals to whip up hatred. Most importantly of all, this kind of thing deters really good candidates from applying for positions in public life.

Andrea Leadsom Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons

I was disgusted, as I am sure all right hon. and hon. Members were, to hear about my hon. Friend's awful experience. I texted her at the time to say that I hoped she was okay. It must have been absolutely terrifying. It was truly horrible and we should all condemn this kind of behaviour and call it out wherever we see it. Lord Bew's report on the abuse and intimidation of candidates highlights that this is not a simple matter of holding politicians to account. It goes far beyond that and it will be a deterrent to diversity and the high calibre of candidates we want to see standing for Parliament. We all combine in condemning that action against my hon. Friend.

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