

After the local elections

However the results pan out the Conservative leadership has to agree Conservatives need to do better. The polls show we have lost the support at least in the short term of many people who voted Conservative in the 2019 election. There is an argument over why they have moved, and over what has to be done to win them back.

My advice to the leader is to understand these were Conservative voters. It is unlikely adopting more Labour or Lib Dem policies will win them back. The political market for those who want a faster drive to net zero, who want higher taxes, who want more subsidies and interventions in business, who want rent controls and more migrants, who want to import more and make less here is highly congested. Labour, Lib Dem, SNP, Plaid and others are all jostling to offer a bigger state, more money taken from those who work hard and who save, more directions over how we should travel, what we should eat and how we should pass our time. There is no point in Conservatives trying to compete for that part of the electorate.

There are some Conservative advisers who tell the leadership not to lurch to the right, not to adopt more Conservative policies. It is high time Conservatives moved on from right/left as a method of analysis of politics. The current divides are not traditional left/right ones. Brexit appealed to people from all shades of political opinion, as the issue was could we make our own laws and set our own budgets or should these be done by Brussels? Wanting to restore more personal freedoms is not right/left. Wanting to take control of our money, our borders and our laws is not right wing, but a passionate wish by people with widely ranging views of how these freedoms should be used.

What Conservatives need to do is to put through policies that are both on the side of greater freedom, and are popular. There is a majority to be had amongst people who want to be left to get on with their own lives, who want to spend their own money in ways of their choosing, and want to keep enough of the proceeds of their work and savings. The five themes of the present PM are fine. The public want success around them. So when will the small boats stop? When will taxes be cut and growth accelerate? When will more capacity be put in to help bring price rises under control?