

Questions for candidate Prime Ministers

This week-end is crunch weekend for the five survivors in the race to No 10. The candidates who have answered many MP questions in private rooms now go public and answer questions from the press and public. Here are some of the things people need to know from them –

1. Why do you want to do this very difficult job?
2. What would be your immediate priority on September 6th?
3. What changes would you make if any to the structure and posts in Downing Street to ensure you are well served, and to the way Cabinet and departments relate to No 10 to ensure the smooth and effective functioning of government?
4. How would you control your own diary and allocate precious time to priorities?
5. How much delegated authority should rest with Cabinet Ministers and departments?

It's the economy , stupid.

1. How do you explain the big failure to keep inflation under control, bearing in mind Japanese and Chinese inflation is around 2.5% despite energy prices?
2. Do you accept the current Bank forecasts that inflation will tumble next year?
3. Do you agree the task now is to fight possible recession and to ease the cost of living squeeze to do so?
4. Do you think lower taxes are only possible once growth has resumed and speeded up, or do you think lower tax rates are crucial to achieving better growth?
5. How would you find savings and productivity improvements in the public services? Are there current spending programmes that could be removed?

Getting Brexit done means achieving Brexit wins

1. What are your main Brexit wins that you wish to deliver?
2. Will you use our freedom to cut VAT on domestic fuel and on petrol?
3. Will you design an agricultural support programme which promotes more UK food production?
4. Will you beef up the freedom of the Freeports including lower taxes?
5. Will you legislate business rules that allow greater global expansion from a UK base?
6. Will you pursue the life sciences/medical research agenda which requires regulatory change?
7. How will you use the UK's seat on the World Trade Organisation as an independent country to advance the cause of free trade worldwide?
8. How will you police UK borders so we have UK decisions on the number of economic migrants we welcome?

National Security

1. How will you develop the UK's contribution to the NATO response to Ukraine?
2. What additional capabilities do UK armed forces need to defend us in an unsettled era?
3. Will you work closely with the private sector to ensure the UK controls essential technologies, and has sufficient capability to produce weapons and equipment which can be scaled up rapidly were need to arise?
4. How will you develop the growing alliance with our Five Eyes partners, Japan and Korea?
5. How do we become more energy self sufficient? Will you develop UK home based energy to cut our reliance on European electricity which in turn depends on imported gas and on burning coal?
6. Will you review our access to crucial minerals and other industrial inputs to cut our dependence on China and Chinese influenced parts of the world?

Health and education

1. Will you continue educational reforms to raise standards and level up opportunities around the country?
2. Will you expand grammars and Academies, to offer more choice to students and parents?
3. How will you get the NHS waiting lists down?
4. How will you ensure more nurses and doctors, and more access to services?
5. Is the NHS over administered but undermanaged?
6. What are your plans to improve services for the disabled?
7. How will you expand capacity for mental health?
8. What changes will you make to the outline plans for reform of social care?

Environment and Transport

1. Do you agree it makes little sense to close activities in the UK that produce carbon if we import goods from abroad that use as much or more carbon? Will you substitute UK gas for imported LNG to cut CO2 output? Do you agree gas is an important transition fuel?
 2. Will you allow parts of the country that have plenty of new housing to choose their own local Plan to control future numbers, freeing more housing investment for places that welcome it?
 3. What are your plans to improve the railway as we move to a world where the patterns of rail use and demand have changed a lot?
 4. What is your vision for a greener and pleasanter land?
 5. How will you help more people achieve their dream of home ownership?
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Mr Sunak does want to raise company tax by 31%

The bloggers who come here to criticise everything I say attacked me for not saying Corporation tax will go up by 6% on Mr Sunak's plans.

If a company earns a profit of £100 it currently pays £19 tax.

Under Mr Sunak's plan the company would pay £25 tax.

The tax bill has gone up by 31% not by 6%.

Why do you always criticise everything I say even when it means you seek to deny basic arithmetic?

Even the Office of Budget Responsibility sees a case for tax cuts

After two years of demanding the biggest set of tax rises in recent U.K. history the Office of Budget Responsibility this week conceded their policies will slow the economy. Accepting this could go too far they reluctantly accepted there is a case for tax cuts to ease the squeeze!

Why has it taken them so long to see this? Why won't they acknowledge it is their large and wide ranging tax increases which are braking the economy along with the monetary tightening.

They go on to say tax cuts that boost investment are fine. A good start for that would be to cancel the Chancellor's ill judged rise in Corporation Tax which looks like a tax rise designed to push the U.K. well down the list of good places to invest. Better still would be to cancel the wicked tax on jobs, the National Insurance rise. This cuts living standards for employees and takes cash away from investing and employing more for companies.

Will Mr Sunak now change his mind as the official advice moderates.?When will he see we need to switch from tackling inflation to seeing off recession? Inflation will fall next year as a result of His big monetary and tax squeeze on top of the cost of living crisis.

The one good decision Mr Sunak took was to authorise the end of printing money. It is just a pity he had authorised yet more money creation in 2021

when the recovery was well set as it was bound to be inflationary.

[My intervention during the debate on the Restoration and Renewal for the Palace of Westminster](#)

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): Do we not also need some common sense and realism? Surely the priority is to do those works that are essential to the safety of the building and its occupants. We have to understand the mood of the times and say to the experts that to allow this enormous escalation in the project's cost, scope and timing is simply not acceptable.

Mark Spencer MP, Leader of the House of Commons: I honestly think we can do both. I think we can get to an understanding and a place where, with expert advice, we can get value for taxpayers' money, where we can progress this as rapidly as possible and where we can take a more common-sense approach.

The Commissions have taken all these points on board, carefully assessed the options and sought independent advice on the best way forward. The Commissions, with cross-party representation and independent and external members, have taken a unanimous decision that it is necessary to revise the approach to the governance and mandate of the R&R programme.

We need a governance structure that is responsive to the requirements of the parliamentary context, is accountable to Parliament and is better placed to build the necessary consensus. The Commissions have judged that this can be best achieved through an in-house structure. The Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act will remain in place and will continue to provide the statutory underpinning.

The current Sponsor Body will be abolished, and its functions under the Act will be transferred to two corporate officers who will become the statutory duty holders. [The Act](#) provides for this flexibility by allowing for the Sponsor Body to be abolished and for its functions to be transferred. The proposed in-house governance structure will consist of two tiers: a client board on which the two Commissions have strategic oversight; and a programme board with external expertise that will be central to resolving critical choices and priorities.

Time to show some urgency for leadership candidates

The task facing an incoming Prime Minister on September 5th is large.

The first dilemma is how to restructure the Downing Street operation. There are too many posts and senior people vying for PM attention and over loading the diary. Each time Boris was criticised for the behaviour and organisation he put in more people and posts. What does a new PM do to achieve a streamlined operation? Just on the political posts Boris had a Head of Policy, a Chief of Staff, a Minister of State, 3 Parliamentary Private Secretaries. Who could speak for him or who followed up the meetings?

Do we need a Cabinet Secretary, a Permanent Secretary Cabinet office and a Permanent Secretary Downing Street? We used to have just one. Do we need a Perm Sec Downing Street, a Principle Private Secretary and a chief of Staff?

The second issue is how to get the budget ready for a few days after 5 September that is needed now to see off recession and to ease the continuing fuel price squeeze.

The third issue is how to restore a strategic grip whilst delegating proper authority to Cabinet members and departments. The PM needs focus on a few central objectives, and needs to institute one on one meetings with senior Ministers to establish objectives and how the work of their departments fits into the strategy.

The fourth is to slim the legislative programme and output of departments . We legislate too much. Government interferes too much and presumes too much.,

The fifth is to inculcate a new Ministerial insistence of doing less and doing it better. Ministers need to lead their parts of the public sector to deliver more for less, to improve quality and user focus.

There needs to be a quantum leap in using the Brexit freedoms to improve our prosperity and growth.

The net zero revolution has to switch from top down based on bans, subsidies and taxes, to bottom up based on better products, better value for money and customer choice.

The new growth strategy begins with tax reductions.

Listening to the six remaining candidates last night I think they need to be more ambitious and understand the magnitude of the task ahead to transform our national fortunes.