

Votes matter

Today we will hear of the plans for the English local elections, the English Mayoral elections, the Scottish parliament and the Welsh and London Assemblies.

Last year the English Council elections were cancelled and Mayors got extra time in office. Elections at regular intervals are an important part of our democratic system. Elected people and governments need a reasonable time period of several years to exercise the powers they are given and to show whether they can govern well or not, serving the people who elected them. Whilst many elected politicians have a sense of public duty and wish to serve people well, the looming presence of an election concentrates minds. It makes the elected individuals show they have done what they promised and have offered good service in order to seek renewal of their mandate. It forces them into regular communication with those they serve and gives them an added reason to listen attentively to complaints and wishes from voters.

The debate about the timing of these important elections revolves around how much of a threat the virus will still pose to us in April and May. Will it continue to make door to door canvassing and conversations impossible? Will it continue to restrict our ability to go to a polling station? I would hope by May we would be able to hold elections with suitably social distanced contacts. If the experts are sure we cannot, perhaps we need to consider shifting the elections more onto a digital and postal mechanism.

Some will argue postal voting is too open to abuse, and will argue against universal postal votes. Some will complain if campaigning is via the internet with zoom public meetings and social media communications. Others will think this better than delaying or cancelling elections yet again. What are your views? Many Conservative voters in London are very keen to have an opportunity to vote for a different Mayor, and doubtless voters of other parties in various parts of the UK have equally strong reasons to want an election soon.