

SLOUGH CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

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President: Gurcharan Manku
Chairman: Lee Pettman
Deputy Chairman Political: Cllr Anna Wright
Deputy Chairman Membership & Treasurer: Cllr Wayne Strutton
Secretary: Christine Bamigbola

Monday 16th September 2019

To: Kevin Foster MP, Minister for the Constitution

Securing the Ballot

The need to accelerate reform to ensure the integrity of our right to vote

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you today to put forward our case for the need to ensure the Government includes an accelerated plan for implementing further reforms to our electoral system to secure the process of voting.

Our experiences in Slough, named as one of the top 'at risk' boroughs [by the Electoral Commission in 2014](#), are that issues with ensuring the integrity of voting have not gone away – and that more concerning, there is a significant proportion of voters who have lost faith in the ability of local authorities and Government to provide the right assurances around integrity.

Time and time again in the work that we do, residents report a wide variety of practices that take place locally here in Slough relating to election fraud and tampering, which whilst very difficult to prove, does not necessarily mean it isn't taking place.

Whilst opponents of voter ID reform argue that the number of convictions relating to electoral fraud remains low, we believe that this is the case because we do not have the right measures in place that allow fraud to be more easily detectable – and more importantly to deter fraud. Put simply, our voting system is just too vulnerable to manipulation that all too easily goes un-detected. The impact of this is what harms voter faith in the system.

As a result, we believe that now is the time to include an accelerated set of measures in the new Queens Speech next month – that will provide a real commitment that this Government is committed to tackling these issues – and to upholding and protecting our precious democracy. We would also welcome your short-term intervention to include Slough in any immediate decision over trials from next year's elections onwards.

We also would welcome enhanced action to strengthen policy in the area of Postal Voting in particular, and would urge you to consider the following options for doing so:

- Change Postal Voting registration from once-only registration to Annual re-registration in line with the regular annual electoral roll canvass conducted by local authorities.
- Introduce a deadline for Postal Vote completion return to the day prior to Polling Day, so as to reduce the impact of Postal Vote collections and verifications at the count on Polling Day.



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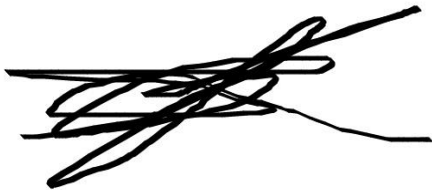
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- Introduce new rules to stop the sweep of post-boxes on Polling Day, restricting the use of Postal Votes to those handed in at Polling Stations on the day.
- Completely ban the handling of Postal Votes by any candidate at any time to ensure there is clarity in law.
- Stronger penalties for individuals found to have been involved in the manipulation of Postal Votes, including coercion, tampering and handling.
- Introduce more stringent requirements to document the outcome of Postal Vote verification, to ensure transparency for the public.
- Strengthen the hand of the Electoral Commission in being able to intervene to investigate potential irregularities with Postal Voting procedure by local authorities.
- Consider restricting Postal Voter registration to those with genuine need to vote from home; such as those with a disability, medical condition or the Elderly.

We look forward to working with you in developing this area of policy – and very much hope that you are able to make the progress voters need to ensure that their ballot really counts, particularly given the important context of Brexit.

Yours sincerely,



Lee Pettman

Chair, Slough Conservative Association

Cc:

The Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Rt. Hon. Lord Pickles



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