

Item 21: Notices of Motion

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 18 July 2024

- (a) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs:**

Proportional Representation

Overview

First Past the Post (FPTP) originated when land-owning aristocrats dominated parliament and voting was restricted to property-owning men.

Historically FPTP and the whole structure of elections, created absurd anomalies with the existence of “rotten boroughs” such as Old Sarum, Dunwich and Gatton. Old Sarum was by local reckoning “one man, two cows and a field” and yet returned two MPs to Westminster! Gatton, a village in Surrey, returned one MP yet had just one voter in it.

The 1832, 1867 and 1884 Reform Acts changed a lot of the more absurd abuses that surrounded the electoral system so vividly described by Charles Dickens in “Pickwick Papers”.

In 2019, 43.6% of the vote produced a government with 56.2% of the seats and 100% of the power.

Therefore, Council Notes that

- *Internationally over **90 countries** use either a form of Proportional Representation or a mixed system to elect their primary chamber.*
- *PR is already used to elect the parliaments and assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.*
- *PR ensures all votes count, have equal value, and that seats won match votes cast.*
- *PR would end minority rule.*
- *37 councils have already passed a motion to write to HM Government demanding a move to PR*
- *PR is the national policy of the Liberal Democrats.*

The Motion

This Council therefore resolves to write to H.M. Government calling for a change in our outdated electoral laws and to enable Proportional Representation to be used for UK general elections.

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(b) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor David Marsh:**

Companion Bus Passes

Council notes that:

Companion bus passes enable people with disabilities that prevent them travelling alone, such as blindness, to take a companion, free of charge, on their journey. This could literally transform the lives of some of our residents.

West Berkshire Council offered a companion bus pass scheme until the “austerity” cuts of 2016. However, neighbouring councils continue to offer companion bus passes, in some cases allowing reciprocal travel between different authorities.

Companion bus passes are funded, in full or in part, by central government so reintroducing them would not put a large financial burden on council tax payers.

By failing to enable all its residents to enjoy the benefits of bus travel, West Berkshire is in effect discriminating against some of them.

Council accordingly resolves to:

Reinstate a companion bus pass scheme in West Berkshire at the earliest possible opportunity.

Explore the possibility of reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring authorities.