

Electing a leader

There are many considerations in choosing a candidate to vote for. I see some on this site have already written off the full slate of 12 possible candidates. You need to live in the real world. The new PM will be an existing Conservative MP. The 12 include people with a wide range of talents and past successes and each would bring something different to the role. Choice involves compromise. No one gets everything they want in an ideal leader, or everything they support in the leader's programme. We are choosing someone who needs to be right for the nation, not just for us.

The assessment is a mixture of issues. Does the person broadly support the values you like? Do they have an outline programme of action to carry through those values? Does their past demonstrate an ability to overcome obstacles to seeing through important changes? Would they be able to earn the loyalty of enough support, and would they be confident enough to recruit a talented team of Ministers? Will enough of the public like or respect them?

The ability to communicate and carry people with them is important. It is no good having a good programme or great ideas if you cannot get elected to the leadership role or if you lack public support to retain office. Reading the public mood and making the right advances at the right time is a crucial leader's skill.

It will be a demonstration of leadership skill to emerge victorious from this crowded field. It is important the MPs present two candidates to the membership and that both agree to fight a good campaign to give members a clear choice. It will be a test of character and political skill as well as a judgement on two competing programmes.

The truth is a lot is potentially up for change and that could be a good thing. The other truth is the unelected governing establishment will be looking to circumscribe or control an incoming Prime Minister. Some of them see it as an opportunity to bin work on The Northern Ireland Protocol, human rights law reform, controlling our own borders, setting our own VAT and using the freedoms of Brexit.