

One rule for the Conservatives, another for the rest of us

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Author:

Why we must stand in more council elections

The merits of standing in a council by-election we have a chance of winning are obvious. So too for wards which we might hope to win in the future and where the by-election is a chance to accelerate that progress.

But there are also **huge benefits in standing even in wards that we are not likely to win** for a very long time yet (if ever).

One set of benefits comes from the **opportunity to practice, train and learn**. Winning elections isn't easy and some of the skills required are very hard to pick up outside politics.

So we should be using every opportunity to add to our experience, try out things and get better.

Even if we don't do very much, or any, campaigning, there is still the **chance for a new election agent** to practice getting the paperwork right. Or to **take a new person out on their very first canvassing session**. Steps such as those are if anything easier in a 'no hope' by-election as the pressure is much less and so you can concentrate on the learning.

Those benefits are specific to by-elections on their own. There are other benefits too, which apply even if you've got other elections on the same day – and to non-target wards in the usual run of elections.,

First, **it's good for democracy**. Having different parties put up candidates is the necessary condition for voters to make choices between them. The mere act of having your name on the ballot paper is a contribution to making democracy function – and democracy could do with all the contributions we can give.

Second, **it's good for voters**. It's deeply frustrating for many voters when they turn up to vote and see their preferred party isn't on the ballot paper. They may just feel frustrated (and crikey, do they feel frustrated as I know having had the job of fielding such complaints from voters in the past). Or they may also blame the party for, in their eyes, treating them with disdain

for not giving them a candidate to vote for. Frustration or frustration and disdain; either way, that's not how we should be leaving voters feeling.

Third, it's **good for the party**. One of the biggest challenges the Liberal Democrats face is [to build up a large group of loyal supporters who persistently support us](#). Our core support is much smaller than that of our main rivals – and we suffer for it. It makes us more vulnerable to bad times. It means we have further to go and harder to work to get to the winning post than rival parties with larger core votes.

Yet the one sure way to ensure people don't become persistent supporters is to insist that they should not be allowed to vote for us thanks to not putting up a candidate. **No Liberal Democrat on the ballot paper means us saying to voters: 'we refuse to let you be loyal supporters of us'.**

Standing also helps the party identify better where its support currently is, and isn't. Having a full slate of candidates across the board helps spot areas that can be promising to target and try to win in the future.

All of which is why even if being a candidate does not mean more than getting a name on a ballot paper, it's still a valuable contribution to make.

Hundreds of party members do that every May and in between at by-elections – thank you.

With next May's elections nearing, it's a terrific contribution you can make if you join them and ensure another vacancy has a Liberal Democrat name next to it come May.

And in the meantime, **let's contest as many council by-elections as possible.**

There is lots of support and resources available, for everyone from a possible first-time candidate through to an experienced agent working in a marginal ward. Do [get in touch](#) if you'd like to know more about how to access this.

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[International Aid: What Next](#)

Catch up on our Webinar with Jeremy Purvis and Layla Moran on International Aid after the Conservatives cuts.

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[Meet your candidates for Vice President](#)

Nominations closed for the Vice President with responsibility for Ethnic Minority election today at noon and six candidates had obtained enough nominations to appear on the ballot.

Those candidates* are:

Amna Ahmad who was nominated by 52 members and 1 local party

Roderick Lynch who was nominated by 65 members and 1 SA0

Tahir Maher who was nominated by 13 members

Julliet Makhapila who was nominated by 23 members

Rabi Martins who was nominated by 7 members and 1 local party

Marisha Ray who was nominated by 55 members

**Candidates appear here in alphabetical order by surname.*

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[Time for Conservative MPs to stand against sewage dumping](#)

We're calling out Conservative MPs that voted in favour of dumping sewage into rivers.

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