



Chloe Smith MP  
Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution  
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS

Kathy O'Leary  
Chief Executive  
Stroud District Council  
Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 4UB

Our reference: MC2020/18774

Email: [Kathy.o'leary@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:Kathy.o'leary@stroud.gov.uk)

15 December 2020

Dear Ms O'Leary,

Thank you for your letter of 12 November about the motion passed by Stroud District Council.

The Council has raised a number of important matters. I would comment that the choice of candidates to stand at elections is primarily a matter for the political parties, rather than the council, though we would like to see local government better reflect the communities it serves, at both officer and member level.

How we elect our representatives is of fundamental importance and I have noted with interest that the Council is seeking to trial a new voting system in its District Council elections. The Government's view is that the First Past the Post system is a well established and secure voting system, and is well-understood by electors. We are not persuaded that proportional voting systems bring the same benefits as the First Past the Post system.

The Government was elected on a manifesto commitment to continue to support First Past the Post and has no plans to change the voting system away from this process (including to hold a pilot), either for electing Members of Parliament or local councillors.

The Council has raised the issue of allowing job sharing of the elected councillor role. Elected representatives, be they Members of Parliament or local councillors, are elected as an individual to represent their constituents and by virtue of having been elected, are provided with the responsibility to participate in debates and vote in the relevant chamber on behalf of their constituents. Any changes to these procedures to allow for formal job sharing would need careful consideration to ensure a constituency/electoral area is represented in a consistent manner. The Government has no plans to make changes in this area.

The Government has no plans to lower the voting age, having been elected on a manifesto commitment to retain the current franchise at 18. The age of 18 is recognised in the vast majority of democratic countries as the age at which an individual becomes an adult. Accordingly, the vast majority of liberal democracies worldwide consider 18 the right age to enfranchise young people. This includes the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and almost all European Union countries.

I regret that I am unable to provide you with a more positive response to your requests for the reasons outlined above.

**Yours sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chloe", with a horizontal line underneath it. The signature is centered within a faint, light-colored circular stamp or watermark.

**Chloe Smith MP**  
**Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution**