

COUNCIL MEETING – 20th JULY 2022

NOTICE OF:	Reference No:	Date Received:	Date Forwarded:
White Paper	WP2	11/7/22	12/7/22

Submitted by:	Councillor Ann Forsaith
Relevant Board/Regulatory Panel:	Executive Board
Executive Member/Chair:	Executive Member (Resources)
Relevant Director	Chief Executive

This Council notes that the First Past the Post (FPTP) voting system originated when land-owning aristocrats dominated parliament and voting was restricted to property-owning men. In Europe, only the UK and authoritarian Belarus still use archaic single-round FPTP for general elections.

Council supports fair votes for all and further notes that:

- the UK's First Past the Post voting system curtails voter choice and leaves millions feeling unrepresented by their elected representatives. This growing disillusionment amongst voters is evidenced by low turn outs, particularly in local elections. These factors have contributed to dangerous levels of distrust and disillusionment with our democratic process.
- Proportional Representation (PR) is used to elect parliaments in more than 80 countries. Those countries tend to be more equal, freer and greener. PR ensures all votes count, have equal value, and that seats won match votes cast. Under PR, MPs and Parliaments better reflect the age, gender and protected characteristics of local communities and the nation. MPs better reflecting their communities leads to improved decision-making, wider participation and increased levels of ownership of decisions taken.
- PR would also end minority rule. In 2019, 43.6% of the vote produced a government with 56.2% of the seats and 100% of the power. PR also prevents 'wrong winner' elections such as occurred in 1951 when more people voted Labour than Conservative, yet the Conservatives formed the government.
- PR is already used to elect the Parliaments and Assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as London and the Welsh Senedd is reviewing legislation on Single Transferable Vote for local councils.
- There is a growing movement of supporters for Proportional Representation, with the Unite and Unison unions now backing PR.
- There is a range of options for implementing Proportional Representation systems, any of which would deliver a fairer and more representative democracy for electors.

Council believes

- that it is essential that faith is restored in our democratic system and that the public see both Parliament and Councils as fairly reflecting their views
- that our First Past the Post voting system is a significant barrier to restoring this faith which prevents the balance of opinion among the electorate being reflected in Parliament and local councils

- that a system of Proportional Representation in which seats match votes and all votes count equally would help to rebuild public trust by ensuring that all political views are represented in Parliament and local councils in proportion to their level of public support

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

Council further resolves to ask all the MPs who represent Leeds residents to support changing our electoral system to a fairer Proportional Representation system.

Cllr Ann Forsaith

Deadlines for submission

White Papers	- 10.00 am on the day before the issue of the Summons
Questions	- 10.00 am on Monday before the meeting
Amendments (including references back)	- 10.00 am on the day before the meeting

(All submissions should be made to Governance Services for receipt to be recorded and distribution made)
