

## **Council – 21 September 2021**

### **Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14)**

#### **Motion from Cllr Charles**

#### **Elections Bill**

#### **Council notes:**

Councils are responsible for organising all elections in England.

A recent Queen's Speech contained government proposals to require people to show identification including a photograph in order to vote in a General Election.

Allegations of electoral registration or voter fraud are very rare in North Somerset and the rest of the UK

#### **Council believes:**

Voting at elections is the cornerstone of democracy at both local and national level.

Participation in elections should be encouraged in all those who are qualified regardless of age, ethnicity or income.

Unnecessary barriers to voting are likely to reduce voter participation in elections, proper representation of all parts of the community and so legitimacy of those elected to office.

Voter ID is a solution without a problem and as such would introduce barriers to voting which should be of great concern to anyone who supports an open and effective democratic system of government.

#### **Council Further Believes**

That this is only a part of a series of measures including new restrictions on protest and assembly, the independent integrity of the Electoral Commission and restrictions to third party campaigning which threaten to potentially criminalise those who wish to collectively campaign against Government policy.

That an opportunity has been wasted to work to develop cross party action on foreign funding of elections, the promotion of voter registration initiatives, tackling concerns around social media in elections and the influence of the media.

That the protection of democratic principles can be something achieved through consensus across all parties and welcomes those like David Davis and Ruth Davidson who have expressed their concerns regarding the elections bill.

#### **Council Resolves:**

To oppose the introduction of photo ID as a requirement to vote at polling stations.

To declare a democratic emergency and work to ensure that the councils new engagement strategy includes support to encourage and nurture citizen engagement through non biased independently managed schemes such as educational initiatives for schools on civic engagement and voter registration drives that target groups who are often reluctant to register to vote.

To request the Leader to write to the relevant minister indicating this opposition to voter ID and the reasons why and requesting this measure is considered and amended or withdrawn in later stages of the bills progress

To further request that the leader make clear to government that any new free voter ID card issued through local councils should be fully funded as a new burden and to highlight the importance of having an accessible and straightforward system of application.