

10 September 2009

Dear colleague,

### Save General Election Night

You may have seen recent reports about the new cross-party campaign to Save General Election Night. A number of Electoral Returning Officers have decided to move the timing of general election counts from the evening of polling day to the next morning. There has been no proper consultation of political parties or the media.

The timing of a local election counts should, of course, be a matter for local discretion. Yet there is a need for a consistent approach for elections to a UK-wide, national body like the House of Commons, especially given the fact that general election costs are refunded by a central government grant. The delay by a few EROs of their counts ruins the efforts undertaken by those which do not.

At a time when interest and trust in politics is at such a low ebb, it would be a retrograde step to suck all the interest out of the most important and vibrant part of our democratic process. One only has to look to June's European Parliamentary Count to see how the whole process had all the impact of a soggy sparkler on Bonfire Night.

In this context, on behalf of the Conservative Party, I have endorsed the cross-party campaign to Save General Election Night. Detailed arguments in favour of keeping our traditional practices can be found on the Facebook campaign page: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=126713799469>

I would encourage all councillors to sign up to this Facebook campaign.

Secondly, you may wish to investigate the policy that your council is taking for the forthcoming general election (county councils excepted). If a Friday count is being proposed, you may wish to ask questions or table motions at your next Full Council, or at the very least, discuss the issues at your next group meeting.

Britain is crying out for change twelve years of Labour Government. The result of the next general election can't come a moment too soon.

Yours truly,

Eric Pickles MP  
Chairman of the Conservative Party