

Eric Pickles'
General
Election
Review
2017

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FOREWORD

On 8th June 2017, the nation went to the polls for a General Election. The result^{1,2} over the coming days was:

Party	Seats	+/-	Votes	+/-%	% Share ³
Conservative	318	-13	13,669,883	+5.5	42.4
Labour	262	+30	12,878,460	+9.5	40.0
SNP	35	-21	977,569	-1.7	3.0
Lib Dems	12	+4	2,371,910	-0.5	7.4
DUP	10	+2	292,316	+0.3	
Sinn Fein	7	+3	238,915	-0.2	
Plaid Cymru	4	+1	164,466	-0.1	
Green Party	1	0	525,435	-2.1	1.6
UKIP	0	-1	594,068	-10.8	1.8
SDLP	0	-3	95,419	0.0	
UUP	0	-2	83,280	-0.1	

The only numbers that count in a General Election result are the number of seats in the House of Commons. Yet within these figures there was considerable churning; both major Parties gained and lost what would hitherto have been considered “safe seats”. The Conservative Party’s performance in Scotland brought cheer to an otherwise glum night. Our overall vote share of 42.4%, was our best share since 1983.

So, in particular, how should we view this increase in our percentage share? Most obviously it, along with the increase in Labour’s share, is a return to two-party politics in England. In order to get a majority we need to squeeze the Labour vote in selective seats, and retain strong support in seats we currently hold. However, I believe that the true importance of our percentage share is the measure of the task we face, and the need for a fundamental re-evaluation of the way we organise and conduct our election campaigns to translate this increased vote share into a higher number of seats.

I have been a member of the Conservative Party for a few months shy of 50 years and I was a Member of Parliament for twenty-five years. Eighteen of those years were spent in opposition, working hard to get a Conservative majority government elected, so at this election I felt the loss of our seats, along with colleagues I had worked with, very keenly. That has not blinded me into the delusion that one thing caused our setback. Many of the problems we encountered have been present at previous general elections, in some degree or another. I hope that this is a frank and unblinking look at our Party, which will set a series of reforms in motion.

When the Prime Minister and the Party Chairman asked me to do this review, I wanted our Party to come out of the process stronger and more adept at campaigning, ready to take on our

¹ BBC Online, accessed 28 September 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2017/results>.

² Parties with no MPs in either the 2015 or the 2017 are excluded.

³ Parties below 1% are excluded.

opponents and win. That is why in this report you will not find blame and recrimination, you will not find sensational stories about what went wrong behind closed doors. The recommendations speak for themselves, without spin.

Of the 126 recommendations there is one thought that threads through them all: canvassing, targeting and campaigning is not just about getting our Conservative message across, of equal importance is listening to the electorate and the people of our great island nation. The strength of our Party over the years is that it has always spoken for our people. In the coming months, we shall be judged on our leadership on Brexit, the economy, our place in a turbulent world and the many difficult social issues facing us. To do that, we need to be present in the country as a whole, and for our country to be unambiguously certain that we are listening and acting decisively on its behalf.

At this election we faced a united left that supported, in a co-ordinated way, the Labour Party. We will need to encourage and co-operate with people and organisations on the centre right who share our beliefs in freedom, responsible markets, enterprise, social justice and the rule of law. The battle for ideas that moved through our country, when I joined our Party five decades ago, was decisively won and the benefits are now taken for granted. Our task is to show that Conservative values offer our country the best chance for prosperity, social justice and security, by looking to the future and not to examples from the past.

Over the past few weeks I have spoken to, and read submissions from, hundreds of people at every level of the Party. I have interviewed in-depth most of the key players at CCHQ. In that endeavour, I received the valuable help and advice from: Graham Brady, Rob Semple, Nus Ghani, Patrick McLoughlin and Mick Davis. All of them hold important positions within our Party, but it was clear that our common membership and shared desire for the betterment of our Conservative Party was the main driving motive of their contribution to the review.

All the Review Panel share a sense of optimism, we believe that our Party is in a mood to address the defects and deficiencies of our electoral machine, building on its strengths and adapting to the new. We can come out of this process stronger and better, but we will need to be brave, radical and modern in our reforms.

It is my sincere hope that these recommendations, whilst addressing some of the problems of the campaign will make us stronger, more united and more able to face the challenges ahead.

So let me start with my first recommendation:

1. *That the Party undertake an exhaustive review after each and every major election, win, lose or draw. There are always lessons to be learned.*

Eric Pickles

Conservative Party Member

SEPTEMBER 2017

MANIFESTO AND MESSAGING

Overview

When a Parliament is close to its full term the process for writing and developing a manifesto is well established. Policy groups within the Parliamentary Party and the Voluntary Party, through the Conservative Policy Forum (CPF), provide ideas and suggestions. The Party's Principal Minister/Spokesman will take these ideas and suggestions forward, along with others, for consideration in the Manifesto. The Prime Minister/Leader directs the theme of the Manifesto and instructs individual and cross-cutting initiatives. These issues are tested and examined, and third parties are engaged. By this method, there is common ownership of the Manifesto, although ultimately the Prime Minister/Leader retains the final say as to its contents.

Clearly, where a sudden election is called, particularly when it is the early months of a Parliament, many of these procedures will not be fully engaged. Common ownership and unity surrounding the Manifesto is essential. We make recommendations on writing a Manifesto in these circumstances, and policy development generally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2. So far as is practical the Parliamentary and Voluntary Party, though CPF, in a sudden election should have an opportunity to make suggestions for inclusion in the Manifesto.*
- 3. A Manifesto Committee should be established and, in Government, consist of the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Party Chairman/Chief Executive, Chief Whip and up to three others appointed by the Prime Minister. In opposition it should consist of the equivalent office holders.*
- 4. Secretaries of State/Principal Spokesmen must be consulted on all items concerning their responsibilities before inclusion in the Manifesto.*
- 5. Where the Secretary of State/Principal Spokesman disagrees with such items, he/she may refer it to the Manifesto Committee of the Cabinet/Shadow Cabinet, which shall make recommendations to the Prime Minister/Leader of the Party. The Prime Minister's/Leader's right to retain the final say as to the content of the Manifesto is unaffected.*
- 6. Prior to the Prime Minister/Leader approving the Manifesto, the Manifesto will be discussed at the Manifesto Committee.*
- 7. Preparation for the next Manifesto shall start no later than 12 months after the last General Election. The aim would be to make this as public and transparent as possible, so that the public feel part of the process of ideas and the Party feels ownership.*
- 8. The launch for planning the next Manifesto should be at the Spring Forum of the Conservative Party 2018.*
- 9. In planning the Manifesto, it shall always be a priority to directly explain the relevance of the policies, and crucially on how they affect peoples' lives.*
- 10. The Manifesto should be produced in accessible formats, as soon after the main launch as possible.*
- 11. Third-party endorsements of the Manifesto proposals are desirable.*

RE-ESTABLISHING A CONSERVATIVE YOUTH ORGANISATION AND ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Overview

The Conservative Party's longevity and relevance are firmly based on speaking for the whole nation, not being the captive of a particular interest group or sector. It follows that it should have a philosophy and policies that speak to every generation.

The inefficiencies and the failure of socialism are a distant memory to a new generation. The benefits of a market economy are taken for granted, without appreciating the reforms and struggles to achieve its success.

Young people must feel that the Conservative Party is on their side. Not only on the side of first time voters and students, but also those in their twenties and thirties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. *The Conservative Party must have a vibrant youth wing. The Party needs to radically reform and update Conservative Future.*
13. *Young people must be represented at all levels of the Party, therefore it is encouraged that there should always be a person below the age of thirty on the Board.*
14. *A local Conservative Association may not adopt a parliamentary candidate unless there are two people below the age of thirty present and voting at the adoption meeting. By-election rules will apply to the selection where an Association fails to meet this requirement.*
15. *The Party should offer programmes of personal development for young activists, including bursaries and subsidies to attend training, courses and Party events.*
16. *The Party shall establish a cross-cutting group to consider policies to help and assist young people. Additionally, a strategy should be drawn up to explain its relevance as they start their careers and build their families.*
17. *Before a new policy is announced, there should be active consideration on its relevance to young people.*
18. *The Party should encourage young people to be involved in a rejuvenated official youth branch of the Party, as well as conservative movements.*
19. *CCHQ should support associations in recruiting and retaining more young activists.*
20. *The Party must make the case for Conservatism to the next generation, and identify the right Party representatives and media to deliver this message.*
21. *The Party should enhance the programme to encourage younger people to become Conservative councillors.*

INTIMIDATION AND HARASSMENT

Overview

There were consistent reports of high levels of intimidation, verbal and online abuse experienced by candidates and Conservative volunteers at this election. This intimidation ranged from the destruction and vandalism of Conservative posters to physical intimidation and verbal and online abuse.

Such levels of intimidation and abuse have not been experienced before, and concerns were raised that both in the Party and in other bodies there were not sufficient support available, nor were there processes for reporting and addressing these experiences. Intimidation threatens our free and democratic society.

Social media also played a significant role in the intimidation of Conservative supporters and activists during the campaign, and the levels of online abuse and trolling were difficult to combat.

It is essential that the Party is robust in dealing with any abuse, which is intended to discourage members of the Conservative family from engaging in the democratic process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 22.** *CCHQ to establish a clear procedure and guidance for candidates and volunteers experiencing abuse online.*
- 23.** *The Party Chairman should work with the Police and the Electoral Commission to ensure that any allegations of intimidating behaviour are taken seriously and can be dealt with accordingly.*
- 24.** *CCHQ should offer a dedicated hotline and email inbox, with a senior named person responsible, so that candidates and Associations can report incidents of intimidation to the Party.*
- 25.** *All relevant CCHQ staff should receive additional training and guidance on how to deal with intimidation both from a pastoral and practical point of view.*
- 26.** *CCHQ to provide a best practice guide for candidates, Associations and volunteers on how to deal with intimidation, and how to report incidents to the necessary authorities.*
- 27.** *The Party should build a network of volunteer lawyers and former law enforcement officers who can give advice on how to most effectively deal with and report the abuse to the relevant authorities.*

CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS (CCHQ)

Overview

Even with a fixed-term parliament, CCHQ must always be ready to fight a General Election. This is particularly true when there is a hung parliament. Clearly, it is not possible or affordable for CCHQ to be on a permanent election footing, but we must make sure that we are better prepared for sudden elections going forward.

It must be unambiguous who is responsible for the preparation and the running of the election campaign.

CCHQ must establish a strong partnership with local associations to ensure there is an effective flow of communication leading up to and during General Election campaigns. The Party is always fighting elections so the following areas should always be well resourced: field campaigning professionals across the country, voter data and communications, volunteer mobilisation, research, candidate selection and support, and digital campaigning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 28.** *The Party Board should regularly assess the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.*
- 29.** *As is the usual practice, the Prime Minister/Leader shall appoint the Party Chairman and the Party Board shall appoint the Party's Chief Executive/Chief Operating Officer. The appointment of joint Party Chairmen is discouraged.*
- 30.** *The Party Chairman shall be in charge of all election campaigns. Part of that function can be delegated (e.g. local government elections, the day-to-day conduct of a General Election campaign and by-elections).*
- 31.** *The Party Chairman may appoint, after consulting the Party's Chief Executive, a Party professional(s)/consultant(s) to run any part or the whole of the campaign. Notice of the appointment shall be given in writing by the Party Chairman to the Prime Minister/Leader of the Party, the Chairman of the 1922 Committee and the elected Chairman of the National Convention.*
- 32.** *The Party Chairman shall from time to time draw up plans to get the Party Organisation ready for a General Election, so a core team is capable of being scaled up at short notice.*
- 33.** *The plan shall, in all circumstances, include attack and defence seats, which shall be regularly monitored to assess a realistic outcome.*
- 34.** *Planning for the next General Election must begin no later than 12 months after the previous election.*
- 35.** *The Party Chairman will report at least annually to the Party Board on the readiness of CCHQ to fight a General Election. The closer to the known date of the election the more frequent shall be the report.*
- 36.** *A list of target seats (falling into the categories of attack and defence) should be drawn up within a year after a General Election, and continuously reviewed throughout a fixed-term parliament.*

- 37.** *In Government, it is the Prime Minister's decision whether to seek to call an early election. The Party Chairman shall report to the Prime Minister on the readiness of the Party Organisation to contest the election.*
- 38.** *The Party Chairman and anyone appointed under recommendation 31 shall have free and unimpeded access to the Prime Minister/Leader during a General Election, and reasonable access for planning leading up to a general election.*
- 39.** *There should be robust and trusted lines and methods of communication between CCHQ and local associations that build a proper partnership. Strong emphasis in both theory and practice should be placed on the two-way nature of the relationship.*
- 40.** *A senior person in CCHQ should lead on third-party engagement and relationship building, ensuring the Party is working and communicating with them on key policy areas.*
- 41.** *CCHQ must be involved in the planning and management of the political grid.*
- 42.** *The Party should look at ways to engage with non-voters and run campaigns to increase voter registration.*
- 43.** *CCHQ needs to increase its capacity to provide rapid rebuttal to developing stories and key themes.*

SELECTION OF CANDIDATES AND SUPPORT

Overview

Candidate selection was held back as new parliamentary boundaries were expected before the scheduled 2020 General Election. Over a two-week period during the General Election, senior volunteers, association officers, members and CCHQ staff facilitated the screening, selection and nomination of 650 candidates. This was a tremendous challenge for all involved.

More than anyone the Candidate represents the Party locally. Their conduct, character and pronouncements reflect, for good or ill, on the Conservative Party beyond the locality. It follows that their leadership qualities are a vital component to any successful campaign.

Ours is a mobile society, and while geographical location must never be the sole qualification of candidacy, all candidates must be “local” in their attitudes and outlook. They must immerse themselves into local life, getting to know local organisations, societies and institutions. They should be, along with local councillors, the bridge between the Conservative Party and third-party organisations.

Ours is a diverse society and Conservatives must reflect modern Britain. Increasing the number of women, BAME, and people from a variety of backgrounds who stand as Conservative candidates must be a priority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 44.** *In a fixed-term parliament, it is strongly encouraged that a Member of Parliament would give two years notice to their local association if they intend to retire at the next general election.*
- 45.** *Early adoption of candidates is always very desirable, especially in regards to parliamentary, Police and Crime Commissioners and Combined Authority Mayors. Parliamentary candidates should be in place in battleground seats by June 2018 to ensure they are well-established within the seat before the next scheduled General Election on 5th May 2022.*
- 46.** *The parliamentary candidate shall have the responsibility, alongside the officers of the Association to build an election team and to ensure there are sufficient local resources to implement an election plan.*
- 47.** *The parliamentary candidate shall have the responsibility, working alongside local councillors, to maintain contact with third-party organisations within the constituency, keeping them informed of Conservative policies. The parliamentary candidate shall keep the Party informed, via CCHQ, of local concerns. A candidate’s effectiveness in devising and maintaining a local third-party network shall be monitored and supported by CCHQ.*
- 48.** *To strengthen the partnership between the Association, the new parliamentary candidate and CCHQ, a formal contract shall be entered into by the candidate, which will specify their responsibilities and time commitment. It will also outline what support they should expect from the Association and CCHQ.*
- 49.** *The Party Board shall provide a draft contract for new parliamentary candidates.*
- 50.** *All parliamentary candidates should be paired up with a sitting Member of Parliament who can act as a mentor.*
- 51.** *The Party should strengthen the bursary scheme available to candidates to encourage more working class and disabled candidates to become Members of Parliament.*

BLACK, ASIAN AND OTHER ETHNIC MINORITIES (BAME)

Overview

Modern Britain is made up of many diverse communities, which have long established roots in our country going back decades and in some cases centuries. Collectively they form our British identity and values. Without that diversity, Britain would be the poorer.

Our Party has always reflected and supported British values; it follows that to be effective as a political party we must attract support across all communities and stand firmly for equality of opportunity for everyone as individuals.

The Conservative Party has made great progress over the years to engage with BAME communities, but it is not enough and we must do more. We should celebrate the diversity of modern Britain, and remove barriers so that everyone can enjoy and feel part of being British. Ours must be a Britain that everyone should feel pride in.

While it is convenient to speak of BAME communities in the context of inclusion, our message must always be framed in terms of addressing an individual fellow British Citizen.

It follows that it must be a high priority, and that diversity is evident at all levels of the Conservative Party.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 52.** *The Party should appoint a Vice-Chairman for Diverse Communities, and should consider that person being represented on the Party Board. The Vice-Chairman for Diverse Communities should work with the Outreach Department to contact the different communities that will keep the Party nationally and locally in touch.*
- 53.** *The Vice-Chairman for Diverse Communities shall draw up a rolling ten-year strategy of engagement, with an intermediate point coinciding with the next General Election. The Outreach Programme should be generously funded for the whole of the ten-year programme.*
- 54.** *The Vice-Chairman of Diverse Communities shall be responsible for ensuring that at all major community events that is a senior Conservative representative present. It is hoped that colleagues from the Lords, Commons and local government will enthusiastically cooperate with this aim.*
- 55.** *The Party shall continue to consider how every individual, regardless of background, is affected by its policies, and how it can communicate those benefits in the most effective manner.*
- 56.** *The Party should actively encourage parliamentary and council candidates from diverse communities, and ensure through our training programmes that such potential candidates get priority.*
- 57.** *As has been effective with Women2Win, the Party needs to further develop a strategy to increase the diversity of candidates, including those from BAME communities.*
- 58.** *Mutual mentoring schemes should also be developed on the lines of Women2Win.*

- 59.** *CCHQ should ensure the Outreach Department is well resourced, so that it can become a major force within the campaign aims of CCHQ.*
- 60.** *Professional staff shall continue to work with the Outreach Department to find effective and innovative ways to engage with BAME communities around the country.*
- 61.** *The London Zone should have a dedicated BAME Engagement Officer to support the entire team.*

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Overview

Effective campaigning must be maintained outside of election time, activists who are not members must be better engaged, and volunteers in seats without a Conservative MP must be better harnessed.

Training and development of Associations, key activists and professional staff need to be improved. Our staff and activists, whether they be MPs, Candidates, Councillors, Association Officers or key activists deserve to have the best training and personal development possible. The Party needs an actual and virtual “Swinton” type training facility.⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 62.** *New national training scheme to be established to train and develop the capacity of Associations, councillors and volunteers.*
- 63.** *The training scheme will include e-learning for improved access and standardisation of training across the country.*
- 64.** *The training scheme will assist associations in efforts to train and develop Association Officers and build succession plans for these roles.*
- 65.** *Priority shall be given to the establishment of a training and personal development programme for all selected candidates.*
- 66.** *Training and development should become a key function of CCHQ. The Head of Training should be a Director level appointment, and supported by a team to deliver on training along with the Vice-Chairman for Training.*
- 67.** *The Board of the Party should receive a regular report on training and development.*
- 68.** *The Party should investigate the feasibility of a full-time training facility.*
- 69.** *The Field Team should move to a new Area Campaign Structure to allow professional staff to develop stronger relationships with the Voluntary Party and elected officials.*
- 70.** *The Party will establish a career path for long-term field employment within the Conservative Party, which will include a professional qualification in electoral law, regular training and programmes in campaigning and personal development.*
- 71.** *CCHQ should review the retention of campaigning staff following General Election campaigns, and immediately increase field capacity, including the hiring of a new batch of campaign managers who are trained and prepared to fight local and parliamentary election campaigns.*
- 72.** *The Party should maintain a significant number of well-trained and resourced Campaign Managers across the country.*
- 73.** *Campaign Managers should receive training support from CCHQ but it should be expected that Associations will provide financial support to fund their positions.*
- 74.** *The Party should introduce for all its employees, both in the field and at CCHQ, a programme of Continuing Professional Development.*

⁴ Swinton was a training college set up in 1948 and active until 1975. Lord Swinton provided a base for the college and 54,000 Conservative activists, agents and other students were trained there.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Overview

The importance of social media has grown exponentially over the last two General Elections. No political party can hope to succeed without a savvy and continuous monitoring and assessment of its online presence. Past success is no guarantee of future success. Contacts need to be renewed, built on and replaced. In a rapidly changing world, it is a vital way of ensuring the Party's voice is heard.

Separate and distinct strategies should be devised for each social media programme. Having a Social Media and Digital Engagement Team is of equal importance to having a top flight Communication Team. In both the Party should seek to attract the best.

If elections are in part to be played out via social media, all our parliamentary and local representatives need to have the training and resources to campaign effectively in this medium. Social media activity should be an integral part of any local campaign.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 75.** *CCHQ should urgently upscale the Digital Department, including hiring a new Digital Director and in-house graphic designer to better employ rapid response and to create compelling content and drive engagement.*
- 76.** *Digital engagement must be at the heart of the Party, and the Digital Director should be involved in the senior meetings across the Party to ensure he/she has access to the Leader and senior Conservatives.*
- 77.** *Off-line and online communication must be integrated, and all literature should have a digital element to it.*
- 78.** *CCHQ must re-implement "Share the Facts," or some version of it, and build a large bank of content. We should be continuously looking for new ways of engaging with our activists and the public.*
- 79.** *When creating new content, a heavy emphasis should be placed on constantly testing messaging variants with different voters. Even if the Party is not currently in the midst of an election campaign, the Digital Department must still be testing, iterating, and learning.*
- 80.** *Graphically driven emails and testing must be utilised better, and happen throughout the political cycle.*
- 81.** *The Party should consider refreshing the website. Utilising what the Party learns from content testing, a new data-driven design should then be implemented. As many variants as possible should be rigorously tested. The website should be fully accessible.*
- 82.** *Training in social media campaigning should be delivered to activists as well as professional staff.*
- 83.** *As part of all campaigning, CCHQ should produce social media material that can be shared by professionals and activists.*
- 84.** *CCHQ should employ social media software to undertake social media listening.*
- 85.** *Third-party engagement and promotion of our social media is desirable.*

BRIEFINGS AND CAMPAIGN LITERATURE

Overview

At every election, a centralised General Election Literature Pack is an important tool in delivering easy to use templates for standardised materials.

A centrally-produced pack can be particularly useful in a snap election when candidates have less time to create their own literature. Literature in the pack contains space for national content, which allows the key campaign messages to be included in literature across the country. At its most effective, it strikes the right balance between national and local content, which allows for personalisation and should be easy to access and use.

CCHQ is also responsible for producing effective briefings for candidates and campaigners on the key issues of the day.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 86.** *CCHQ should increase the amount of online tools to produce effective local campaign literature, throughout the political cycle.*
- 87.** *There should be increased training on producing effective local literature within local Associations.*
- 88.** *The Blueprint website should get increased resilience to cope with additional users at peak times.*
- 89.** *The Conservative Research Department (CRD) should increase the support made available to candidates for local briefings and localised national messaging.*
- 90.** *Additional resources should be made available for rebutting opposition attacks and campaigning on a local level with dedicated support from CRD for campaigns.*
- 91.** *Constituency-specific briefings should be made available throughout the entire political cycle.*
- 92.** *It is desirable that nationally-produced materials and templates allow for greater amounts of local content and personalisation.*

DATA, TARGETING AND RESEARCH

Overview

Segmentation and the targeting of voters is now a crucial part of modern political campaigns. At its best, the targeting of voters will be based on a broad base of data, which the Party collects continuously from canvassing, surveys and outside companies such as Experian. In the 2017 campaign, the Party had very little base data to go off in some of the seats that were targeted.

Voter targeting is becoming ever more sophisticated and the Party needs to keep up with this fact. Volunteers need to be mobilised, trained, and have a full understanding of why their canvassing, their survey deliveries and their phone calls are so crucial to the national data and targeting efforts. Despite the obvious advantages to targeting, the Party needs to be wary of becoming too obsessed or blinkered by micro-targeting.

In addition to this, CCHQ needs to maintain a robust research programme, which will drive our messaging priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 93.** *Investment in and development of target voter models must be a priority throughout the political cycle.*
- 94.** *Message research and testing must be part of the ongoing research programme and should be driven from CCHQ.*
- 95.** *The Party must undertake a comprehensive value study in line with the study conducted in 2013.*
- 96.** *The Party should be testing policy propositions against an up-to-date value study.*
- 97.** *Provisions should be made for the Party to always buy the marked register in all constituencies after an election, especially General Elections, and this should be input by the Party (local associations and CCHQ) as soon as possible.*
- 98.** *CCHQ should maintain up-to-date party support scores for all electors, all year round. This would allow for identification and tracking of emerging trends in support that are not picked up by either national polls or VoterID.*
- 99.** *Demographic and attitudinal segmentations of the electorate to be produced and mapped to VoteSource, to enable constituencies and CCHQ to produce segmented, and tested, communications and material for different people.*
- 100.** *Procedures are required for us to have a better understanding of the impact of very late changes in the electoral register, including the likely demographics and support levels of those groups who have a record of registering late.*
- 101.** *CCHQ should expand the in-house analytics team responsible for analysing trends in voter behaviour, canvassing data and impact testing, providing real-time reports and analysis for senior campaign staff.*
- 102.** *There should be better training, clearer guidelines, and VoteSource functionality, to enable local constituencies to analyse their own VoterID and changes in voter registration.*
- 103.** *In future campaigns, CCHQ internal reporting of field intelligence must be more structured to allow for a more empirical based evaluation of VoterID and doorstep 'feel'. This would mean local intelligence would be a more valuable input to both strategic and targeting decisions.*
- 104.** *The party must value volunteers by training, explaining and encouraging the collection of canvassing data on an ongoing basis.*

CAPACITY & CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Overview

The Conservative Party's strength and enduring relevance is based on representing the whole country. It follows that it should have a presence and a vibrancy in all part of our nations. While this is particularly true in Conservative held and target seats, it is also true of opposition held seats.

The General Election showed that there is a clear campaigning deficiency in many parts of the country, which needs to be urgently addressed. Put simply the Party needs to rapidly upscale its presence on the ground with more members and volunteers involved in campaigning both between and at election time. Priority should be given to target seats, both attack and defence.

To be a viable campaigning force our activist base must become more balanced in age grouping, attracting new and younger members who are both engaged and trained in election activity.

A strong campaign support strategy is vital to compensate for the differing levels of resource across Associations and to ensure help is received in the seats that need it most. Campaign support must work for both target Associations and those asked to support them. It remains important that campaign support not be provided to the detriment to the Association from which the additional support comes.

Campaign support worked most effectively where long-term relationships were established as part of the campaign support programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 105.** *The Party needs to better value volunteers, and a successor to Team2015 needs to be developed by CCHQ and put in place by 2018 local elections. This should include Head of Volunteer Mobilisation with the authority to implement the research on what drives people to join, get and stay involved with the party.*
- 106.** *CCHQ, in conjunction with the Voluntary Party, to launch a volunteer and membership drive, backed up with research, on what drives people to join, get and stay involved in Party politics.*
- 107.** *Associations to be offered a capacity assessment by the Head of Volunteer Mobilisation appointed under recommendation 105, and to jointly agree phased and realistic targets for volunteer and activist recruitment. An incentive scheme should be agreed to strengthen the partnership between CCHQ and local Associations.*
- 108.** *The Party Board should commission an annual report from every seat on the levels of volunteers, activists and resources. The Board shall receive support from CCHQ to produce this report where it is needed.*
- 109.** *The implementation of central administration of party membership must remain a priority, and this must be supported by a sufficiently resourced Membership Department at CCHQ.*
- 110.** *The Party should look in to the way third-party opposition campaigns were run, in particular looking at their social media activities.*

- 111.** *The Party should create and maintain lines of communication with centre-right groups. Those groups that share our values of freedom, enterprise and the rule of law are a welcome counter point to those groupings that wish to undermine our democracy.*
- 112.** *Stronger Associations should be encouraged to sponsor Campaign Managers in nearby target seats.*
- 113.** *Area Chairmen, with CCHQ support, should hold regular meetings with all Associations to analyse capacity in terms of activists, funding and other campaign resources.*
- 114.** *Local election campaign support arrangements must be in place by the end of the year in preparation for the elections in 2018.*
- 115.** *Following the Local Elections in 2018 CCHQ will propose campaign support arrangements for the next General Election.*
- 116.** *Where possible, constituencies receiving campaign support are encourage to assign, in agreement with the campaign support providers, specific geographical areas such as a ward.*
- 117.** *It is encouraged campaign support pairing should be done both with the strategical need and with geographical distances in mind.*
- 118.** *As per the Party Constitution, the data held by the Conservative Party is owned by the Party, e.g. Associations and CCHQ, and is overseen by the Party Board. All are responsible for keeping data secure and following data protection legislation. Although it should be assumed that safe seats will support neighbouring Associations, there should be no restriction on VoteSource or any other software resource during an election campaign that will restrict any seat's ability to either access that data or campaign in their seat.*
- 119.** *Ask the Party Board to consider ways in which MPs can have access to the Party membership lists in a similar manner to candidates.*

INCUMBENCY

Overview

Incumbency campaigning and MPs being active, and active locally, is a crucial driver of votes in an election.

In addition, effective incumbency campaigning increases capacity and election preparedness. A permanent Campaign Manager role within an Association greatly increases the effectiveness of incumbency work and increased capacity.

It is important that incumbency is considered in all areas of CCHQ campaigning and any work is done in conjunction with Campaign Managers in defence seats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 120.** *An increased Incumbency Department within CCHQ shall provide dedicated support and resources to MPs, and where appropriate, candidates and associations with advice on literature and other materials, capacity building and fundraising.*
- 121.** *MP Incumbency Toolkit should continue to be built on, and templates not already on Blueprint should go live on Blueprint as soon as possible.*
- 122.** *Funding should be made available to MPs, and where appropriate, candidates and Associations, so they can bid for bespoke projects.*
- 123.** *Reoccurring projects, such as MyPlan, should be established in all seats identified under recommendation 36, and the Incumbency Department should create guidance for all other seats on how the plans work.*
- 124.** *All CCHQ Departments should produce an annual report to the Chairman on how they are supporting incumbency.*
- 125.** *The Party Board should receive as part of the annual report on General Election preparedness a report on incumbency.*
- 126.** *Research and polling should be conducted into how incumbency factors can be most effectively used in Conservative held seats and to measure the effectiveness of campaigns deployed.*

SPECIAL THANKS

- *My Review Panel – Graham Brady MP, Rob Semple, Nus Ghani MP, Sir Patrick McLoughlin MP and Sir Mick Davis.*
- *The 6,000+ members who took the time to respond to the Comprehensive Membership Survey.*
- *The 400+ members who attended regional meetings with the Party Chairman and Deputy Chairman. Rebecca Corbett and the Field Team for organising these regional meetings, and Amanda Sater and Patrick for their feedback from these events.*
- *The 500+ individuals (Members of Parliament, councillors, candidates, peers, senior volunteers, members, staff, donors and third-party groups) who shared their views and suggestions.*
- *The members of the senior campaign team whom the Review Panel interviewed.*
- *The 169 volunteers, candidates, MPs and association staff in key seats who were interviewed by the Review Team (Craig Aston, Gaj Wallooppillai, Harriet Arbutnot, Rachel Oldham, Shannon Holland-Houghton, Sian Tierney, Stephanie Dyke and Tori Peck), totalling 340+ hours of conversations.*
- *Line Kristensen and James Kerby for their patience and professionalism in putting this report together.*