



Our Ref: MFCNMP/0265

Damian Eaton  
Democratic Services, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council  
Town Hall, Stockport  
SK1 3XE

29 October 2018

Dear Mr Eaton,

Thank you for your letter of 1 October, advising of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council's resolution to support the lowering of the national voting age, as well as your letter to the Prime Minister on this matter.

The Government has no plans to lower the voting age, having been elected on a manifesto commitment to retain the current franchise for parliamentary elections at 18. This age is recognised in the vast majority of democratic nations as the age at which one becomes an adult. Full citizenship rights – from buying alcohol, to betting, to voting – should be gained at adulthood. For similar reasons, you have to be 18 years of age to sit on a jury.

We ought to be clear that the position in Scotland and Wales is a consequence of the devolution settlements, which rightly allow the Devolved Administrations to take decisions in their competences. It is right that the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly decide the voting age for their elections, as it is right that the UK Parliament decides on the voting age for its elections. The franchise for referendums is debated by Parliament on a case by case basis.

The Government fully recognises the importance of engaging our young people in decision making and we are working in partnership with numerous civil society organisations, including Bite the Ballot, British Youth Council and Operation Black Vote, to increase democratic engagement among young people across the UK. The Government is also taking the opportunity to use high profile events, such as the Suffrage Centenary and National Democracy Week, to further encourage this. Regarding education, Citizenship has been a compulsory subject in maintained secondary schools in England since 2002. It remains the responsibility of the devolved administrations to oversee and deliver education and other programmes in Scotland and Wales

I hope the above provides a clear rationale for the Government's position.

With best wishes,

Chloe Smith

**Chloe Smith MP**

Damian Eaton  
Democratic Services  
Town Hall  
Stockport  
SK1 3XE

REF: 10002/NM

31 October 2018

*Dear Damian,*

**RE: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Motion – Votes at 16 across Local Government Elections, Devolved Elections and Referenda**

Thank you for your recent letter in relation to the above.

Like you, I firmly believe that young people should be involved in the decisions that affect their community and have a say in changes to the world around them.

I have seen this demonstrated clearly by the Youth Combined Authority, which represents young people from communities across Greater Manchester (including Stockport). Their commitment to their city region has been notable as they work to improve their communities and develop specific policies proposals, including a 'Curriculum for Life' that will prepare young people for adult life.

The UK Youth Parliament's Make Your Mark initiative has also provided a strong case for extending the franchise. This year, 41.9% of eligible young people (aged 11-18) in Greater Manchester voted on their priorities for the coming year. As I am sure you will appreciate, this level of turnout is higher than many 'real' elections, and provides an important insight into what matters to our young citizens.

For these reasons, and the valuable contribution young people can and do make to our national debate, I am pleased to support the Votes at 16 campaign.

*Best wishes,*  
*Andy Burnham*

Andy Burnham  
Mayor of Greater Manchester

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