

Public Questions

Question A – Matthew Broadley of Chatham will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Vince Maple, the following:

“The 2021 census indicates that there were 2,041 residents unable to vote in local elections in Medway in 2021. It is likely that this number is now higher. These people live, work, study, make use of public services, and call the UK their home. Many foreign-born residents in Medway from EU and Commonwealth countries can vote in our local elections. Yet, voter registration levels are low, and this is often due to the complex eligibility rules that make registering to vote inaccessible to residents. Over 1 million residents across England & Northern Ireland do not have a right to vote.

Migrant Democracy Project are inviting local councils to pass their motion on the right to vote for all residents, as set out below:

“This Council notes:

- *The right to vote is the most important foundation of our democratic system. Yet, we do not yet have a universal franchise.*
- *That all residents, no matter their nationality, bring significant value to the area.*
- *One in six usual residents of England and Wales were born outside the UK.*
- *Over 1.2 million residents across England and Northern Ireland do not have a right to vote at all and 4.4 million residents do not have the right to vote in General Elections.*
- *2,041 residents do not have the right to vote in Medway.*
- *Scotland and Wales have extended the franchise to allow all residents with lawful immigration status to vote.*
- *Over 50% of people agree that every resident, no matter where they are from, should have the right to vote at least in local elections.*
- *21 local authorities across England have passed motions asking for the right to vote to be extended to all residents in local elections.*

This Council resolves:

- *Write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the relevant shadow frontbenchers requesting that the franchise for local elections be extended to all qualifying foreign nationals in England and Northern Ireland in the upcoming Elections Bill in line with eligibility criteria in Scotland and Wales.*
- *Write to the local Member(s) of Parliament asking for their support ensuring that the upcoming Elections Bill includes the extension of franchise to all residents in local elections.”*

Will the Council today commit to supporting this motion and joining 21 other councils across England & Northern Ireland to support this initiative?”