

Notice of Motion from Councillor Dean: Exit from the European Union

Council recognises that there is continued uncertainty over the UK's future economic and social relationship with the Continental members of the European Union. It does not wish to see economic harm being caused to businesses and their employees in the Uttlesford district, such as those at Chesterford Research Park and those at Stansted Airport.

Council wishes no harm to be caused to residents, especially those of younger generations, who wish to maintain their ability to visit, study and work in this and neighbouring countries.

Council calls upon the Saffron Walden Member of Parliament, Mrs Kemi Badenoch, to take responsibility for the future wellbeing of the people of this district by striving at Westminster to find a way through the current uncertainties over Brexit to ensure that local people's futures will not be harmed.

Council also notes that recent polls suggest that public opinion in this district, as well as nationally, is shifting away from leaving the EU towards a majority of people favouring the UK retaining its membership of the European Union.

Therefore, in the event that Parliament cannot reach an outcome from its current and forthcoming deliberations that will give a high confidence of maintaining or improving the wellbeing of local people, Council calls on Parliament to check again the will of the people by conducting what has become known as a People's Vote to confirm the present will of the people.

Proposer's speech

Madam Chairman

I have known many national crises in the years since World War II. But none has divided the country so deeply, and potentially damagingly, in the way the split over Brexit is damaging relationships within families and between friends.

Choices are often difficult. Moving home can be a traumatic experience that needs many more than one time for making choices and decisions. The first step is deciding to move. Deciding where to move to comes next--- and usually takes much longer.

In June 2016 the country voted narrowly to move; to leave the EU. The Saffron Walden constituency was split down the middle with a smaller division at 50.7% for Brexit.

At the end of October Survation for Channel 4 polled Leavers and Remainers across the country as a whole and in this constituency. A month ago the local Leave vote polled at 47.5% for Leaving; down 3.2%.

Last Saturday I joined a group of people in Saffron Walden's Market Square. They were sounding out local opinion on the government's proposed solution for terminating this country's membership of the European Union.

113 shoppers responded to two questions. Firstly, they were asked what they considered to be the best outcome from the Government's negotiations for the United Kingdom.

7% backed the Prime Minister's and Government's deal with the EU.

7% backed walking away from the EU with no deal.

86% backed remaining in the European Union.

Even allowing for people who refused to participate, that is a massive margin now favouring Remain.

Saturday's shoppers were also asked how our country's future should be decided.

1% trusted the Westminster Cabinet to decide.

9% trusted MP's in the House of Commons to decide.

90% of local people wanted a People's Vote to decide so they could decide.

Since local surveying like this began in September this year, the percentage wanting a People's Vote on the Brexit destination has climbed steadily from 6-in-10 to Saturday's 9-in-10 result.

I have heard people say that having another referendum would be undemocratic and divisive.

I accept that it would be divisive, but the country has already been divided. It would no doubt be stressful. But crashing out of the EU will be divisive and damaging for the people we represent. If our national politicians haven't the courage and imagination to come up with an outcome that will not harm younger and future generations, we have a duty to put the question back to the people.

The claim that a new vote would be undemocratic is pure nonsense. Democracy did not end in June 2016. We have general and local elections every 4-5 years. People have a right to change their mind if they wish to do so.

A People's Vote will not be on the same question or questions. We all now know much more about what Brexit will mean for this country. We know it won't, as we were told in 2016, be a piece of cake. We know there is a limit to how far the EU-27 will bend the rules to suit a country that wants to go its own way.

There are MPs who would be willing to walk away with no deal and making the best of whatever chaos ensues. I suspect they are mostly well healed people who will rise above or gain from other people's misery. At the other end of the spectrum, there are MPs who never believed in Brexit and still don't. They are said to be in the majority, but dare not ignore the 2016 referendum, especially in strongly Leave areas.

I don't know the present view of our local MP, Mrs Kemi Badenoch. She is telling constituents she is reading the documents. I remember she was a Brexiteer back in 2016. Maybe, she is aware that local opinion has shifted. Is she being more cautious now?

Whatever Mrs Badenoch now thinks, if you agree this motion, the Council will be offering her a way forward by letting the people of Uttlesford and the Saffron Walden Constituency have a say on our future relationship with our Continental neighbours; whether that should be by staying within the EU or by leaving it with a deal yet to be identified.

When you decide to move house, you don't buy the first place you see. You make an offer on somewhere that seems to fit the bill. You then have a survey carried out. You read it carefully. Your choice may be just right, but the survey may throw up warnings. When confronted with the real choice, you at least think again. Most people either find somewhere else to live or they stay put.

That's where the people of Uttlesford seem to be with Brexit. So, please let us support them in deciding where to move to, now they know much more about the choices before them, their families and those who come after us.

Alan Dean