Chloe Smith MP
Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS

To: Members of the Parliamentary Parties Panel

22 January 2021

Dear Colleague,

Doorstep campaigning during the national lockdown in England

As you will be aware, in recent weeks there have been media reports about political campaigning activity during the national lockdown in England. I am writing to provide some advice to political parties to reflect the UK Government's position.

Current national lockdown restrictions in England, say: "You must not leave, or be outside of your home except where necessary". The Government's view is that these restrictions do not support door to door campaigning or leafleting by individual political party activists. It is widely accepted that voters can continue to get campaigning information remotely. In order to reduce transmission of covid-19 infection, door to door campaigning *at this point in time* is therefore not considered essential or necessary activity.

I hope that you will all agree that it is essential that we reduce the infection rate, protect the NHS and save lives. I would ask that all parties follow this advice, and ensure that your supporters are aware of this position.

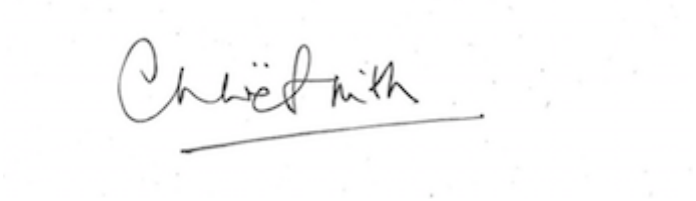
More broadly, as I have stated to Parliament, the Government is currently reviewing how May's local elections can be successfully delivered in a covid-secure way. The Government is analysing the public health situation and continuing to support the necessary logistics to hold a covid-secure election, and will update Parliament in due course on our plans. The date of the elections is set in primary legislation, and will remain so unless Parliament determines otherwise. I recognise that there has been speculation about any change of date but there is rightly a high bar for any further postponement, considering that polls have been postponed for a year already, and that voters deserve to have their voices heard. I would observe that other countries have successfully held elections of late, and a number of countries are planning elections over the next few months. Elections can be run safely.

It is our intention to provide further guidance in due course, including more detailed advice on appropriate conduct in the run up and during an election period itself. This will include advice on the nominations process. We must ensure a level playing field for those standing for election, protect the integrity of our elections, and help voters to have confidence in these elections which are important civic events despite the challenging circumstances.

I am keen to continue to work with both political parties and election administrators on these matters, and the Cabinet Office will do so, alongside other partners including the Electoral Commission. We are also, of course, liaising with our counterparts in the devolved administrations.

I am placing this letter on gov.uk, so the Government's position on campaigning during national lockdown is clearly accessible.

Yours ever,



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