

Next week many towns and cities go to the polls for local elections.

In St Helens, we have no local elections this year after our move to 'all out' elections giving us four years stability and time to get on with the job of delivering the manifesto on which we were elected.

The next scheduled elections for St Helens residents are in 2024, with Metro Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner votes taking place – and a General Election too.

For those elections and for all future ballots the Tory Government have decided that everyone will need an accepted form of photo identification in order to be able to vote at a polling station.

It's an attempt by the Government to fix a problem that simply doesn't exist. Voter fraud is almost completely non-existent in the UK. In the 2022 elections, according to the Electoral Commission's own figures, there were just seven cases of voter impersonation reported at polling stations – and every single one was dismissed.

The requirement for photo ID only risks denying many people the right to vote.

Our elections team is working hard to put plans in place for future votes, and you can find all the latest information – including which forms of photo ID are acceptable, and how to apply for a free 'Voter Authority Certificate' – online at [www.sthelens.gov.uk/elections](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/elections), by calling them on 01744 646464 or emailing [elections@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:elections@sthelens.gov.uk).

The photo ID plans are just the latest example of a Government out of ideas – and hopefully, soon, out of time.

I always try to give credit where it's due – and the recent £20m Levelling Up funding we've secured for Earlestown and the £25m Town Deal funding we won for St Helens is welcome. But it's a drop in the ocean compared to what they've taken away from us year on year, and they've let us and the country down in countless ways.

We have so much potential.

Just this week I welcomed a trade delegation from India to our borough to present to them the Glass Futures project and other significant investment and trade opportunities.

We're working hard to put St Helens on the map regionally, nationally, and internationally – and with a Government focused on things that actually matter instead of pandering to lobbyists and the right wing media we could flourish.

Best wishes to all Star readers.