The impact of the 2011 referendum on local election campaigning

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A controversial aspect of the UK referendum on voting reform for the House of Commons that took place on May 5 2011 was the decision to run it concurrently with scheduled elections across much of the country. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (where local elections were also taking place) these were elections to the devolved institutions while in England, with few exceptions voters would be participating in local council elections. Critics of this policy believed that synchronous polling hampered proper debate about the merits of changing the voting system. Others approved, believing that holding the referendum on this date reduced the costs of campaigning and would eventually assist voter turnout. In respect of turnout there is little doubt that the strategy worked – the boost was highest where devolved elections occurred, smaller than that where local elections were happening and in areas like London where only the referendum vote took place turnout was lowest. It is reasonable to suggest that instead of a national turnout of 42% a referendum-only vote would have been smaller – substantially lower than that at the referendums that preceded devolution and comparable with that which endorsed the creation of a London mayor and elected assembly. It does not appear from the aggregate data, therefore, that the electorate became highly mobilised by the referendum issue but more did vote than might have done if it had been held separate from the local elections.

Synchronous elections have become a feature of the UK electoral landscape over the past two decades and certainly do affect voter turnout. Every general election since 1997 has coincided with local elections, leaving the latter to struggle for media attention but conversely having the effect that more voters participate. In turn, the relatively high turnout (compared with European only elections) at local elections has caused local council contests to be moved from May to June in both 2004 and 2009. As a consequence of this increasing trend local parties and their candidates have become accustomed to sharing their campaigns with candidates and parties seeking other kinds of votes.

The 2011 campaign, however, was a rather different situation to that which had gone before. Previous campaigns were run on strictly party lines – local parties and activists were campaigning simultaneously to promote and elect both local councillors and their counterparts in the UK or European Parliament. For the referendum on voting reform there was not necessarily a clear national party line that local party activists could or would follow.

The Liberal Democrat leadership reasoned that while the Alternative Vote was not a system of proportional representation it was better than simple plurality and should be supported on that basis. The referendum vote was at first portrayed as a pivotal moment in the party's history, a once in a lifetime opportunity to ditch the despised first past the post system, but when it became clear that the vote might be lost it was also stated that the outcome would not become a coalition breaker. While it was felt that rank and file members would toe the party line there are always questions that have to be asked about the relationship between the Liberal Democrat leadership and the average member (Bennie, Curtice & Rudig, 1996). Their partners in the national coalition government adopted the contrary position with the Conservative Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues virtually unanimous in undermining the case for AV as a replacement for the current system. A small group, Conservative Action for Electoral Reform, campaigned in its favour (even making their 'Conservative Yes to fairer votes' leaflets available for other parties to distribute) but local Conservative party associations and rank and file members appeared to be strongly against change.

There was, however, no clear national position within the Labour party and therefore no clear instruction for local activists to follow. The party leader, Ed Miliband, openly endorsed the Alternative Vote (churlish not to, given his own unexpected success under AV rules for the party leadership) along with some prominent members of his shadow Cabinet. Other shadow Cabinet members took a contrary view and were backed in their opposition by some senior party members, including former foreign secretary Margaret Beckett who became president of the 'No to AV' campaign. Both the Scottish

National Party and Plaid Cymru favoured reform as did Sinn Fein and the Social Democratic Party in Northern Ireland but Unionist parties there were against. On the ideological right the United Kingdom Independence Party favoured the switch to AV but the British National Party took a contrary view. In short, to a significant extent the preference for or against AV cut across party and ideological lines.

Inevitably, the debate over the merits of AV became entangled with the local and devolved election campaigns. Although the respective Yes and No camps (each modestly staffed and financed) courted and received national publicity (whilst the Electoral Commission prepared and delivered to every household an information booklet that was strictly neutral in tone) the ground war was necessarily conducted by local party activists and candidates that were also fighting quite separate campaigns. The referendum campaign can be assessed in a number of different ways - the imbalance between each side's funding and expenditure, the voters' knowledge about AV and their decision choice, the geography of support for and against reform – but it is also important to gain some understanding of how the local campaign might have impacted upon the electorate.

Sensing an opportunity to learn more about the execution of a referendum campaign at the local level we inserted some questions about it in our annual Local Election Candidates Survey. This survey asks people who have just stood in a local election to reveal, *inter alia*, details about their campaigning activity. In 2011 we asked whether or not candidates had also delivered any literature about the proposed change to the voting system, whether such literature promoted a Yes or No vote, and finally, whether and how candidates had voted in the referendum itself. Examining past surveys makes it possible to consider how the 2011 campaign compares with other types - local election only (2006, 2007, 2008), joint local/European (2009) and synchronous local/general (2010) campaigns. The aggregate turnout data suggest that voter interest was modest despite the potential for a major constitutional change.

These findings suggest some reasons for this apparent lack of voter engagement.

The first section outlines the reliance that electors have upon information cues provided by national political elites and party leaders, a reliance that is greater when the election is at least a second order one, and the growing importance of local campaigning. Following this we describe how the Candidates' Survey is compiled and the questions that sought to examine the extent and nature of campaigning activity both generally and specifically in relation to the referendum issue. The survey evidence is used to describe first some characteristics about people that stand as local candidates, before considering the effort expended in fighting for council votes and whether or not in 2011 that was combined with activities centred on the referendum question. The analysis focuses principally upon differences among candidates' activity according to their party but also asks whether or not those that are already elected and perhaps benefit from first past the post have a stronger loyalty towards the *status quo* than others competing for election.

Campaigning in low information elections

Research shows the nature and extent of voters' dependence on information cues from political parties when framing attitudes and opinions, especially when they relate to positions on complex policies (Alvarez & Brehm, 2002; Boudreau, 2009; Dalton, 2007; Goren, Federico & Kittilson, 2009; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). Vital information short-cuts are necessary if voters are to engage with and participate in the electoral process although it is not always possible to describe how cues about complex policy are mediated by voters with varying degrees of political sophistication.

It seems that the costs to voters of acquiring a reasonable understanding of the issues that surround referendum questions sometimes places even more dependence upon these political and party elites (Anderson & Goodyear-

Grant, 2010; Christin, Hug & Sciarini, 2002; Denver, 2002; Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Freire & Baum, 2003; Hanley, 2004; Hobolt, 2007; Krasovec & Lajh, 2004; Leduc, 2002; Mendelsohn & Cutler, 2000; Mikkel & Pridham, 2004; Pridham, 2007; Qvortrup, 2005; Rallings & Thrasher, 2006; Rallings, Thrasher & Cowling, 2002; Soberg & Tangeras, 2007; Stratmann, 2006; Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2004; Tolbert, Bowen & Donovan, 2009; Tranter, 2003; Tverdova & Anderson, 2004; Uleri, 2002). There are, however, mixed messages about how citizens engage with referendums that address issues involving the intricacies of voting systems (LeDuc, 2009; Levine & Roberts, 1994). It follows, therefore, that in the absence of either clear national party positions and/or cues about the consequences of a resulting Yes/No vote at the 2011 referendum many voters' ability to engage with the referendum campaign will have been compromised. Moreover, campaigning efforts will have been similarly affected with some local parties unsure about which position, if any, to adopt and whether to become actively involved by circulating referendum-related literature.

There is little doubt, however, that in recent years the effect of locally directed campaigning has grown as the strength of party identification has declined (Denver & Hands, 1993; Denver & Hands, 2004; Denver & Hands, 1997; Fisher, Denver & Hands, 2006a; Fisher, Denver & Hands, 2006b; Johnston & Pattie, 2003; Johnston & Pattie, 1995; Johnston & Pattie, 1997; Pattie & Johnston, 2009; Pattie et al., 1994; Pattie & Johnston, 2010; Whiteley & Seyd, 1992; Whiteley & Seyd, 2003). In 2011, therefore, many voters, unsure about their preferred party's precise stance on electoral reform might have been more reliant than usual upon locally delivered messages about how they should vote on the issue. The delivery of those messages, however, would be contingent on the level of agreement about AV amongst the local party members. All this points to a picture of uninformed voters, many of whom with a relatively weak sense of party identification looking for but not necessarily receiving information cues from local election candidates. In such circumstances a party that could organise its activists to a greater degree than its competitors would achieve a considerable competitive advantage.

Surveying local election candidates

The Local Election Candidate Survey began in 2006 and candidates from all principal local authorities in England and Wales (London boroughs, metropolitan boroughs, shire districts, shire counties and a range of recently established unitary councils) have now been surveyed[1]. In 2009 local council elections were re-scheduled from the normal date in May to coincide with elections for the European parliament held in June. In 2010 local elections coincided with the general election.

Candidate names and addresses are randomly selected from nomination lists published by each local authority. Up to and including the 2010 survey candidates were asked to complete a postal questionnaire but in 2011the survey was conducted online. Sampling procedures vary according to the number of candidates that are contesting in a given year. In 2009, for example, because the number of candidates was relatively small, the random selection interval alternated between one in two and one in three. By contrast, in 2007, when many more candidates contested, the sampling interval was closer to one in ten. In 2010 we over-sampled among candidates contesting London borough council seats but this is controlled for in any comparative analysis. The normal target for each postal survey is to select randomly the names and addresses of approximately 3,000 candidates with a view to obtaining at least 1,000 usable responses. Because the 2011 survey was conducted online and because of an expected lower response rate we factored this into sampling. In 2007, the corresponding point in the local electoral cycle, more than 28,000 candidates contested over 10,000 seats. Since nomination lists become available on an authority by authority basis we had to estimate beforehand the number of candidates that might be contesting and

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[1] Local authorities in Scotland are excluded because the Scottish Parliament commissioned its own survey of local election candidates. See MacAllister, I. (2003) *National Survey of Local Government Candidates.* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Social Research. Available. These

select an appropriate random selection procedure. A sample of one in six candidates was used and produced a list of 4,503 candidates. Our initial target had been to contact 5,000 candidates (assuming a response rate of 20% this would provide approximately a 1,000 responses) but there was a smaller than anticipated number of candidates in 2011.

Prior to 2011, questionnaires were posted on the day of the election and timed to arrive while the election experience was still fresh. The 2011 candidates were sent instead a letter (again posted on election day) that described the purpose of the survey and contained an internet address which they should type into their browser and which would take them to the survey. The letter also stated that if internet access was providing difficult or was unavailable for whatever reason then a candidate wishing to respond to the survey invite should contact the Elections Centre by telephone or by mail. A relatively small number (about 30) did so and were either given verbal instructions about accessing the web-based survey and/or were sent a questionnaire to complete and return by post. A total of 899 usable replies, a response rate of 20% were received by the end of June 2011.

The response rate is lower than that recorded for previous surveys which range between 44.1% in 2007 to 31% in 2009. In common with earlier surveys we also considered issues of response bias. At the time of writing the only known characteristics of candidates contesting the 2011 elections are sex, party and local authority (both the specific authority and the type of council, e.g. shire district, metropolitan borough etc.). After comparing respondents with the candidate population the 2011 data are weighted by party and by local authority type.

Since 2007 the questionnaire has sought to identify the nature of local election campaigning, particularly in respect of each candidate's personal election material and the extent to which that is delivered to households.

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authorities now employ the Single Transferable Vote rather than simple plurality voting to select councillors.

Unfortunately, over successive years it has proved difficult to maintain a standard battery of questions because of space constraints or simply of the changing electoral context (i.e. European/general election). An Appendix describes the campaign related questions that apply for each year's survey and which are referred to in this paper.

Candidates and local campaigning in 2011

Table 1 provides a broad picture of candidates that fought the elections in 2011; weighted and unweighted counts are shown but column percentages are for weighted data. Men out-number women two to one, a ratio consistent amongst local candidates since the mid 1980s. Age data are divided into four roughly equal categories with a mean candidate age of 55 years, a year or two lower than in previous surveys – the under-representation of younger people is regarded by candidates as more of a pressing issue than that of women or candidates from minority ethnic backgrounds. Non-white candidates continue to be under-represented but particularly so at this part of the local electoral cycle where contests for the English shire districts dominate. Almost one in three of candidates that fought in 2011 is now retired from work, four in ten are in some form of paid employment whilst a relatively high proportion is self-employed. A majority of candidates hold at least one degree-level qualification while three-quarters are or were in some type of professional or managerial employment. These social characteristics broadly reflect the responses from previous surveys (Rallings et al., 2010). In short, candidates are atypical of the general population, particularly in terms of the under-representation of women, younger people and ethnic minorities and the over-representation of professional/managerial occupations and those with a university qualification.

Table 1 here

The survey asks candidates whether they are resident in the ward that they contest. A narrow majority of the 2011 candidates were and this conforms to the general pattern (only in London do non-residents outnumber residents as election candidates). Fewer than expected Conservative candidates responded to the survey (hence the weighting) with Labour members rather more enthusiastic participants, reflecting perhaps the tenor of the election outcome. Almost two-thirds of candidates have been party members for more than five years with a further quarter members for more than a year. About one in eight is a recent member (joined within the last year). Recent surveys have shown that about four in ten candidates are contesting a local election for the first time but in 2007 that figure was only 25%. The 2011 data suggest that more experienced candidates are perhaps being replaced by a newer (though not appreciably younger) cohort. One in five respondents was an incumbent seeking re-election while another third is what we term 'serial' candidates – people who contest on more than one occasion but for whom regular defeat is no deterrent to continuing participation!

The 2011 survey asked about a range of campaign and canvassing activities. The latter activity would have been directed towards either getting election promises to register for and complete a postal vote or on election day to get to the polling station. Here, we concentrate mostly on the time and resources spent delivering campaign literature since any information about the referendum would more than likely have been delivered simultaneously with this material. Table 2 shows the proportion of candidates producing some form of campaign literature and its delivery. About eight in ten prepared campaign literature but this varied considerably by party. Conservatives, who already out-numbered their opponents, invariably produced a leaflet but only seven in ten Liberal Democrats did so, only marginally higher than the proportion found amongst candidates contesting either on behalf of smaller parties or as Independents. It is possible, of course, that candidates might not deliver their own leaflet and so we also ask about the candidate's own involvement in the actual delivery process. In more than nine in ten cases and across all parties the candidate delivered leaflets. Most active on the

candidate campaign trail were Conservatives and those people contesting for one of the smaller parties but the differences between them and Liberal Democrats and Labour is rather small. Main party candidates, it appears, have fellow party members joining them in leafleting but minor candidates did not or could not call upon similar assistance. Although a similar proportion of Conservative and Liberal Democrats candidates helped fellow members contesting neighbouring wards Labour candidates were more likely to be drafted into other wards to help with the delivery of campaign literature.

Table 2 here

It is important to compare this campaign activity with previous years but because of changes to questions we are cautious about generalisation. One comparison is with the 2007 survey evidence since this is the equivalent point in the local electoral cycle.. Then, the mean number of hours a week spent delivering leaflets was 11.8, (median 10 hours) slightly higher than that found in 2011. The difference is admittedly small but it certainly does not suggest that the prospect of also delivering literature about the referendum persuaded candidates to spend more time on this part of the campaign process. In both 2009 and 2010 a slightly different question was used, with candidates being asked to state how many hours they had spent campaigning in what had been joint elections for the European Parliament and House of Commons respectively. When local elections coincided with the general election each candidate campaigned for an average of 18 hours per week (median 14 hours). In 2009 time investment was higher – an average of 19 hours (median 15 hours) although analysis (Rallings et al 2011) suggests that this increase was less associated with the coincidence of the European Parliament elections but rather the fact that geographically dispersed county council divisions were being fought that year. The most valid comparison with the 2011 data is to sum the hours spent delivering leaflets with the time spent on canvassing activities. This shows an overall mean of 17.3 hours (median 12 hours) which is not a substantially smaller amount of time than that directed towards the joint local/general election campaign. On the face of it this appears to suggest

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that on average candidates' enthusiasm for the campaign battle was little diminished in 2011 but how much of that enthusiasm was being channelled into the referendum?

Table 3 here

Because each survey asks candidates whether they had prepared a leaflet, whether they delivered that literature and third, what proportion of households in the ward or division would have received campaign literature it is possible to compare years in terms of this level of activity. Table 3 shows that about eight in ten candidates in 2011 produced a leaflet, similar to the proportion at the same part of the local electoral cycle in 2007. With the exception of the county council elections in 2009 these mainly shire district contests saw local Conservatives at their most active. Labour and Liberal Democrat candidates were not quite as conscientious in preparing campaign literature. Unsurprisingly, candidates that have campaign literature then become involved in delivering it although the performance of Liberal Democrats was a little below the levels found at both the European and general election years. It is, perhaps, the final part of Table 3 that provides a stronger sense of comparative campaign coverage – the percentage of candidates that reported delivering their campaign literature to all households.

Even Conservative candidates appeared to fall back from the 2007 position with just 79% delivering to all addresses compared with 89% four years earlier. Both Labour (from 83% to 62%) and Liberal Democrats (88% down to 73%) reported a reduction in campaigning measured in terms of households leafleted. There are, of course, competing explanations for this (the policy may be deliberate and reflect more strategic use of resources, it may be a reflection of a decline in the number of party activists willing to deliver literature etc.) but it does suggest that although candidates were still accumulating campaign hours the message was by no means reaching the entire electorate.

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Given that a clear majority of almost four fifths of candidates (higher amongst Conservatives) were delivering local election campaign literature (albeit not to all households) there was an obvious opportunity to deliver referendum literature simultaneously. The survey asked whether candidates had/had not delivered such literature and in cases where they had whether the leaflet's message had been pro or anti-reform (we allowed for the outside possibility that candidates were delivering literature that was neutral in tone – 8 candidates reportedly did so). Alternatively, for respondents that had not delivered any literature referring to the referendum we wanted to discover whether or not they had been asked to do so.

Table 4 here

Table 4 summarises the findings in respect of referendum campaign literature that was delivered by candidates, both generally and after controlling for partisanship. More literature against the change to AV was delivered than in favour although there is just an eight point difference when all candidates are taken into account. What is perhaps most surprising in the light of campaigning activity generally is that *half of candidates did not deliver any literature at all*. A rather large proportion, 46% of candidates were not asked by their party to deliver literature while 5% were asked to become involved but declined the invitation. Although all (or virtually all) households would have been in receipt of the Electoral Commission's leaflet explaining the referendum question and the mechanics of AV it appears that the ground campaign that might have provided additional cues to voters was severely restricted. True, the national media were covering the campaign but the survey evidence (combining Tables 3 and 4) suggests that less than half of households with local council elections in England were in receipt of referendum literature.

It should be noted that Conservative candidates would have been much more visible in the 2011 campaign than each of their main rivals. More than nine in ten vacancies was contested by a Conservative, a higher proportion than the

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seven in ten featuring a Labour representative and six in ten seats where a Liberal Democrat was challenging.

After controlling for a candidate's party some rather interesting features emerge that are best viewed in the context of the national party's position. First, Conservative candidates, more numerous than their rivals in contesting seats, were both more engaged in campaigning simultaneously with the referendum question and were overwhelmingly endorsing the leadership's dislike of AV. Only 3% either campaigned for the other side or stayed neutral, the same proportion took the brave line of refusing a request while only one in eight was not asked at all to deliver referendum literature. Conservative candidates were highly mobilised campaigners favouring a No vote in the referendum. By contrast, the Liberal Democrats (who fielded many fewer candidates than did the Conservatives) who might be expected to be equally persuaded of the merits of a Yes vote were less mobilised by the local or national party machine. A quarter (almost twice the proportion amongst Conservatives) were not asked to deliver referendum-related material leaving just seven in ten delivering literature that advocated a change to AV.

Labour candidates potentially might have corrected this asymmetry in campaign activity given their leader's view that AV would improve democratic accountability. Instead, the reality among local Labour parties it appears was a lack of engagement with the referendum issue. More than eight in ten were not asked to deliver any literature but only a fraction declined an invitation. Nevertheless, at least amongst the small fraction (one in twelve) that did become active the pro and anti-reform camps were evenly divided – reflecting the schism within the national party! Minor party candidates, although pro-reform when sides were taken, were similarly disengaged from referendum campaigning. Taken as a whole this evidence suggests that a rather large fraction of the electorate would have been heavily dependent for information and voting cues upon the national referendum campaign and media coverage of it.

Prior to the referendum there was much discussion about the potential impact of an AV system on the conduct of politics which, following revelations about MPs' expenses, was regarded by many as overdue for change. A different voting system would become part of a modernisation process that addressed broader constitutional change, including some form of direct election for the House of Lords and the ability of constituency voters to recall recalcitrant politicians. On the other hand a clear majority of those already elected to the Commons took the view that AV would be a step into the unknown and probably best avoided. Was there any evidence, therefore, that local candidates might be taking sides according to their status? Would incumbents who relied on simple plurality to win their seats be resistant to change while first-time candidates would be more likely to embrace the idea of change to the voting system?

Table 5 here

Table 5 examines referendum campaign activity across four candidate categories. Just under half of first time candidates were not asked to deliver literature but when they did so were more likely to campaign against AV. By contrast, incumbents seeking re-election were more active in the campaign with only a third not involved. Incumbents (largely Conservatives) were certainly more likely than not to be delivering literature that urged voters to reject electoral reform. Liberal Democrat incumbents were leafleting with a different story but, of course, in rather smaller numbers than their Conservative counterparts. There was more of a balance amongst the 43% of candidates that had been councillors and who campaigned with referendum literature but over half of this group was not asked to do anything at all.

This growing sense that the referendum on voting reform was a rather minor feature on the local campaign landscape is borne out by a question that sought to understand the degree to which local election candidates had become irritated by the other issue. Just 22% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed

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with the proposition that the national referendum had dominated the campaign while 60% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this suggesting.

Although many candidates, it appears, ignored the opportunity to distribute referendum literature they did participate in the referendum vote. Although a small number would not reveal this information a rather large majority had voted. Interestingly, the vote choice among candidates vproduced a reverse of the national result - 60% voting Yes and 40% opting for No (Table 6). It is clear that overwhelmingly Liberal Democrats had voted Yes, thereby supporting the party line. It is unsurprising perhaps that Labour candidates would reflect the divisions within the national party but a move to AV was supported two to one. What is surprising, perhaps, is the relatively large proportion of Conservative candidates, one in five, that ignored the position taken by the Prime Minister and most of his Cabinet colleagues and instead cast a Yes vote.

Table 6 here

Mindful of the number of respondents within the different vote categories we sought to examine further these voting patterns. A candidate's age, sex, educational attainment and employment status appeared to offer no purchase in explaining differences but when we controlled for occupation (recalling that candidates generally are drawn heavily from professional/managerial occupations) some possible reasons for the pattern of referendum voting amongst candidates are suggested.

Table 7 here

Table 7 reveals that Conservatives from professional occupations were solidly No voters but only two-thirds of their colleagues with skilled occupations toed the party line. The professional classes among Labour's ranks were well represented in the Yes camp but such voters were rarer among their colleagues in the skilled/partly skilled occupations. These figures should be

interpreted with care, however, but comparisons with the BES post referendum survey evidence would be interesting.

Conclusions

The explanation for the referendum vote outcome is rather complex, of course, with the evidence from the local election campaign supplying another piece in the jigsaw. In a low information election with voters more reliant than usual on cues from political and party elites in deciphering the nature of AV and its likely impact on the composition of a future House of Commons there was more than a hint of confusion about national party lines (mainly but not exclusively meaning Labour) and, it appears, an over-reliance on the national rather than a locally communicated campaign. The evidence that emerges from the 2011 Local Election Candidates' Survey is that for probably a whole variety of reasons many candidates and their parties simply did not engage with electors about the referendum. There was no appreciable decline in overall campaigning activity and the comparison with the 2010 data shows no evidence of a post-general election hangover with candidates using that event to curtail their activities last May. However, there is no question that opportunities to deliver literature that might have endorsed one side or the other of the AV debate were ignored. Quite simply, those electors claiming to understand AV and its consequences that information was more likely to be gleaned first-hand from national rather than locally supplied resources.

Not all electors were ignored locally, of course, but among those that did receive some communication the message would more likely to be anti- rather than pro-reform. Liberal Democrats that did get involved would have been pushing leaflets through letter boxes that proclaimed the advantages of AV over the current system but campaigning Conservatives were both better disciplined about toeing the party line and their additional numbers on the streets meant that more households would have been told to vote against AV as a consequence. Labour, equivocating nationally, did so locally by not

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becoming engaged, concentrating instead on recovering support forfeited after thirteen years in power.

The evidence from among candidates, however, also shows that as a group a majority favoured and vote for a change to the voting system. Ignoring the obvious endorsement for AV among Liberal Democrats it is interesting to note that Labour candidates (and by implication Labour activists) were generally favouring electoral system change while a substantial fraction of Conservatives voted in a way that was contrary to their party's preferred and clearly stated position. We have no way of knowing the motives that lay behind each candidate's decision to select the Yes or No option and when that decision was taken but it does reinforce the general point that at the 2011 referendum the local branches of the national parties either would not or could not persuade even their own activists to campaign and eventually vote in a way that corresponded with what the party leader advocated.

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Table 1: Candidate characteristics: 2011 local elections

	%	Count	Unweighted Count
Male	71.4	640	637
Female	28.6	256	259
Total	*100.0*	*896*	*896*
Age in years: <= 42	23.8	205	203
43 - 55	24.6	212	213
56 - 63	25.1	216	217
64+	26.5	228	228
Total	*100.0*	*861*	*861*
White	96.6	836	836
Non-white	3.4	30	29
Total	*100.0*	*865*	*865*
No qualfication/GCSE	17.0	149	147
A level	24.1	210	204
First degree	32.0	279	281
Higher degree	26.9	235	241
Total	*100.0*	*873*	*873*
Full- or part-time paid employment	41.0	352	351
Self employed	17.7	152	148
Retired	30.5	262	265
Other	10.9	94	95
Total	*100.0*	*859*	*859*
Professional	51.6	436	439
Managerial/technical	29.8	252	246
Skilled	10.8	91	91
Partly skilled or Unskilled	7.9	67	70
Total	*100.0*	*846*	*846*
Ward resident	55.4	495	498
Outside ward	44.6	399	397
Total	*100.0*	*895*	*895*
Con	32.6	292	240
Lab	23.7	213	252
LD	20.5	184	188
Other	23.1	208	217
Total	*100.0*	*897*	*897*
Member of the party: > 5 years	61.8	518	521
1 - 5 years	23.9	200	194
< 1 year	11.6	97	97
Non-member	2.7	23	23
Total	*100.0*	*838*	*835*
First-time	38.9	349	345
Incumbent	20.3	182	175
Former councillor	8.4	76	78
Serial but never elected	32.3	290	299
Total	*100.0*	*897*	*897*

Table 2: Campaign activities at the 2011 local elections in England

		Con %	Lab %	LD %	Other %	Total %	N=
Produce campaign leaflet	Yes	91.1	79.3	71.0	66.6	78.5	
	No	8.9	20.7	29.0	33.4	21.5	
	Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*890*
Deliver campaign leaflets	Yes	94.0	93.0	90.3	93.1	92.9	
	No	6.0	7.0	9.7	6.9	7.1	
	Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*695*
Delivering leaflets (hrs)		10.5; 8.0	8.2; 6.0	9.5; 6.0	11.4; 10.0	9.9; 8.0	636
Candidate had assistance	Yes	94.4	93.8	92.4	79.5	91.0	
	No	5.6	6.2	7.6	20.5	9.0	
	Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*688*
Others delivering leaflets (hrs)		10.0; 6.0	8.1; 5.0	12.4; 6.0	8.6; 5.0	9.7; 5.0	604
Candidate assisted	Yes	48.4	65.5	43.1	32.4	48.5	
in other wards	No	51.6	34.5	56.9	67.6	51.5	
	Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*682*
Door canvassing (hrs)		9.2; 8.0	7.2; 6.0	10.9; 8.0	9.0; 8.0	9.1; 7.0	510
Telephone canvassing (hrs)		2.0; 2.0	3.3; 2.0	3.6; 2.0	1.9; 1.0	2.8; 2.0	121
Internet campaigning (hrs)		3.0; 2.0	2.8; 2.0	2.7; 1.0	3.6; 3.0	3.1; 2.0	107
Other activities (hrs)		6.6; 4.0	5.6; 3.0	5.6; 4.0	5.5; 3.0	5.9; 4.0	214
Total excluding leafleting (hrs)		12.1; 10.0	10.4; 8.0	11.2; 8.0	9.8; 7.0	11.1; 9.0	601
Total hours per week		19.7; 17.0	15.3; 12.0	16.7; 12.0	16.3; 12.0	17.3; 12.0	748

Statistics are column percentages for Yes/No values otherwise mean followed by median values for hours per week of the campaign. The mean and median values are calculated for respondents who reported more than 0 and less than 81 total hours a week spent on campaign activities including leaflet delivering.

Table 3: Local election campaign literature, 2006-2011

	Con	Lab	LD	Other	All
Campaign literature produced					
2011	91.1	79.3	71.0	66.6	78.5
2010	84.8	78.4	61.7	53.9	70.5
2009	97.6	63.9	68.7	65.2	74.4
2008	84.3	87.3	67.8	73.1	79.0
2007	87.6	81.2	75.1	66.3	78.9
2006	86.9	76.8	62.5	60.8	72.7
Campaign literature delivered					
2011	94.0	93.0	90.3	93.1	92.9
2010	97.7	94.6	95.2	94.5	95.7
2009	98.7	93.4	96.4	94.7	96.2
2008	93.5	97.0	91.2	94.4	94.5
2007	95.7	90.7	95.2	91.2	93.6
2006					
Campaign literature delivered to all households					
2011	79.4	62.4	73.2	59.3	70.2
2010	86.2	82.9	82.8	56.2	79.4
2009	88.6	69.5	71.5	54.7	73.3
2008	78.4	76.5	82.9	73.9	77.4
2007	89.3	82.8	87.5	78.4	85.4
2006	87.4	78.5	86.4	66.4	81.3

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Table 4: Local party election campaigning and the referendum (Column %)

	Con	**Lab**	**LD**	**Other**		**All**	
	%	%	%	%	%	N	
						Weighted	Actual
Delivered Yes literature	1.7	4.4	69.6	19.6	20.3	171	176
Delivered No literature	80.4	3.3	0.7	1.5	28.3	239	200
Delivered neutral literature	1.3	1.8	0.5	0.0	1.0	8	8
Was not asked to deliver	13.2	84.6	25.3	71.8	45.5	385	418
Asked but declined to deliver	3.4	5.9	3.9	7.2	5.0	42	43

Table 5: Local candidate-type campaigning and the referendum (Column %)

	First time	**Sitting Cllr**	**Ex Cllr**	**Serial Cand**		**All**	
	%	%	%	%	%	N	
						Weighted	Actual
Delivered Yes literature	19.0	26.2	19.1	18.3	20.3	171	176
Delivered No literature	32.2	41.3	24.1	16.2	28.3	239	200
Delivered neutral literature	1.5	0.0	1.8	0.7	1.0	8	8
Was not asked to deliver	44.4	27.0	49.7	57.8	45.5	385	418
Asked but declined to deliver	2.9	5.5	5.3	7.0	5.0	42	43

Table 6: Voting in the referendum (Column %)

	Con		**Lab**		**LD**		**Other**		**All**	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Yes	21.9	62	62.7	130	96.1	169	71.3	142	58.1	502
No	75.6	214	35.0	72	1.6	3	21.8	43	38.5	333
Did not vote	0.0	0	0.3	1	0.7	1	1.4	3	0.6	5
Do not want to say	2.6	7	1.9	4	1.6	3	5.5	11	2.9	25

Table 7: Party vote in the referendum by occupational status

		Prof	Manager	Skilled	Part skilled/ Unskilled
		%	%	%	%
Con	Yes	17.8	25.4	34.6	20.1
	No	78.6	72.2	65.4	79.9
	Did not vote	.0	.0	.0	.0
	Do not want to say	3.6	2.4	.0	.0
	Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*
Lab	Yes	68.4	58.2	53.5	48.2
	No	29.5	41.8	46.5	44.4
	Did not vote	.6	.0	.0	.0
	Do not want to say	1.4	.0	.0	7.4
	Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*
LD	Yes	97.8	98.0	90.4	81.8
	No	.0	2.0	9.6	.0
	Did not vote	.0	.0	.0	10.3
	Do not want to say	2.2	.0	.0	7.9
	Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*
Other	Yes	70.4	68.7	86.6	71.5
	No	20.9	25.2	10.2	24.1
	Did not vote	1.1	3.8	.0	.0
	Do not want to say	7.6	2.2	3.2	4.4
	Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*

Appendix: Survey questions

2011

Did you produce a campaign leaflet for distribution? (Yes/No)
If 'Yes, Did you deliver your own campaign leaflets in your ward? (Yes/No)
> If 'Yes', approximately how many hours a week in total did you spend
> delivering your own campaign leaflets? (note: this is time that does
> not include door-to-door canvassing and other campaign activities.
Did you have any help in delivering these leaflets? (Yes/No)
> If 'Yes', approximately how many hours a week was the average time spent
> by others delivering your campaign leaflets.
Was your leaflet delivered to all of the addresses in your ward? (Yes/No)
Did you help deliver campaign leaflets in another ward? (Yes/No)
Apart from the time you spent delivering campaign leaflets approximately how many hours a week did you spend on each of the following campaign activities? (Options to select from were door canvassing, telephone canvassing, internet campaigning and Other. Respondents were then invited to indicate hours per week devoted to these different efforts.)
Voters were mostly interested in the national campaign issues of the major parties, 2011 (Strongly agree to strongly disagree and Not applicable)
The national referendum on voting reform was allowed to dominate the local election campaign (Strongly agree to strongly disagree and Not applicable)

2010

Holding simultaneous elections is a good idea (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Campaigning locally was difficult because voters were largely interested in the parliamentary election (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Our local party priorities were eclipsed by the party's national campaign (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Did you produce a campaign leaflet for distribution? (Yes/No)
Did you deliver your own campaign leaflets in your ward? (Yes/No)
Was your leaflet delivered to all of the addresses in your ward? (Yes/No)
Did you canvass by telephone?
Did you canvass by the internet / email?
Did you campaign in other wards?
Approximately how many hours a week did you spend campaigning during the election period?

2009

Did you produce a campaign leaflet for distribution? (Yes/No)
Did you deliver the campaign leaflets? (Yes/No)
Was your leaflet delivered to all addresses in your ward? (Yes/No)
Did you canvass by telephone? (Yes/No)
Did you canvass by the internet /email? (Yes/No)
National issues and not local issues were allowed to dominate the campaign (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Did you campaign in other wards? (Yes/No)

Approximately how many hours a week did you spend campaigning during the election period?

2008

Did you produce a campaign leaflet for distribution? (Yes/No)
Did you deliver the campaign leaflets? (Yes/No)
　　　If '*Yes*', approximately how many hours a week did you spend delivering campaign leaflets?
Was your leaflet delivered to all addresses in your ward? (Yes/No)
National issues and not local issues were allowed to dominate the campaign (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Did you campaign in other wards? (Yes/No)

2007

Did you produce a campaign leaflet for distribution? (Yes/No)
Did you deliver the campaign leaflets? (Yes/No)
　　　If '*Yes*', approximately how many hours a week did you spend delivering campaign leaflets?
Was your leaflet delivered to all addresses in your ward? (Yes/No)
Voters were mostly interested in the national campaign issues of the major parties (strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Did you campaign in other wards? (Yes/No)

2006

Did you produce a campaign leaflet for distribution? (Yes/No)
Was your leaflet delivered to all addresses in your ward? (Yes/No)
Approximately what percentage of the households in your ward was canvassed by you, or on your behalf during the campaign?
Voters were mostly interested in the national campaign issues of the major parties (strongly agree to strongly disagree).