



The story of
**OUR UK Democracy that
EVERY UK
CITIZEN
should know.**

This 'story' contains the basics which we think all citizens need to know in order to be able to fully participate in our UK democracy. Our UK democracy needs all citizens to be informed and actively encouraged to get involved, and know that it is their democratic right to challenge, question, protest, shape, critique, debate and influence our democracy all year round and not just at the ballot box.

This information is in a story format because our research shows that using story is the best way to engage people and share information.

All The Democracy Box young co-creators creatively retell this story using social media, video, music, rap, podcasts and more.

You can find examples of how they have retold **this story** to date (<https://www.thedemocracybox.co.uk/our-uk-democracy>) by going to any of these links

- **The Democracy Box Podcast Series** (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast-Series>)
- **4 Democracy Box raps commissioned by BBC Bitesize** (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Bitesize-Raps>)
- **The Democracy Box on Instagram** (<https://www.instagram.com/thedemocracybox>)
- **The Democracy Box on TikTok** (<https://www.tiktok.com/@thedemocracybox>)
- **The Democracy Box YouTube Channel** (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-YouTube>)
- **The Democracy Box on Twitter** (<https://twitter.com/TheDemocracyBox>)

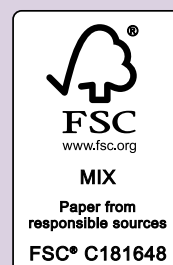
The story
online



*The Story of our UK Democracy That Every Citizen Should Know in Seven Short Chapters© was written by Yvonne Murphy with input from The Democracy Box young co-creators and fact checked by the Electoral Commission.
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For more information please see www.thedemocracybox.co.uk and www.omidaze.co.uk or contact Omidaze at omidaze@outlook.com

Illustrations by Liv Winter and design by Katie Price and Megan Penberthy



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Foreword

Written by too many citizens to name

Watch this video – ‘What does democracy mean to you?’ (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video1>)

Watch the
video



Who holds the power? What power do I have? Why vote at all? Why get involved? Why does it *matter*? It won't make a difference. They're all the same anyway. I'm fed up with politics. What's democracy got to do with me? Who cares? I haven't got time for all this. How will it help? What will it do? Who do I trust? Where do I find the truth? What is a vote anyway? Why wasn't I taught all this in school? Why don't I see or hear from anyone except when they want my vote? Who represents me and why, how and where? What's First Past the Post anyway? What is the difference between parliament and government? What election? What's it for? What's this got to do with *me*?



Well sure you could just stand there shouting on the side lines or you could actually get involved and be part of the story.

Because this story is
your story.

It is our story.

Written by those who went **before us** and
by all of us **now** and all those **yet to come**.

Democracy is the people.
Stand up and be counted.

'Stand Up' by young co-creator Saskia Pay
(<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video2>)

Watch the
video



CHAPTER 1:

Introducing the
HERO
of our story

The hero of our story is you.

Watch the Discover Democracy film trailer on YouTube (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video3>) by young co-creators Thandi and Katherine

Watch the video



The hero of our story is you. You are at the heart of this story. You the reader. The viewer. The listener. You the citizen. You the voter! Without you our collective story of democracy doesn't really properly exist. Because the people rule and that means you rule!

Like all good heroes, of any good story, you will need to go on a quest. Your quest begins here. You will be faced with challenges and you will need to collect information as you go, to help you map your journey. You must collect **13 Knowledge Tokens**, **7 Key Facts** and find **10 Ways to Get Involved** in our UK democracy along the way.

It is your responsibility to empower other heroes and help everyone to know how to get their voices heard all year round and not just at the ballot box.

Your challenge is to read this story, share this story and tell this story far and wide to every person in every corner of the kingdom until everyone:-

1. Understands the basics of our existing UK democracy and that democracy is more than the ballot box and is all year round and begins with them.
2. Has confidence and trust in our democracy and feels heard and involved.
3. Understands that democracy is not fixed or set in stone and is shaped by the people for the people.
4. Has the confidence and permission to question and challenge our existing democracy. Because that is the very essence of a working democracy.

*The **1st Knowledge Token** you will need to collect before you begin is to understand the word democracy itself.*



Knowledge Token 1

The Meaning of the word democracy

The word democracy comes from two Greek words that mean people (demos) and rule (kratos).

A democracy is a system of government where the power lies with the people who either rule directly or, in the case of the UK, indirectly through freely elected representatives who we can replace through peaceful transfer of power.

In a representative democracy you vote for people to represent you.

Voting is your **right**. Your **privilege**.

However, democracy is about more than simply voting and elections.

Democracy needs you every single day of the year, not simply on election days.

Our democracy needs you and everyone to be fully equipped with an understanding of how things work, so that you can harness your power, have your say and be a champion for positive change all year round.

Get involved! By simply starting a conversation, sharing this story, exercising your freedom of speech or volunteering and getting involved in local societies and groups. Find ways, large and small, to take part in civic and civil society in your local community, your neighbourhood and beyond. You can also get your voice heard by starting or signing a petition, protesting, campaigning, lobbying, contributing towards a committee's research, contacting the media and your elected representatives or by joining a youth parliament or standing for public office.

Democracy is collaboration and negotiation. It is being able to think critically, debate and reach a consensus.

A democracy is a society which is considered as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity.

Democracy affects your life every single day. From how and when your rubbish is collected and your streets are repaired, to how your school and hospital is run, to how you collaborate with others in your community for the benefit of your community.

Remember! - Democracy isn't just about voting and elections.

It is about you having your say every day and holding your elected representatives to account. Democracy is about being able to influence, contribute to and help shape the society you want for yourself, your loved ones, your community now and for future generations. Democracy affects our lives every single day. Democracy impacts you and the streets where you live, your family, friends and neighbours. It affects your local community, your town, city, region and your country.

Listen to
the podcast



Listen to episode 2 of The Democracy Box podcast (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast2>)

Don't be powerless and excluded. Be a democracy hero by reading and sharing this story. Read all seven chapters and find out all you need to know to begin your hero's journey.

Find out who can help you. You're not on your own. You have representatives who you elect to represent you in councils and parliaments/legislatures (that's where the laws are made) across the UK. You need to find out who they are and make sure they are representing you properly all the time.

You vote for the people you want to represent you in your council and your devolved parliament, if you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, and in the House of Commons to discuss things on your behalf. You elect representatives to make the laws on your behalf and to look carefully at everything that happens and at decisions and policies, made by local government, devolved governments and the UK government.

And you elect the people who get to form those governments.

All those elected representatives are paid by you and work for you and they have to listen to you all year round, not just at election time.

Voting is your right. Your privilege.

Taking part in our democracy all year round is your right too.

You are part of a community.

You are not alone.

Your challenge, if you choose to accept it, is to read and share this story and to own and exercise your right. And in doing so enable others in your community to do the same.

You must collect **13 Knowledge Tokens**, **7 Key facts** and find **10 Ways to Get Involved** along the way.

Watch raps 1-4 from The Democracy Box Rap series
by Saskia Pay on BBC Bitesize
(<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Bitesize-Raps>)

Bitesize
Raps



Being a Democracy Hero may seem challenging and at times even daunting. Your hesitation is understandable. However you are not alone and like the work of any hero your quest is vital and will change people's lives, including your own.

Are you ready?

Then let the story begin.

Once upon a time there was a democracy hero who chose to go on a quest to understand and then share the basics of their country's democracy all across the land. Our hero was tired of feeling *powerless* and *excluded*. They wanted to contribute, to feel valued and heard and they wanted to influence positive change.

Our hero believed that if they could understand the basics of how their country worked and fitted together then maybe, just maybe, they could make a difference. And if they then shared this story with people all across the land then maybe, just maybe, everyone could understand the basics of our democracy too and then everyone could feel valued and heard all year round.

This is a story of everyday democracy and everyday **heroes**.

Democracy is

“about the responsible use of power by and for the people... Those who currently feel powerless and excluded should be able to learn how to have an effective say about issues that concern them, and do something about them. Society will be better as a result.”

Titus Alexander — Practical Politics



You are a democracy hero.

Are you ready?

Then let's begin.

Key fact

Democracy is about you. The basic feature of democracy is the capacity of all voters to participate freely and fully in the life of their society.

CHAPTER 2:

The HERO'S JOURNEY

"Over the last 50 years the number of people voting in national elections has fallen from around 80% to 60% ...With a lower turnout democracy becomes meaningless."

Peter Macfadyen — Flatpack Democracy

(nb in Welsh elections it is less than 50%)

Our UK Democracy is not set in stone

It never was. All of our UK democracy has been created, challenged and changed by democracy heroes past and present. This includes the different types of government, our voting ages and our voting systems, Our UK democracy must continue to respond and develop to meet the needs of future generations.

You are going to need some basic essentials on your democracy journey.

Find below **4 Knowledge Tokens** and the **10 Ways to Get Involved**. Read these and then share them with everyone you meet on your journey. They will keep you going when you get tired and weary.



Knowledge Token 2 The Rule of Law

The key idea of the rule of law is that the law should apply equally to all rulers and ruled alike. This ensures a 'government of law' and not a 'government of men'. In this way, the rule of law establishes the relationship between government and the people. No one, not even the Prime Minister is above the law.

The Rule of Law prevents the abuse of state power and requires the law to be followed by all, it ensures that legal rights are fulfilled and that our judges and our courts are independent.



Knowledge Token 3 The Media

The UK has a strong independent media history with many different newspaper titles, television and radio channels. The media's role is to inform the public on important issues that affect them whether these are local, national or international.

Many broadcasters (BBC, ITV, C4) have it written into their charters that they must inform all citizens about our UK democracy.

Newspapers remain an important source of political information with millions sold and read online every day.



Knowledge Token 4

Bias

The media is not unbiased. Newspapers don't have to be unbiased, but TV and radio journalists generally do need to be impartial. You can **check out OfCom** (<http://tinyurl.com/Ofcom-link>) for more information. Different newspapers and media can choose to report the news in different ways. Newspapers can take a one-sided approach through their choice of headlines, pictures and stories. Newspapers often support one political party. This can change. It is important to understand what political bias different media sources have. Sometimes it depends on who owns that media outlet. Some urge or seek to influence their readers to vote for one political party or another in the run up to an election.



Knowledge Token 5

Fake News

The internet and social media allows people almost unlimited access to information which means people are better informed than ever before. As the internet allows almost anyone to post almost anything they choose, some of the information on the internet is not accurate. Check the date, source, author, detail, facts and who is funding or financing the information source. Just because you like a person who is popular on the internet or you follow a website, forum, group, personality or celebrity it does not mean they are unbiased, accurate, factual or true. You should **always** check the facts.

To check your facts about our UK democracy visit the **Electoral Commission** (<https://tinyurl.com/electoral-commission>) - an unbiased and trusted source of information for everything to do with elections and democracy.

You can also use trusted and independent fact check websites like <https://fullfact.org/> and https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/reality_check to check if a story/ fact/image/video is fake or to be trusted.



Ten Ways to have your say

Democracy is about having your say and getting involved all year round.

Whether that's through exercising your freedom of speech, getting involved in your local community, volunteering, starting or signing a petition, protesting, campaigning, joining a youth parliament, lobbying, contacting your elected representative, or finding ways large and small to take part in Civic and Civil Society.

Here are **10** ways for each and every hero to **Get Involved**, to make sure their voice is heard and they can help shape and change their local area, region, nation, country for the better for themselves, their families, friends, neighbours, communities and for future generations.

1. Have conversations

Have conversations with family and friends and share this *Story of Our UK Democracy that every citizen should know*. Explain all of the above to other heroes.

Critical thought, debate, collaboration, challenge, protest, campaigning, reaching consensus (agreement) are all key to a good working democracy.

2. Volunteer and get involved in your local community

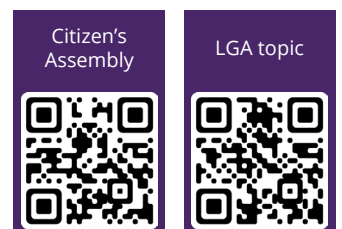
Democracy starts outside your front door and in your local community all year round. Get to know your neighbours. Find out about and get involved in volunteer groups and societies which represent the needs of your local community and things which you care about.

If one doesn't already exist, start one!

What do you want to change or help fix? What group(s) already exist that are starting to make the change you want to see that you could support?

Volunteer to help with a local community garden, or school (like helping listen to kids read or becoming a school governor or helping with the PTA) or find out about your local health board, parish, community and/or Town Council.

Find out about **Citizen's Assemblies** (<https://citizensassembly.co.uk>), **Participatory Budgeting** (<https://tinyurl.com/LGA-topic>) and local initiatives that will help you to raise your voice and be heard about what matters to you and your family and friends.



3. Contact your elected representatives

Find out who your Councillors, Members of Devolved Parliament (if you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) and MP are, and get in touch with them about what you care about locally, nationally and internationally

Find them at **Write To Them** (<https://www.writetothem.com>) and **They Work For You** (<https://www.theyworkforyou.com>). Contact your elected representatives by letter, email, phone, social media and in person. They should all hold 'surgeries' which just means a day when they hold face to face meetings with the people they represent. Some are drop ins and some are by appointment.



4. Protest, Campaign and Organise

Join with others to amplify your voice and, if you live in Wales, use the **Future Generations Act in Wales** (<https://tinyurl.com/future-generations>) to hold public bodies and elected representatives to account. Freedom to assemble (getting together with others in public) is your right. Know your rights. Get a copy of the book 'The Young Citizen's Passport' – a guide to those parts of the law most relevant to the everyday life of young people in England and Wales.

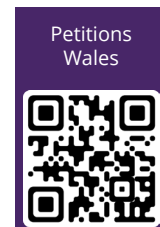


5. Contact the media

From letters pages in your local and national papers, to contacting journalists in the press and recorded media (TV) to social media or simply writing a blog. Freedom of speech is 'the right of people to express their opinions publicly without governmental interference, subject to the laws against libel, incitement to violence or rebellion, etc.' (Collins English Dictionary). Remember at all times the simple rules of our Freedom of Speech – that it comes with duties and responsibilities to protect the freedom and rights of others as well as ourselves and to not incite violence or hatred.

6. Start a petition

Start a petition and get it debated by a devolved body such as the **Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru** (<https://petitions.senedd.wales>) or **UK Parliament** (<https://petition.parliament.uk>).



7. Contribute towards a committee's research

They have to listen to you! Watch out for public consultations too and make sure you have your say about anything which matters to you.

Find out how to contribute to a Westminster committee [here](#). You can also find out about devolved parliament committees via their websites. Get heard by your local council too by attending or speaking at council meetings (everyone can do this) and viewing or commenting on public and statutory services, plans and policies.

8. Join a School Council, Youth Parliament or stand for public office

You can represent others in primary and/or secondary school and/or a Youth Parliament from age 11-18, and when you are 18 or over you can stand for public office. Yes you!!! Become a Councillor or even stand to be elected as a Member of a devolved parliament or the UK parliament.

9. Register to Vote

Register to vote at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

Register to vote:

at 14 if you live in Wales or Scotland

or 16 if you live in England or Northern Ireland



10. Vote

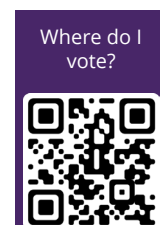
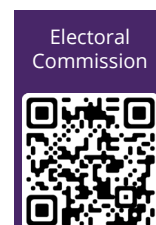
Check out The Electoral Commission for trusted and unbiased public information about your vote and all elections.

(<https://tinyurl.com/electoral-commission>)

Also

Where do I vote? (<https://wheredoivote.co.uk>) and

Who can I vote for? (<https://whocanivotefor.co.uk>)



DEMOCRACY IS NOT SET IN STONE. IT'S SHAPED **BY** THE
 PEOPLE, **FOR** THE PEOPLE. THE LAW APPLIES **EQUALLY** TO
 ALL RULERS AND RULED ALIKE.



DEMOCRACY IS ABOUT HAVING YOUR SAY
 AND GETTING INVOLVED ALL YEAR ROUND....

HERE ARE 10 WAYS FOR EVERY HERO TO MAKE THEIR VOICE HEARD

1. Share the Story of our democracy with other heroes.	2. Volunteer and get involved in your local community.	3. Get in touch with your councillors, Members of devolved Parliament and MP.	4. Protest, campaign and organise.	5. Contact the media.
6. Start a Petition, get it debated by your devolved Parliament or the UK Parliament.	7. Contribute towards a committee's research.	8. Join a School council/a Youth Parliament/ if you're over 18 stand for Public Office.	9. Register to vote.	10. VOTE! check the Electoral Commission for unbiased voting info!

ILLUSTRATIONS BY OLIVIA WINTER

CHAPTER 3:

The five kinds of
ELECTED
REPRESENTATIVES
our hero can call
on for **help**

"Democratic rights and freedoms without the skills and knowledge to use them are like owning a car without being able to drive."

Titus Alexander — Practical Politics

Every hero has more than one elected representative

Now that you have the first **6 Knowledge Tokens** and have found the **10 Ways to Get Involved** you are well on your way with your quest. Your next challenge is to find your elected representatives to help you on your democracy hero's journey.

Everyone in the UK is represented by an MP and several councillors. Everyone in England and Wales also elects a Mayor or a Police Crime Commissioner. If you live in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland you elect members of that devolved parliament/legislature too.

You elect the people who you want to represent you in your council and the UK parliament in Westminster (and in devolved parliaments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland too if you live there) to discuss things on your behalf.

You elect representatives to make the laws on your behalf and look carefully at (scrutinise) the government and council leaders. You elect the people who then form governments which run the UK and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. All those elected representatives are paid by you and work for you and they have to listen to you **all year round** not just at election time.

Watch rapper and young co-creator BlankFace explain the different levels of government in his own unique way (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video4>)

Write To
Them



They Work
For You



Watch the
video



Hero Challenge

Find all your elected representatives at:

Write To Them (<https://www.writetothem.com>) and

They Work For You (<https://www.theyworkforyou.com>).

1. Councillors (Cllr)

Councillors are elected by Ward/District to represent you at local government level. Councillors represent electoral areas called Divisions, Wards, Districts or Unitary Authority Electoral Division (UTE). I know, you couldn't make this stuff up. This is why the hero's challenge is so complex! It just means an area around where you live. It's really important to know who your councillors are because they are responsible for and make decisions about all the stuff in your local area. The things which affect you day to day. You will have several councillors who represent you at city, county, district or borough council level which is often called your Local Authority. You may also have councillors who represent you at town, community and parish councils too.

Find them all. Who are yours?

2. Mayors

Most local authorities opt for what's called a 'leader and cabinet' model where a councillor is chosen to be the council leader by whichever political party got the most votes. Some places (like London and Manchester) use a 'mayor and cabinet' model, where the mayor gets elected separately and replaces the role of council leader.

Many local authorities (with or without elected mayors) also have a ceremonial mayor who holds no executive power and gets to open fetes, go to events and represent the council and wear a chain of office. The two roles of elected mayor or nominated council leader and a ceremonial mayor exist concurrently (at the same time).

Do you have a mayor who represents you?

3. Members of Parliament (MPs)

MPs represent you at UK Parliament level at Westminster in London. Everyone in the UK is represented by an MP in the UK parliament in Westminster. There are 650 MPs representing 650 constituencies. MPs and Members of Devolved Parliaments represent people who live in an official geographic area called a Constituency which is a bigger local area than a ward/district.

Who is your MP?

4. Members of devolved parliaments (MS, MSP, MLA)

Elected to represent the people of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland Parliaments/Legislatures.

Members of the Senedd (MS) and Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) are elected by constituency and region. Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in Northern Ireland are elected by constituency only.

Find your MS, MSP or MLA. How many have you got?

5. Police Crime Commissioners (PCCs)

Police Crime Commissioners (PCCs) represent you in your local police force. They make sure that the local police in your area are meeting the needs of the community. There are 39 police areas across England and Wales with a PCC. Each area has one commissioner. In Greater London, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire the mayor holds the responsibilities of a PCC. PCCs aim to cut crime and deliver an effective and efficient police service within their police force area. They are elected by the public to hold Chief Constables and the police force to account on their behalf.

Police and Crime Commissioners:

- Set the police budget and make sure it's spent effectively
- Appoint the Chief Constables of the local police forces
- Engage with the public and victims of crime to help set police and crime plans and organise projects within the community
- Work closely with the local council and other community organisations on these plans and projects

Do you have a Police and Crime Commissioner?

Hero Challenge

Now help at least two people you know to find all their elected representatives too!

Key fact

You have more than one representative. Everyone in the UK is represented by an MP and several councillors and some also elect a mayor or a police crime commissioner. If you live in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland you elect members of that devolved parliament/legislature.

Find all your elected representatives at <https://www.writetothem.com>

Write to
Them



Northern Ireland

has 90 Members of the
Legislative Assembly (MLA)

In Northern Ireland our hero
has 5 constituency MLAs.

Scotland

has 129 Members of the
Scottish Parliament (MSP)

In Scotland our hero has
1 constituency MSP and 7
regional MSPs.

Wales

Currently has 60 Members of the
Welsh Parliament/Senedd
Cymru (MS)

However at the time of writing there is
a Bill going through the Welsh
Parliament which, amongst other
things, seeks to increase the size of
the Senedd to 96 Members.

At the point when this story was
updated our hero in Wales has
1 constituency MS and
4 regional MSs.

Now you are less alone in the world.

You have many elected representatives to come with you on your democratic journey. These elected representatives must listen and take on board what matters most to you and make sure that all voices are heard equally.

If in doubt you can visit the oracle, otherwise known as the Electoral Commission. An independent and regulated source of trusted, truthful, factual and unbiased public information about all things voting and all elections. (<https://tinyurl.com/electoral-commission>)

Electoral
Commission



Hero Challenge

Your next challenge is to travel through and understand the **'three realms'** i.e. the **three different types of government** we have in the UK.

CHAPTER 4:

Our hero understands
that **PARLIAMENT** and
GOVERNMENT
are two **VERY**
DIFFERENT
things

Before you travel through the three realms, (otherwise known as the 3 different types of government we have in the UK), you, our democracy hero must collect your **6th Knowledge Token**.



Knowledge Token 6

Parliament and Government are two very different things

Basically our parliaments hold our governments to account and make the laws. Our governments run the country, or part of it.

The UK Government is responsible for running England and everything that is not devolved across the whole of the UK. The devolved governments are responsible for running everything which is devolved in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Listen to episode 4 of The Democracy Box podcast (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast4>)

Listen to
the podcast



“...to deny people opportunities to learn how the system works and how to exercise power as citizens, is to deny democracy.”

Titus Alexander — Practical Politics

PARLIAMENT basically means **DISCUSSION**.

A Parliament is the group of people who are elected to make and change the laws of a country and check everything the Government does. A Parliament is a country's legislative (law-making) body and is sometimes called a **LEGISLATURE**.

Both words mean an institution that has the **power to make or change laws**.

Which is very different to...

GOVERNMENT the group of people who are officially responsible for governing (running) the country or political part of the country.

A Government has 1 job – to run the country

A **Parliament** has 2 jobs:

1. **LEGISLATION** - Propose new laws and amend (change/make better) existing laws.
2. **SCRUTINY** - Challenge and examine (inspect closely and thoroughly) everything the Government/Cabinet is doing.



Hero Challenge

Your challenge now is to understand the different types of **parliament** in the UK. Yes there is more than one parliament!

The UK Parliament

The UK Parliament makes laws for England and for the UK. The UK Parliament scrutinises the UK Government.

The UK Parliament (Westminster in London) is made up of 3 things:

1. The House of Commons

This is the first chamber where MPs debate, propose and amend laws and vote. Ordinary British citizens, citizens of the Republic of Ireland or eligible Commonwealth citizens can stand to be an MP unless they are disqualified because of their job (such as police/army/judge/civil servant/monarch).

You can find out who can't be an MP here (<https://tinyurl.com/Be-an-MP>).

2. The House of Lords

This is the second and non-elected chamber. Decisions made in one House generally have to be approved in the other.

If the House of Commons proposes a new law, the House of Lords needs to approve it before it gets signed off by the monarch.

It's a two way chamber system. Checks and balances. Making sure everything is fair, right and proper.

You can find out how someone becomes a member of the House of Lords here (<https://tinyurl.com/Be-a-Lord>).

3. Monarch

The monarch has the final seal of approval but this is really ceremonial. King Charles III and Queen Elizabeth II before him never challenged a law. The Monarch used to have ALL the power until 1642 when Charles I burst into parliament and tried to arrest some MPs which led to the monarchy being abolished for 11 years!

Be an MP



Be a Lord



Devolved Parliaments

The devolved parliaments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland make and amend their own laws for their own devolved nations. The devolved Parliaments scrutinise the devolved Governments. For example, the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru makes laws for Wales and challenges and examines the Welsh Government.

The parliaments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland do not have a second chamber.

All devolved parliaments have law making powers and can create laws about devolved areas without reference to Westminster.

It is therefore very important that people in the devolved nations vote in the UK parliamentary general election and the Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland elections.

A QUICK BIT OF HISTORY: *Until 1999, the UK Parliament was the source of all legislation across the whole of the UK (they made all the laws for everywhere). Since devolution, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru and the Northern Ireland Assembly have taken on the task of passing laws for their respective nations and have developed distinctive new bodies of law in areas of devolved responsibility.*

THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015:

*One of the laws that the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru has made is the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) which gives people in Wales the ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being. **The Well-being of Future Generations Act** (<https://tinyurl.com/future-generations>) requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The Act is unique to Wales, attracting interest from countries across the world as it offers a huge opportunity to make a long-lasting, positive change to current and future generations.*

Hero Challenge

Share your understanding of the difference between parliament and government and the different parliaments in the UK with at least 2 people and pass on this knowledge with everyone you meet on your democratic journey through the three realms.

Key fact

All devolved parliaments have law making powers and can create laws about devolved areas without reference to Westminster.

It is therefore very important that people in the devolved nations vote in the UK Parliament General Election and the Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland elections.

CHAPTER 5:

The **THREE REALMS**

The **THREE DIFFERENT**

types of **GOVERNMENT**

we have in the **UK**

(THAT'S RIGHT we have more than one!)

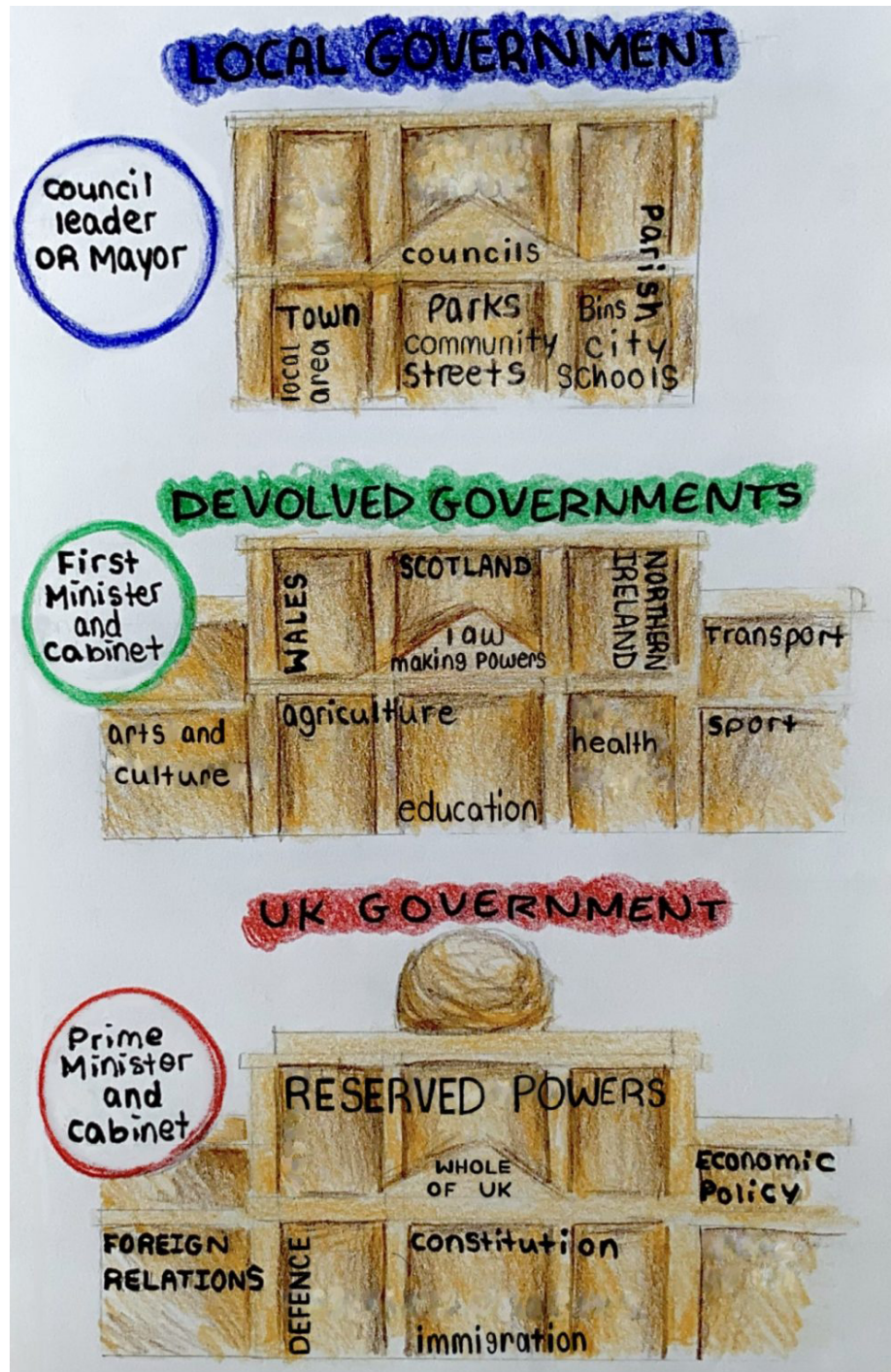
"One strength of democracy is that it shouts '**remember thou art mortal**' in the face of politicians on a daily basis."

Willie Sullivan — The Missing Scotland

Next our hero must travel through and understand the 'three realms' — the three types of government in the UK

Realm 1

Local Government



Realm 3

UK Government

Listen to episode 3 of The Democracy Box podcast

(<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast3>)

Listen to
the podcast



The three types of government explained



1. Local Government

You don't have to travel far. Just step outside your front door. Your local area, your town, city or county will have a local council/local authority/local government which looks after it. Our hero is probably rightly confused that one thing can have so many different names! Your council/local authority (otherwise known as your local government) deal with all the local stuff including schools, youth services and social care. Your council/local government is also responsible for your local streets and roads, local public buildings and services including your library, rubbish and recycling and some public cultural buildings as well as open public spaces like your local parks. Some people in the UK will also have a smaller council which might be a Community, Town or Parish Council who have some responsibilities too in your local area.

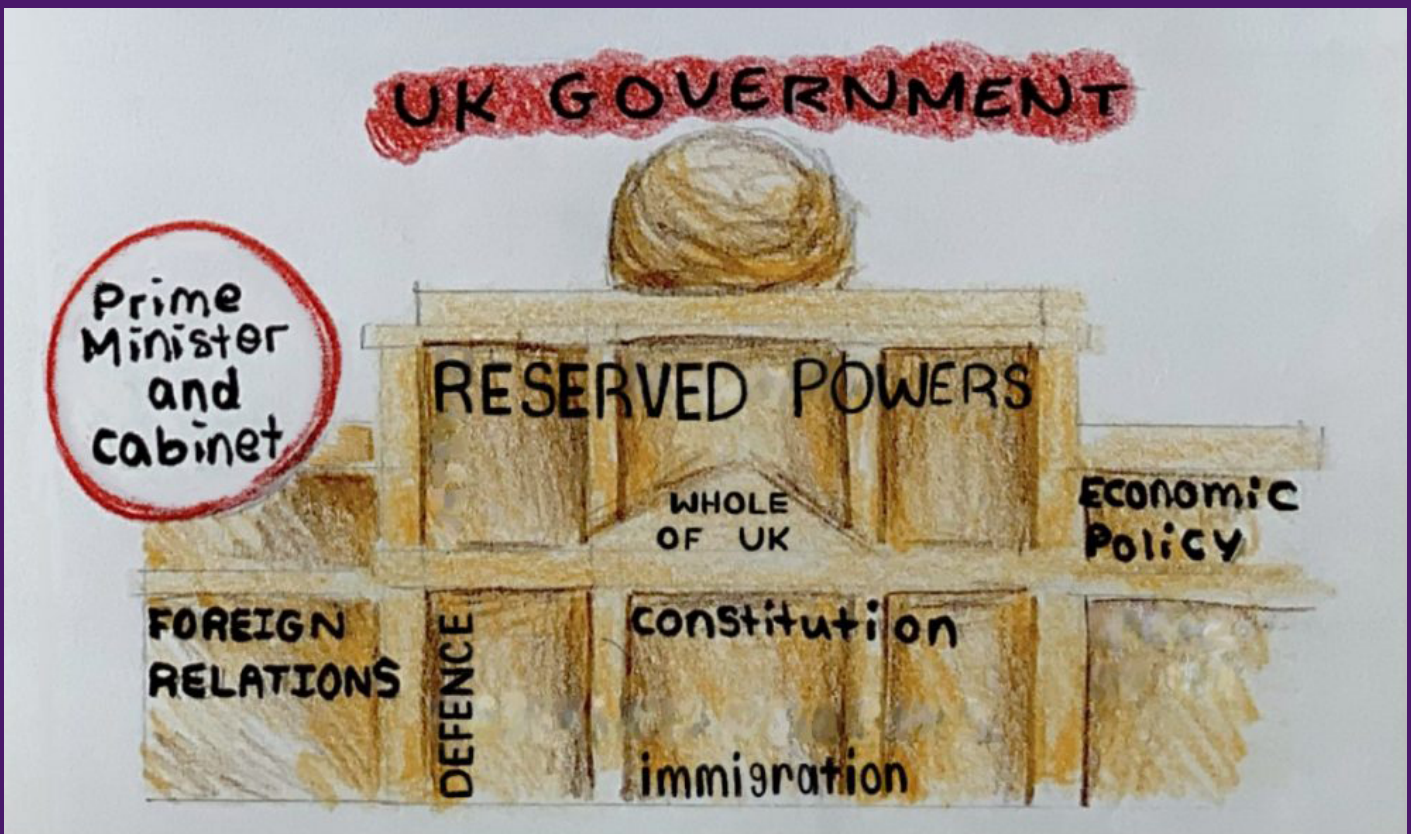
Most local authorities/councils opt for the 'leader and cabinet' model where the council leader is selected from the councillors by the political party with the most elected councillors. However, in some areas a 'mayor and cabinet' model has been adopted, where a directly elected mayor replaces the role of council leader. The Council leader or elected Mayor chooses the Cabinet which forms the Local Government.



2. Devolved Governments and Parliaments (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)

You, our democracy hero, must now travel across the United Kingdom to explore all the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Each of these devolved governments are in charge of many things that directly affect the people living in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland such as health, education, transport and much more.

Our hero must become familiar with devolution, devolved governments and devolved powers and understand that devolved parliaments have law making powers for these devolved areas. It is important to remember and remind everyone you meet on your journey that the UK government in Westminster does not make decisions about areas which are devolved, such as health and education, in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



3. UK Government and Parliament

The leader of the political party with the majority of MPs in the UK parliament becomes Prime Minister and forms a government and chooses the cabinet.

Whichever party (or parties) come **second** become the **opposition**. If there is no clear winner there may be a...**Coalition Government**.

A coalition government is a government formed jointly by more than one political party. Parties may decide to form a coalition government if there is a hung parliament where no single party has a clear working majority in the House of Commons following a General Election.

The UK Government looks after immigration, trade, foreign relations, defence, the constitution and many aspects of economic policy for the whole of the UK.

These are called **Reserved Powers**. Reserved Powers means that only the UK Government and UK Parliament in Westminster can make decisions on these matters.

Now here is the confusing bit about this 3rd realm...The UK Government and Parliament in Westminster also look after things for people in just England that are devolved in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This includes health, education, transport and culture which are **Devolved Powers** in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



Knowledge Token 7

The difference between the Prime Minister and a First Minister

We have **one** Prime Minister and **three** First Ministers in the UK. The Prime Minister is in charge of everything in England and anything which is not devolved in the whole of the UK. This includes trade, immigration and defence. We have First Ministers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. They are in charge of the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish Governments and everything which is devolved in those nations. This includes education, health, transport and culture. The leader of the political party with the majority of seats in each parliament becomes the Prime Minister or First Minister and forms a government and chooses the cabinet.



Knowledge Token 8

Devolution

It is very important that our hero understands about **devolution**.

The UK Government and Parliament in Westminster only look after things for the whole of the UK that are not devolved (like immigration, trade and defence).

Devolved areas (e.g. health and education), the UK government and parliament are only responsible for these things in England and not in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

*So when you hear the Prime Minister on the news talking about health and education they are only talking about **in England**.*

Key fact

Devolved powers include health, education, culture, sport, agriculture, transport and local government. Devolved parliaments and devolved governments are responsible for all areas which are devolved and have law making powers for these areas such as health and education.

The **UK Government** looks after all the things for people in just **England** that are **devolved** in **Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland**. They also look after foreign relations, defence, the constitution, immigration and many aspects of economic policy for the whole of the UK.

These are **reserved** powers. This means that **only** the **UK Government and Parliament** can make decisions on these matters.

*(Sometimes called **EXCEPTED** powers in Northern Ireland).*

CHAPTER 6:

The **RULES** of the game part 1

VOTING AGES

“When I first joined The Democracy Box I really didn’t know anything.
In fact, I didn’t even know that Britain was a democratic country.”

Democracy Box young co-creator, aged 17

Question:

Is the Voting Age 16 or 18?

Answer:

Depends where you live and what election you are voting in



There are several **Knowledge Tokens** in this chapter and you, our democracy hero, must collect them all.

How old do you have to be to play?

Take the Voting Ages Quiz with Young Co-Creators Lucy and Lloyd

(<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video5>)

Watch the
video



IS THE VOTING AGE
16 or 18...?

You can be **ANY**
AGE to get involved
in democracy by:

Have
freedom of speech! conversations!

volunteering!

Petition!

committee's
Research!

Protest!

campaign! school
council!

Lobbying!

Contact
local
representative!

Youth
Parliament!

civic
and civil
society! contact
the media!



VOTING

AGE depends on
where you live
and what election!

GENERAL ELECTIONS
(UK Parliament) = 18

LOCAL ELECTIONS

• (in England and
Northern Ireland) = 18

• (Scotland and Wales) = 16

**DEVOLVED PARLIAMENT
ELECTIONS**

• (Northern Ireland) = 18

• (Wales/Scotland) = 16

**REGISTER
! TO VOTE!**

• (Wales/Scotland) = 14

• (England/Northern
Ireland) = 16

**REGISTER TO
VOTE
ONLINE**



Knowledge Token 9

What age do I have to be to vote?

General UK Elections

To vote in General Elections (UK Parliament i.e. voting for MPs) wherever you live you have to be **18**

Local Elections

You can vote in local council elections in England and Northern Ireland (council) **at 18** and vote in local council elections in Wales and Scotland **at 16**

Devolved Parliament Elections

Wales and Scotland devolved parliament elections **at 16**
Northern Ireland devolved parliament elections **at 18**

16 year olds can now vote in Wales and Scotland in local elections and their devolved parliament elections.

Register to Vote

at 14 if you live in Wales or Scotland
or 16 if you live in England or Northern Ireland

Voting rules can change. We, the people, and groups like the Chartists and the Suffragettes, have demanded that the rules change to include all men and women equally. People have died so that all men and women could have a vote. All women only got the vote in 1928. We have only had one person one vote since 1948 and votes for everyone aged 18 and over since 1969. The voting age was lowered to 16 in Scotland in 2014 and Wales in 2021 for voting in local and devolved parliament elections.

You can get involved in democracy at any age:

- Exercising your freedom of speech
 - Volunteering
 - Starting or signing a petition
 - Protesting
 - Campaigning
 - Lobbying
 - Contacting your elected representative
 - Joining a youth parliament
 - Getting involved in your local community and finding ways large and small to take part in Civic and Civil Society
-



Knowledge Token 10

Who can vote and what ID do I need?

UK

Parliamentary Elections - All British, Republic of Ireland and qualifying Commonwealth citizens can vote in UK Parliamentary elections (General Elections).

Scotland and Wales

Local government, Police Crime Commissioner & Scottish and Welsh parliament elections - Everyone who can vote in General Elections can vote in these elections in Scotland and Wales, plus citizens from the European Union and qualifying foreign citizens.

Voter ID

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID at some elections. The rules are different depending on where you live in the UK and what election you are voting in. To be on the safe side always take ID with you. You can find the full list of what ID you can use and how to apply for free Voter ID at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voting-and-elections/voter-id>



Knowledge Token 11

Who is not allowed to vote in the UK?

You cannot vote in any UK elections if you are the monarch, a peer in the House of Lords or a convicted prisoner detained in prison - except in Scotland, where prisoners with a sentence of 12 months or less, can vote in Scottish Parliamentary elections and local elections.

If in doubt about any voting rules remember to go to speak to the Oracle - **The Electoral Commission** - the font of all knowledge that is fact checked, true and trustworthy. It has to be by law!

Key fact

Get involved in democracy by exercising your freedom of speech, getting involved in your local community, starting or signing a petition, protesting, campaigning, lobbying, contacting your elected representative or finding ways large and small to take part in civic and civil Society = any age!

Your vote
MATTERS.
It is your
RIGHT.

Register to vote at
<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>



Check out The Electoral Commission for trusted
and unbiased public information about your vote and
all elections (<https://tinyurl.com/EC-About-My-Vote>)



CHAPTER 7:

The RULES

of the game part 2

VOTING SYSTEMS

We are almost at the end of our story. There is just one final chapter, **3** final **Knowledge Tokens**, **1** final **Key Fact** and **1** final **Hero Challenge**.

You, our democracy hero, have traversed the 3 realms of our different UK parliaments, understood the difference between parliament and government, consulted with the Oracle - the Electoral Commission - and discovered the different types of parliament in the UK.

You have searched for and found all of your elected representatives and the meaning of the word democracy.

You now have **10 Ways to Get Involved** all year round. Now finally you will discover the different ways we count votes in different elections in the UK and then this story will be over and yours as a **democracy hero** will have only just begun.

But first

Chapter 7...

Voting systems, or electoral systems, are the method by which we elect representatives. A voting system determines the rules on how we elect parties and candidates.

The House of Commons, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru, Northern Ireland Assembly and UK local authorities all use different voting systems.

Listen to episode 5 of The Democracy Box podcast (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast5>)

Listen to
the podcast



Remember to check your ballot paper carefully for instructions. You may need to put a 'X', a tick or vote using numbers. The staff in the polling station are there to help you. You can ask them questions about the process if you are unsure.

There are a variety
of voting systems

some need a 'X' on
your ballot paper,
some need a number
so it's important to
read the instructions!



Knowledge Token 12 First-Past the Post (FPTP)

is a type of electoral system where the candidate with the most votes in a constituency or area/districts wins.

Who uses First-past-the-post (FPTP)?

The House of Commons and local councils in England and Wales use first-past-the-post.



Knowledge Token 13 Proportional Representation (PR)

is a type of electoral system in which the distribution of seats corresponds closely with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party so that if a party gained 40% of the total votes, a perfectly proportional system would allow them to gain 40% of the seats in that Parliament or Council.

Who uses Proportional Representation (PR)?

A mixture of First Past the Post and Proportional Representation is used to elect Members of the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland Parliaments.

Northern Ireland uses the Single Transferable Vote (STV) method to elect members.

Wales and Scotland, at the time of writing, use the Additional Member System.

There are pros and cons for all types of electoral systems. There are many different forms of Proportional Representation. You can find out more about them here (<https://tinyurl.com/Voting-systems>)

Voting
systems



WE HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS OF COUNTING VOTES



FIRST PAST THE POST (FPTP)

USED IN UK GENERAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS



The candidate with the most votes in a constituency or area/district wins.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (PR)

The distribution of seats corresponds closely with the amount of votes cast for each party.

USED IN
DEVOLVED NATION
ELECTIONS

IN SIMPLER TERMS:

If a party gained 40% of the total votes, they'd gain 40% of the seats in that parliament/council.



Key fact

Voting systems, or electoral systems, are the method by which we elect representatives. A voting system determines the rules on how we elect parties and candidates. There is more than one kind used in the UK and there is much debate about the pros and cons of each. **You can find out more about the different types of voting systems here** (<https://tinyurl.com/Voting-systems>)

Voting
systems



Thank you for reading this story.

You will now have collected 13 Knowledge Tokens, 7 Key Facts and found 10 Ways to get involved in our UK democracy along the way.



**Knowledge
Tokens**

- 1 The meaning of the word democracy**
- 2 The Rule of Law**
- 3 The Media**
- 4 Bias**
- 5 Fake News**
- 6 Parliament and Government are two very different things**
- 7 The difference between the Prime Minister and a First Minister.**
- 8 Devolution**
- 9 What age do I have to be to vote?**
- 10 Who can vote & what ID do I need?**
- 11 Who is not allowed to vote in the UK?**
- 12 First-past-the-post (FPTP)**
- 13 Proportional Representation (PR)**

These Tokens are your superpower.

A note of thanks and a final challenge from The Democracy Box and democracy heroes past, present and yet to come:-

Thank you for reading this story. Your final **Hero Challenge** is to share this story far and wide across the whole of the United Kingdom until everyone you know has heard it. You must pass on the **13 Knowledge Tokens**, the **7 Key Facts** and **10 Ways to Get Involved** to as many people as possible and make everyone, of every age, and future generations too, across the whole Kingdom, democracy heroes just like you. Then we can all write the next chapter **together**.

Your story has only just begun.



GLOSSARY



Ballot box: A secure box where all the ballot papers are kept until they are counted.

Ballot paper: A piece of paper which lists the candidates or parties that you can vote for. You vote by marking your ballot paper with an X or a number depending on the election.

Campaign: A planned activity or action to achieve a goal.

Candidate: Someone who has put themselves forward to be elected in your area.

Citizens: The people (you!).

Civil Society: Sometimes the term civil society is used in the more general sense of the elements such as freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, etc. that make up a democratic society.

Civic Society: In the UK, a civic society is a voluntary body or society which aims to represent the needs of a local community.

Coalition: A coalition government is a government formed jointly by more than one political party.

Committee: A group of people chosen to research and report on a matter.

Community: A group of people living/working in the same area, or a group of people who share a common interest.

Consensus: An agreement.

Constituency: MPs and Members of Devolved Parliaments represent people who live in an official geographic area called a Constituency which is a bigger local area than a ward/district.

Councillors: Elected by Ward/District to represent you at local government level.

Democracy: From ancient Greek that means people and rule. The people of a country have a voice and their voice is heard. People, or citizens, should have a role in their government through elected representatives.

Debate: A formal discussion. Opposing arguments can be heard and a decision is voted upon.

Devolution: The transfer of power by a central government to local or regional administrations.

Elected Representative: These are individuals chosen by citizens to represent them. This could be Members of Parliament (MPs) or members of devolved parliaments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, councillors, a mayor or police crime commissioners

Electoral register/Electoral roll: An official list of names and addresses of all the people who can vote in local and national elections. This is sometimes called the full register.

First Past The Post: In a general or local election, voters put a cross (X) next to their preferred candidate on a ballot paper. Ballot papers are counted. The candidate with the most votes wins and represents that constituency in Parliament or ward at the local Council.

Government: The group of people who are officially responsible for governing (running) the country or political part of the country.

Legislature: An institution that has the power to make or change laws.

Manifesto: Political parties publish documents outlining all their policies. You can use a manifesto to find out what a political party stands for.

Mayor: Most local authorities opt for the 'leader and cabinet' model where the council leader is selected from the councillors, but in some areas a 'mayor and cabinet' model has been adopted, where a directly elected mayor is established to replace the council leader.

Media: Communication: Radio, TV, Newspaper (print), Online and social media.

Members of devolved parliaments (MS, MSP, MLA): Elected by Constituency & Region. Elected to represent you in devolved parliaments if you live in Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland.

Open Register: A list with the same name and address information as the electoral register. It is not used for elections and information can be sold to third parties. You can choose to opt out of the open register.

Parliament: Means discussion. A Parliament is a country's legislative (law-making) body and is sometimes called a LEGISLATURE. The UK parliament (House of Commons) and devolved parliaments (in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) have two jobs -

1. **LEGISLATION** - Propose new laws and amend (change/make better) existing laws.

2. **SCRUTINY** - Challenge and examine (inspect closely and thoroughly) everything the Government/Cabinet is doing.

Political Parties: Most elected representatives represent political parties. However elected representatives do not have to belong to a political party. Instead, they can sit as Independents. The system of political parties in the UK has existed in one form or another since at least the 18th century.

Petition: A formal written request signed by many people.

Politics: Activities associated with government. Politics impacts everything around you.

Poll: A study or election in which people are asked for their opinions about a subject, person or political party.

Polling booth: A private screened area where you vote by marking your ballot paper.

Polling place: The building where you go to cast your vote. There can be more than one polling station at a polling place.

Proportional Representation: In Welsh/Scottish Parliament Elections all the votes cast for each political party in a Region are counted so that the % of votes cast for each party decides the number of regional members each party has in parliament to represent all those who voted in that region.

Protest: A complaint or objection against something.

Register: Sign up for something.

Rule of Law: The law should apply to everyone and the law treats all citizens equally.

Senedd: The Welsh Parliament (Senedd Cymru!) makes laws for Wales. MSs represent Welsh people's voices and views.

Volunteer: Someone who freely offers to take part in a task.

Vote: To make an official choice usually at a meeting, debate or election.

Ward/District: A geographical part of your local area where you live. Smaller than a constituency which is a larger geographical area. Councillors represent electoral areas called Wards or Districts. These areas are also sometimes called Divisions or Unitary Authority Electoral Divisions (UTE).