

What is AV?

■ Voters rank candidates in order of preference – those with the fewest votes are knocked out

■ The overall winner must receive 51 per cent of votes to be elected

■ Campaigners argue AV will reduce tactical voting and force candidates to work harder to gain your vote

■ Opponents fear it will create a more complex system and worry it could see extreme parties win seats in Westminster



FIRST PAST POST: But a referendum could see the current voting system scrapped

Parties clash over votes referendum

Election process to come under public scrutiny

By Nicola Chappell

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SUTTON'S political heavyweights have clashed over proposals to change the voting system for general elections.

Tom Brake, Liberal Democrat MP for Carshalton and Wallington, is in favour of Alternative Vote (AV) and is encouraging residents to vote for the change at a referendum next month.

But a leading Tory has hit back, accusing the Lib Dems of "self interest" and saying there is nothing wrong with the current first-past-the-post system.

On May 5, Sutton residents

and those across the country will vote for or against the proposed AV system.

AV allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference, rather than just casting a single vote for a single candidate.

Tom Brake would like to see his constituents back the proposed change.

Fairer

He said: "AV will make our system fairer. MPs will have to work harder to get elected by reaching out to gain the trust of more of their constituents, not just their core supporters."

"Most of the population have an MP they didn't vote for."

But Graham Whitham, leader of the Conservatives on Sutton Council, fears a move towards AV would only serve to confuse voters.

He added: "It's not about fair voting or PR, this is about the self interest of the Lib Dems and them staying in office."

"True supporters of PR will not see this as a stepping stone, but a cul-de-sac."

"When you think about all the things people would like a referendum on, this isn't one of them."

AV is already used to elect the Mayor of London, the Irish Prime Minister and governors in numerous American states.



CALL FOR CHANGE: Tom Brake thinks the AV system should be introduced

You say:



■ **Alan McEvoi, 41, from Sutton:**
"I'm not too bothered either way.
"I'm going to discuss it through with my friends before I make my decision on how to vote."



■ **Peter Sulsh, 65, from Worcester Park:**
"I doubt if I'll vote. It's not a sufficient enough alternative system. It appears to be a shut case to me."



■ **Lorna Blake, 20, from Sutton:**
"As I'm a student, I voted for Lib Dems in the general election. But they haven't done what they said they would so I can't be bothered to vote."