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Daily Express: **Vote and you could scoop the lottery**

By Alison Little, Deputy Political Editor

PEOPLE could be encouraged to vote by having their name entered in a lottery draw, a report said yesterday.

But households may have to pay for it through higher council tax bills.

Yesterday the Government-funded report on local democracy was branded a "manifesto for waste".

It includes suggestions such as public funding of political parties to encourage a wider cross-section of society to stand for election.

Money would be offered to improve the recruitment, training and selection of local council candidates.

The Government set up the Councillors Commission to look at how to encourage more people to take part in local democracy.

The report drew on voting in California for the idea of using a lottery draw to entice people to turn out for local and general elections.

It noted that voters there had been offered doughnuts, chicken dinners or a chiropractor appointment in exchange for casting a ballot.

But Matthew Elliott, chief executive of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said:

"This report is a manifesto for wasteful, politically correct local government and it won't solve any of the problems faced by councils.

"People are alienated by high taxes, irrelevant policies and ineffective politicians. That won't be changed by costly gimmicks. What people want is councillors who listen to them, cut taxes and run services efficiently. This report has ignored all those essential needs and has instead focused on more of the same wasteful nonsense that has given local government a bad name."

Other ideas in the report include encouraging under-30s, women and people from ethnic minorities to become councillors.

It also backed lowering the voting age and the minimum age for standing for election from 18 to 16.

Another suggested scheme included electing children as "young mayors" to speak for teenagers and advise councils on their youth policy.

Sir Simon Milton, chairman of the Local Government Association representing councils in England and Wales, said: "The best way to boost turnout at local elections would be to give councils greater powers genuinely to improve people's lives. More people would vote at council elections if local authorities had powers to raise and retain more money locally."

Local Government Secretary Hazel Blears said she was "particularly impressed" by such schemes. She will also consider voting incentives and moves to make council membership more diverse by next spring. Voting ages are to be discussed at a conference chaired by Commons Speaker Michael Martin.