



Conservative Leadership Election 2016

Whitehouse analysis and insight



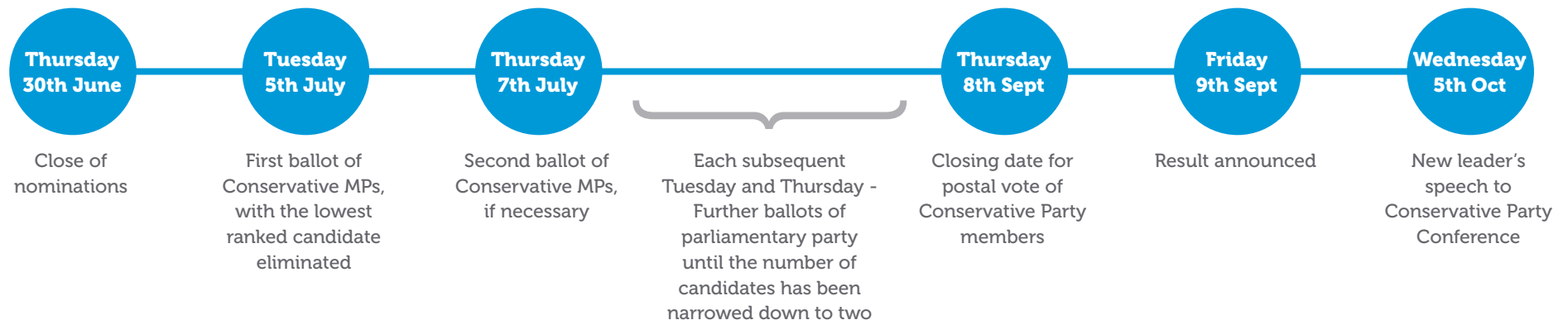
Conservative Leadership Election 2016

Overview

Following last week's defeat in the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, Prime Minister David Cameron announced his resignation and called an election for the leadership of the Conservative Party.

Five candidates have submitted nominations– with the expected frontrunner Boris Johnson announcing at the last moment that he would not put himself forward. The outcome will be decided in two stages. Over the next few weeks Conservative MPs will hold a series of votes and narrow the choice down to two candidates, who will then face a ballot of 150,000 party members. The result will be announced on 9th September 2016, with the winner taking on the role of Conservative leader with immediate effect and expected to be confirmed as Prime Minister as soon as practically possible afterwards.

Process & timeline



The
Whitehouse
Consultancy



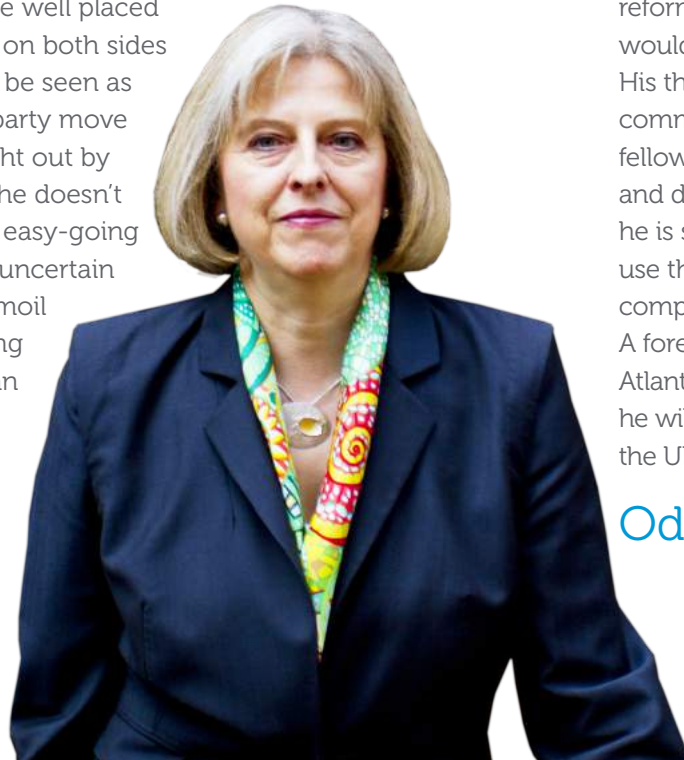
Conservative Leadership Election 2016

Theresa May

Age: 59 Constituency: Maidenhead Year elected: 1997

The longest serving Home Secretary in history, May has been a safe pair of hands in a challenging department. A political loner, she has earned respect and admiration in recent years for her steely grip on issues such as crime, immigration and terrorism. She gave her support to the Remain campaign, but was moderate and temperate in her arguments, eschewing personal attacks or dire warnings of Armageddon if Britain voted to leave the EU. She is therefore well placed to pick up votes from those on both sides of the argument and would be seen as a unifier who can help the party move on from the divisions brought out by the referendum. Although she doesn't display ebullient warmth or easy-going charisma, with the markets uncertain and politics in a state of turmoil she is now the overwhelming favourite as a serious woman for serious times.

Odds: 4/11



Michael Gove

Age: 48 Constituency: Surrey Heath Year elected: 2005

The Justice Secretary initially announced that he would be backing Boris Johnson as part of a united Leave ticket, but tensions between the two have prompted Gove to strike out on his own, while a lack of support across the parliamentary party and feelings that he would be too divisive a candidate led the former Mayor of London to withdraw from the race. A results driven intellectual heavyweight who championed transformative reforms to the delivery of public services, Gove would bring a crusading zeal to government. His thoughtful and highbrow style of communication is in stark contrast to that of his fellow Leave campaigner, and he would give focus and direction to the machinery of Whitehall. While he is still to set out a detailed platform, he will likely use the campaign to warn against any post-Brexit compromise on freedom of movement. A foreign policy hawk with a strong Atlanticist worldview, as Prime Minister he will try to carve out an active role for the UK in world affairs outside the EU.

Odds: 10/1



The
Whitehouse
Consultancy



Conservative Leadership Election 2016

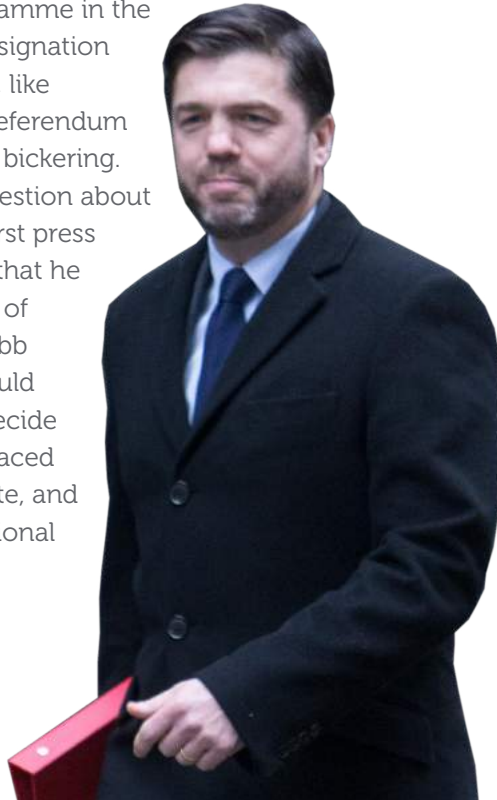
Stephen Crabb

Age: 43 Constituency: Preseli Pembrokeshire Year elected: 2001

The Work & Pensions Secretary's profile has been boosted by a compelling backstory and the sincerity with which he articulates his belief in education and employment as a way of providing the less advantaged with greater opportunities in life. He had a successful, if low key two-year stint as Welsh Secretary before being tasked with seeing through the Government's welfare reform programme in the aftermath of Iain Duncan Smith's resignation from Cabinet. He is personable and, like Theresa May, made it through the referendum without descending into rancorous bickering. A committed Christian, he faced question about his views on gay rights during his first press conference, but reiterated his view that he was comfortable with the outcome of the vote on same sex marriage. Crabb could be a compromise choice should supporters of either May or Gove decide that a third option would be best placed to stop their least favoured candidate, and offers the opportunity for a generational change and optimistic fresh start.

Odds: 25/1

The
Whitehouse
Consultancy



Liam Fox

Age: 54 Constituency: North Somerset Year elected: 1992

The former Defence Secretary had a good referendum campaign, offering a calm and reasoned case for Brexit and cementing his position as the standard bearer of the Thatcherite right more than ten years after he last stood for the leadership. Although questions about the role of his adviser Adam Werrity forced him to stand down from the Cabinet in 2011 and may continue to dog his leadership aspirations, he commands respect for his authoritative manner and the breadth of his experience. His 2005 leadership bid sought to grasp the mantle of social justice for the right, addressing issues such as mental health, promotion of marriage and welfare reform. Even if he fails to make it through to the ballot of party members, a return to a prominent Cabinet position undoubtedly beckons.

Odds: 40/1





Conservative Leadership Election 2016

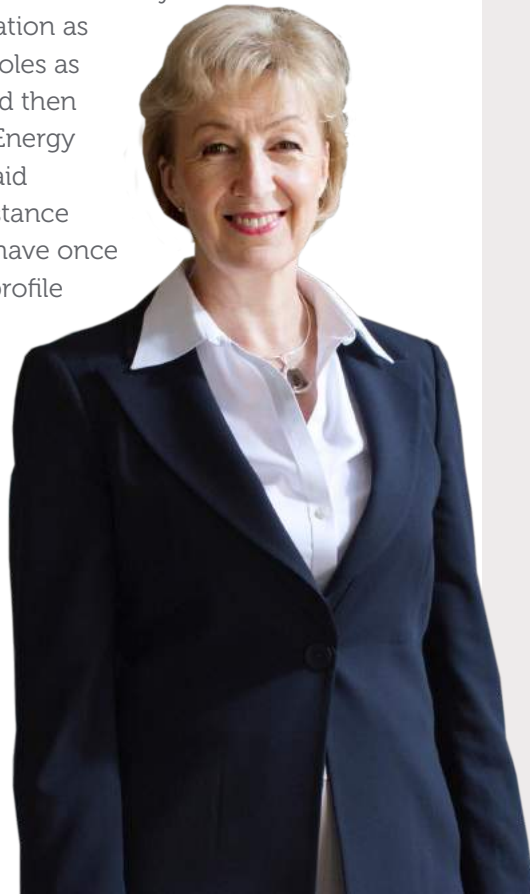
Andrea Leadsom

Age: 53 Constituency: South Northamptonshire Year elected: 2010

Leadsom has distinguished herself amongst the 2010 intake of Tory MPs with an impressive resume in banking and financial services, a forensic approach to scrutiny during her time on the Treasury Select Committee, and gaining a reputation as a shrewd negotiator in her ministerial roles as Economic Secretary to the Treasury and then Minister of State at the Department of Energy & Climate Change. She has been unafraid to speak her mind, taking a principled stance against HS2 and famously reported to have once told George Osborne to "f**k off". Her profile was boosted through a prominent role in the Leave campaign and she has been compared to Margaret Thatcher on more than one occasion. She is a potential dark horse candidate and has been talked about as a future Chancellor of the Exchequer to either Theresa May or Michael Gove.

Odds: 4/1

The
Whitehouse
Consultancy



Whitehouse Analysis

"With this being the first Tory leadership contest since 1990 in which the winner will automatically become Prime Minister, the emphasis of the debate is likely to be on each candidate's competence and their ability to negotiate a settlement for the UK outside of the European Union after the unexpected outcome of the referendum. This is in contrast to previous elections, where the discussion was focused on the direction of the party and extent to which modernisation should take precedence over campaigning on more traditional issues such as crime and immigration. While the new leader will need to plot a forward course following the referendum campaign, there is a degree of consensus around the policy direction of the Conservative Party. Regardless of who wins, it is unlikely that there will be a significant departure from the centrist, One Nation approach charted by David Cameron during his time as Prime Minister. Each candidate will over the next few weeks set out their stall in terms of eye catching policy recommendations designed to appeal to the Tory faithful and country as a whole, and while there is uncertainty around what Brexit will look like in practice and how it will be managed, there is little at this stage to suggest the Government will deviate significantly from last year's manifesto or the legislative programme already announced."

Carl Thomson

Director

To discuss how we can help your organisation
please contact:

Helen Munro

t: +44 (0)20 7014 3204

m: +44 (0)7577 448808

e: helen.munro@whitehouseconsulting.co.uk

 [@WhitehouseSE1](https://twitter.com/WhitehouseSE1)

 www.linkedin.com/company/whitehouse-consultancy

