



Political Notebook by George Pascoe-Watson

David Cameron launches the Conservative Party election manifesto this morning - with an invitation to the nation to "join the government of Britain".

The Tory leader will unveil a hardback document with no pictures to underline the seriousness of his campaign and to try to contrast it with what he will call the "flimsy" Labour alternative.

He will say it took four years to put together his vision of the UK's future and a hardback book touching on every aspect of British life is the product.

Mr Cameron's emphasis will be on a Big Society - which will draw immediate comparisons with Baroness Thatcher's wrong-quoted claim that "there is no such thing as society".

The "direct invitation" will translate into a range of offers under a Conservative government:-

- Be your own boss
- Run your own school
- Own your own home
- Sack your failing MP mid-term and force a by-election
- Sack a failing police chief if crime doesn't fall locally
- Save a post office
- Save a pub
- Veto a council tax rise

This is a 150-page document which will be unveiled a short cab ride from Westminster. The Tories won't say where in case Labour find out and try to hijack the photo opportunity.

Manifestos are an important moment in any political campaign but it's rare for them to carry infinite detail.

Gordon Brown's Labour manifesto promised yesterday a new Industrial Revolution aimed at injecting new life into Britain's economy.

Again, it was long and wordy and reinforced the sense of seriousness that today's world demands.

Far more important will be Mr Cameron's preparations for this week's inaugural TV debates.

The Tory leader and wife Sam will travel to Bristol on Thursday to take part in the ITV show hosted by Aliastair Stewart.

No amount of preparation can guarantee a pitch-perfect performance and in Tory HQ there's a fear that Mr Cameron goes into the event carrying too heavy an expectation of success.

He has been studying the performances of Barack Obama and has been working with Anita Dunn, an American who helped the US senator win the keys to the White House.

She is helping him in the most enormous detail - even down to how to walk casually but exuding authority.



Nothing can be left to chance and Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg are both undergoing marathon training sessions for the first debate.

Alastair Campbell has been playing the part of Mr Cameron in private war-gaming sessions with the PM and a number 10 Downing Street adviser Theo Bertram is acting as Mr Clegg.

Pollsters admit they have little idea how the three televised debates will play for the leaders. Chaos could ensue and throw all the projections out of the window if one figure makes a dreaded gaffe.

The pressure is already building, though, with just over 20 days to go until the ballot boxes open.

The PM let slip a glimpse of his frustration at the media yesterday when he labelled Adam Boulton, Sky News' brilliant political editor, a Tory.

My former deputy at The Sun was booed by Labour activists when he arrived at the manifesto launch.

Things can only get bitter....

Join me in the build-up to the election on Twitter - http://twitter.com/gpw_portland