

Business divided on Tory leaders

By Rachel Cooper

DAVID Cameron and Kenneth Clarke have been voted by business leaders as being the most trusted politicians to steer Britain out of recession.

A survey of 540 senior business figures by DLA Piper, the law firm, found that more than a third of respondents felt the Conservative leader was the best politician for the economy, followed by the shadow business secretary, who attracted 21pc of the votes.

Vince Cable, shadow chancellor for the Liberal Democrats, came third with 17pc, followed by Gordon Brown with just 11pc.

But in a sign of mixed feelings towards the Tory front bench, George Osborne managed to achieve just 3pc of the vote, coming joint last on the list along with Lord Mandelson.

A separate poll by Deloitte found a high level of concern about the prospect of a hung parliament, with 93pc of finance directors believing the lack of a clear winner would damage the economy. However, Deloitte found appetite for financial risk at the highest levels since 2008.

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The respondents to DLA said the current tax regime harms the UK's competitiveness, with 69pc arguing that National Insurance should be reduced to encourage hiring.

At least 81 business leaders are understood to have now backed the letter sent to *The Daily Telegraph* supporting the Conservatives' policy to reverse Labour's NI hike by cutting government waste. The Prime Minister has since claimed that business leaders have been "deceived" by the Tories.

Charles Severs, a partner at DLA Piper, said: "The UK business community appears eager for a change in Parliament, with senior figures clearly pointing to Cameron. However, companies believe that financial and fiscal regulatory reforms are key, and the view of George Osborne does not appear anywhere near as enthusiastic."