

# Election 2023: south west political preview

April 2023

After a breathtaking ten months in UK politics, 4 May 2023 sees local elections the length of breadth of the country. The polls become the first significant electoral test for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. The elections will also indicate whether the landslide lead in the opinion polls for Labour can be turned into the currency of council seats at a local level.

**Our analysis considers the key issues in some of the critical councils up for grabs in the south west and, importantly, whereabouts each local planning authority is in the development plan process.**

We don't make council-by-council predictions – that's for the pollsters. But what is certain is that while expectations for Conservative performance in 2023 are rock-bottom, Labour's are sky-high. As of 28 March 2023, the Electoral Calculus poll-of-polls suggests a 19-point lead. Anything else but sweeping to control in urban areas like Swindon and Plymouth would be considered underachievement.

The picture is less straightforward in Devon, with a mixture of Liberal Democrats, smaller parties and independents. There are also areas where the Tories hold safe parliamentary constituencies even in these problematic electoral conditions. Sir Keir Starmer will find it challenging to make headway here.

This is the first local election since the days of Theresa May in the West of England councils (Bath & North East Somerset/ North Somerset/ South Gloucestershire). At a national level, opinion polling for Conservatives and Labour was around 24%. Only the Tories in South Gloucestershire escaped an electoral mauling – Labour did not benefit. With the opinion polls firmly in Labour's favour now, this impact on these councils may prove the story of the night if sweeping gains are made.

We would be delighted to provide any further insight on these elections and their impact on development projects, local infrastructure, or local decision-making. Our Westminster-based Public Affairs team can provide insight into the effects at a national government level.

Contact us on [info@jbp.co.uk](mailto:info@jbp.co.uk)

## Your JBP Political Analysis team



**James Hinchcliffe**  
Strategic Engagement  
Director



**Serena Ralston**  
Senior Account  
Director



**Matthew Bacon**  
Senior Account  
Manager



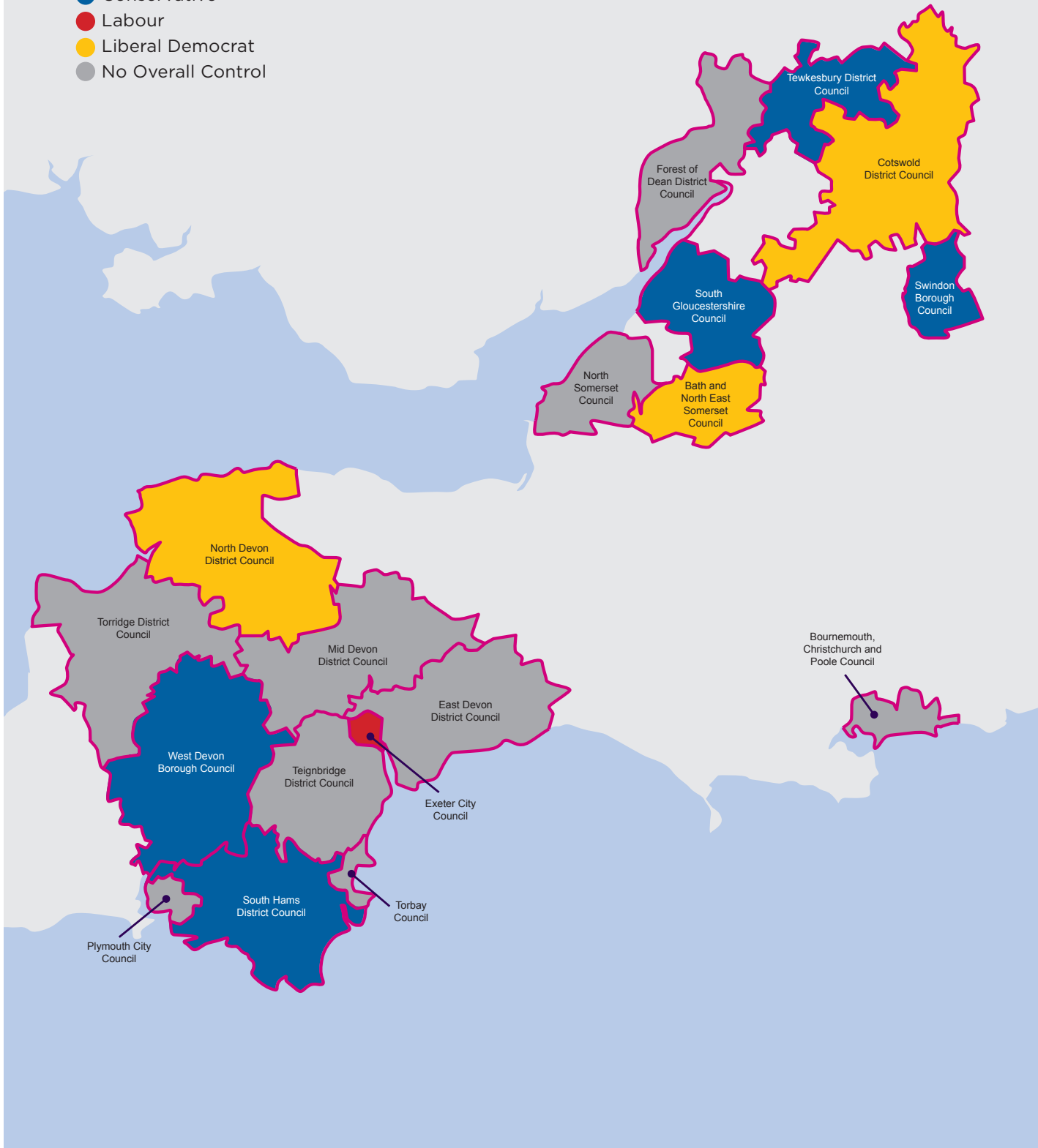
**Matthew Roberts**  
Senior Account  
Manager



**Simon Prescott**  
Senior Counsel

## Election 2023: councils featured in this preview

- Conservative
- Labour
- Liberal Democrat
- No Overall Control



# Devon

## Exeter City Council

**Current Control** - Labour ●

**Election Type** - Thirds

**Last Election Held** - 2022

### Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Labour	26
Conservative	5
Green	5
Independent	2
Liberal Democrats	2



**What happened last time** - Labour have ruled Exeter City Council for many years however they did have their majority slightly reduced in 2022 losing seats to the Green Party in Heavitree and St David's. However, they gained a seat in Topsham at the expense of the Conservatives.

**Trends to look out for** - Labour are highly unlikely to lose overall control in Exeter however it is worth watching the trends in central Exeter as the Greens look to consolidate their position as a left-wing party of opposition to Labour within the city.

Whilst this is unlikely to result in much short-term political change, the city may be beginning a process similar to Bristol where the Greens are dominant in the more central urban student heavy areas whilst Labour are more dominant in the outer areas.

The Conservative meanwhile will be looking to stay alive in Exeter as Labour continues to target their last remaining seats in Exeter Topsham and St Loyes.

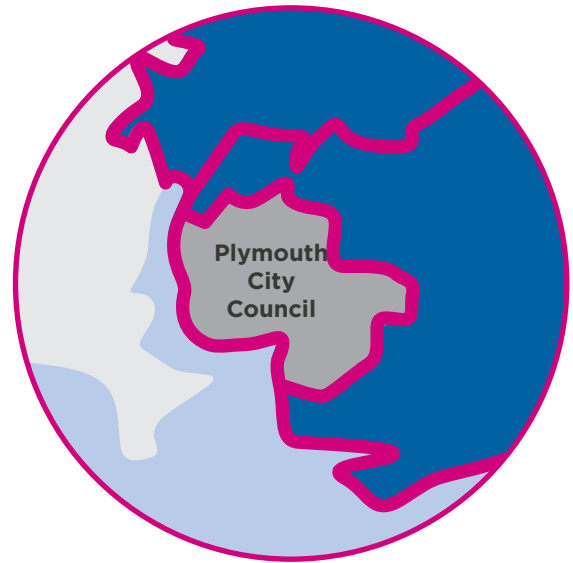
**Local Plan Status** - As the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) and the Development Delivery Development Plan Document (DPD) are no longer being progressed, they are in the process of writing a new Local Plan. The Exeter Local Plan 2020 - 2040 is set to be published shortly with submission to the Inspectorate in the summer and adoption in 2024.

# Plymouth City Council

**Current Control** - No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** - Thirds

**Last Election Held** - 2022



## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Labour	25
Conservative	23
Independent Alliance	5
Green	3
Independent	1

**What happened last time** - Plymouth is a swing authority between the Labour and Conservative Parties. The Conservatives made gains in the previous election in 2021, becoming the largest party and Labour lost overall control of the Council. Since the election there has been many defections. These are primarily from Conservative to Independent. Labour are now the largest party again.

**Trends to look out for** - There has been a great deal of turmoil and infighting in the Conservative group. Council leader Richard Bingley has resigned over the highly controversial felling of trees in the city centre, which attracted national headlines.

Labour will be looking to take control of the authority. It is seen as a top national target for the party, and many resources will be put into the area. Wards such as Budshead, Compton, Moor View, Southway are top targets for the party. Labour may even venture more into uncharted territory by targeting the more suburban Plymstock Dunstone ward.

The Greens will look to expand on their recent gains against the Conservatives in several wards on the outskirts of the authority.

**Local Plan Status** - The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council, and West Devon Borough Council) was adopted in 2019. This replaced all previous development plans in each local authority. No further updates on the local plan status have occurred since.

# South Hams District Council

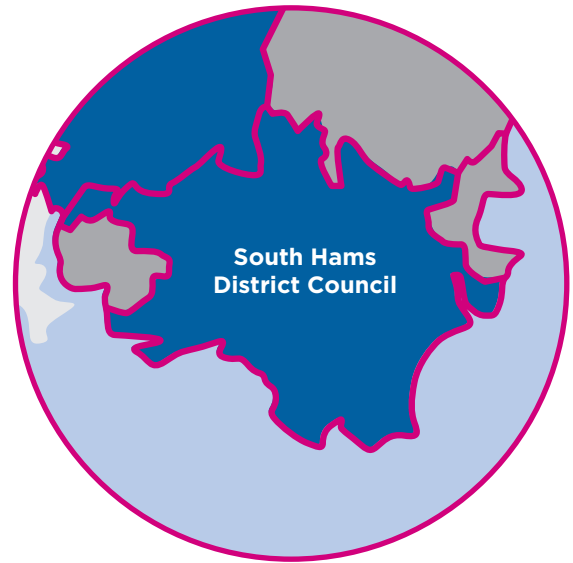
**Current Control** - Conservative ●

**Election Type** - Whole

**Last Election Held** - 2019

## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	16
Liberal Democrats	10
Green	2
Independent	3



**What happened last time** - Despite losing eight seats, the Conservatives narrowly clung on to power in 2019 with the Liberal Democrats taking advantage by winning six seats. This trend was seen in several authorities in Devon that year.

**Trends to look out for** - The Conservatives currently have the bare minimum of seats to form a majority. The Lib Dems will aim to build on progress last time out and capitalise on poor Conservative polling nationally. This is likely to be one of the key battlegrounds in the south west between the two parties, with the Liberal Democrats needing six seats to form a majority. In four seats, the Conservatives have less than a 100-vote lead over the Liberal Democrats, giving them a range of critical targets in May.

The lack of housing for local people is a significant issue, with the authority declaring a housing crisis in September 2021. They took the fight to second homeowners in February 2023 by unanimously voting to double council tax on second or holiday homes, which make up one in 12 homes throughout the district.

**Local Plan Status** - The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan was adopted by South Hams District Council on 21 March 2019, Plymouth City Council on 26 March 2019 and West Devon Borough Council on 26 March 2019. The adopted Joint Local Plan covers the administrative areas of Plymouth City, South Hams District and West Devon Borough and forms part of the Development Plan for these areas. No further updates on the local plan status have occurred since.

# Torbay Council

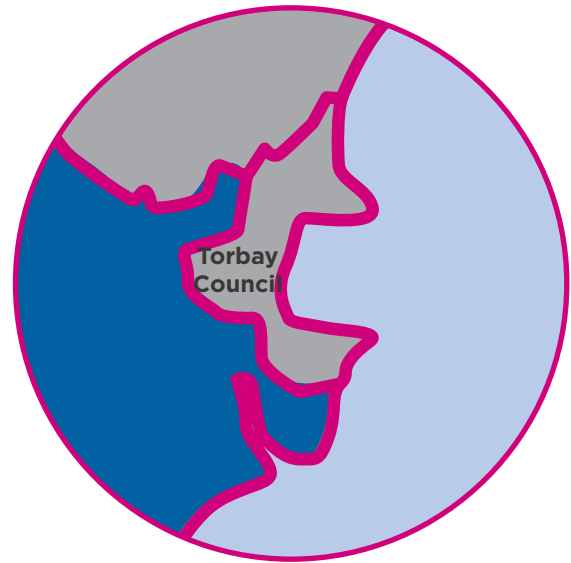
**Current Control** – No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019

## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Liberal Democrats	12
Conservative	13
Independent	10



**What happened last time** – The Conservatives performed badly in 2019, losing 10 seats and control of the Council to a Liberal Democrat/Independent coalition. Since then, they have lost a further two members to the Independents.

**Trends to look out for** – Torbay has historically been a Conservative/Lib Dem battleground, with the parliamentary seat changing hands over the years. With the Lib Dems in the ascendancy in Devon (securing an overwhelming victory in Honiton last year), they will be viewing Torbay as a key target to achieve majority control for themselves.

Housing, or the lack of it, is a vital issue in Torbay. The Council declared a housing crisis in 2021 to address the acute shortage of accommodation in the bay. Lack of affordable housing is a major problem, with Torbay being a historically low-wage area but with some of the most expensive properties in the region. All parties campaigning in May must show they will address this problem.

**Local Plan Status** – Following a review of the Adopted Local Plan in 2020, the Council is preparing to update its housing supply policies. They are currently in Issues and Options stage and will consult on non-housing policies in early 2023. Following consultation on the preferred option, the Plan will be for Examination in Autumn 2023.

# West Devon Borough Council

**Current Control** - Conservative ●

**Election Type** - Whole

**Last Election Held** - 2020

## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Liberal Democrats	1
Conservative	17
Independent	11
Green	2



**What happened last time** - Cllr Mark Davies left the Conservatives to sit as an independent over the Government's handling of the Dominic Cummings scandal. Since then, a separate independent, Cllr Robin Musgrave has joined the Lib Dems. The net result is to leave the number of independents unchanged, the number of Conservatives down one and Liberal Democrats up one, denying the Conservatives an overall majority. The Conservatives regained a majority in 2023 following a by-election.

**Trends to look out for** - The Conservatives weathered the storm in 2019. They held control of the Council despite losing seats to a combination of Independents, Liberal Democrats and Greens. Whether the party can retain its support in an authority where seats are frequently decided by fine margins remains to be seen. This factor raises the likelihood of No Overall Control on the council post-May.

**Local Plan Status** - The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan was adopted by South Hams District Council on 21 March 2019, Plymouth City Council on 26 March 2019 and West Devon Borough Council on 26 March 2019. The adopted Joint Local Plan covers the administrative areas of Plymouth City, South Hams District and West Devon Borough and forms part of the Development Plan for these areas. No further updates on the local plan status have occurred since.

# East Devon District Council

**Current Control** – No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019



## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	12
Independent East Devon Alliance	12
Independent	15
Liberal Democrats	7
Green	2
Labour	1

**What happened last time** – Since the 2019 election, the majority (31/60) of the councillors do not belong to a national political party. Most of these Independents became part of either the East Devon Alliance or the Independent Group.

In March 2020, councillors from the East Devon Alliance, Lib Dems, Green Party and one Independent formed the Democratic Alliance, with 24 councillors making them the largest group in the Council.

In May 2020, eight councillors left the Independent Group. One joined the East Devon Alliance, and seven formed the Independent Progressive Group. This new group formed a coalition partnership with the Democratic Alliance, and a new majority administration with 31/60 seats.

**Trends to look out for** – One of the most complicated councils in the region owing to its myriad of parties and groups, EDDC is likely to remain much the same following the election with a range of groups jostling for power. Another coalition is most likely between much of the same parties as now, though perhaps with more Liberal Democrat members with four Independent East Devon Alliance councillors having recently announced their intention to switch parties. Though the current administration is unpopular, the Conservatives are understood to lack the organisation at a grass roots level to take advantage and will likely remain in opposition.

**Local Plan Status** – East Devon District Council is preparing a new Local Plan that is expected to replace the existing Local Plan. The new plan is proposed to cover the period from 2020 to 2040. Work began with a consultation on an Issues and Options document and the consultation ran from Monday, 7 November, 2022, until Sunday, 15 January, 2023. The council has paused its local plan process as a result of the governments planning reforms.



## Teignbridge District Council

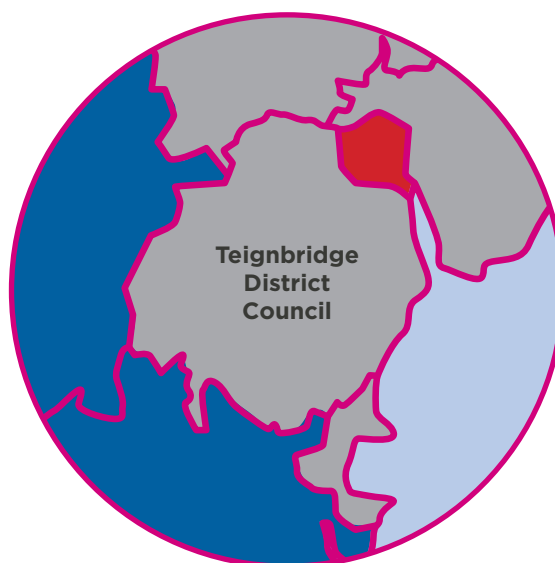
**Current Control** – No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019

### Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Liberal Democrats	21
Conservative	11
Independent	8
South Devon Alliance	4
Anti-Violence & Positive Politics Group	2



**What happened last time** – The last elections took place in May 2019. The Liberal Democrats gained the Council from the Conservatives, taking 26 out of 47 seats. However, since 2019, the Liberal Democrats have lost their majority. The Council has become No Overall Control due to party splintering.

**Trends to look out for** – After a decisive result in May 2019, the last four years have resulted in Liberal Democrat numbers on Teignbridge Council ebbing away. This coming May, there is no certainty that the strength of the 2019 result will be repeated. The likelihood appears that the number of independent councillors could grow, with the period of No Overall Control continuing.

**Local Plan Status** – The current local plan runs from 2013 – 2033 and was adopted on 6 May 2014. The Council are consulting on a new local plan, and the proposed submission Local Plan 2020-2040 (Regulation 19) consultation ended on 13 March 2023.

## Mid Devon District Council

**Current Control** – No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019

### Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	17
Green	2
Independent	3
Liberal Democrats	11
Non-Aligned	6
Ungrouped	3



**What happened last time** – After the 2019 election, the Council was run by a Liberal Democrat-Independent-Green coalition. However, Council Leader ‘Independent’ Bob Deed, removed three Lib Dem’s from the Cabinet in 2020. He replaced them with Tories and in March 2021 and removed the only Green from the Cabinet, ensuring a Tory Majority in Cabinet, and creating a Tory Minority Administration.

**Trends to look out for** – With 22 seats needed for an overall majority, it is an uphill challenge for any party to gain enough seats to fully control the Council. The Conservatives haemorrhaged support at the last election at the expense of the Liberal Democrats, Independents and Greens. With further Conservative losses on the cards, attention will turn to whether these groups can form a stable coalition should they attain enough seats for a majority.

**Local Plan Status** – The Local Plan was adopted on 29 July 2020. Consultation on the Plan Mid Devon 2023-2043 Regulation 18 Issues Paper occurred from 31 January to 28 March 2022. A draft Policies and Site Options Consultation is expected in the summer.

## North Devon Council

**Current Control** – Liberal Democrat ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019



### Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	8
Green	2
Independent	7
North Devon Independent	2
Non-Aligned	1
Liberal Democrats	22

**What happened last time** – The Lib Dems came within a whisker of achieving a majority in 2019, just one seat short. The Conservatives who were the big losers on the night fell victim to the same trend as elsewhere in Devon, that of grassroots, hyper-local community parties standing for election. The Greens also gained their first seats in North Devon.

**Trends to look out for** – Thanks to a by-election victory in December 2022, the Lib Dems secured a majority on the Council. Now, the party will focus its resources locally on cementing their control, anticipating that voters will be weary of 13 years of Conservative-led national government. There are several Conservative-held seats that the Lib Dems will be targeting having come close last time. These include Ilfracombe East, Braunton West and Georgeham and Instow.

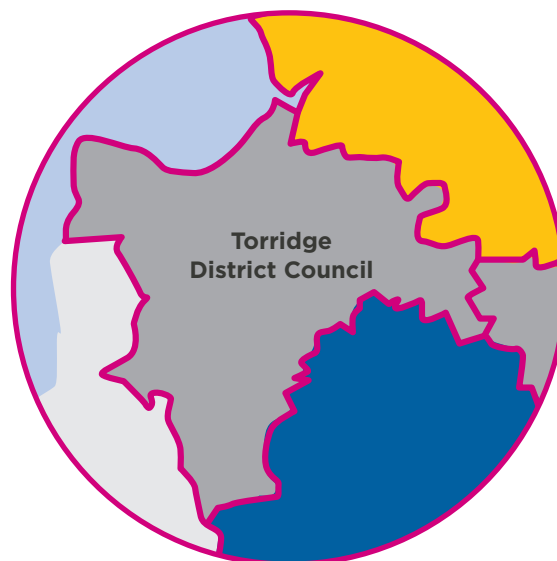
**Local Plan Status** – The first joint North Devon and Torrington Local Plan has been adopted. It will now shape the future of northern Devon. NDDC adopted the plan, along with Torrington District Council, on Monday 29 October 2018. No further updates on the local plan status have occurred since.

# Torrige District Council

**Current Control** – No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019



## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Independent	18
Conservative	9
Labour	3
Green	2
Liberal Democrats	2
Non-Aligned	1

**What happened last time** – The Conservatives lost control of the council, losing 8 seats largely to the Independents who gained 12 seats. The council has a history of being under No Overall Control, with the Conservative majority from 2015 – 2019 being an exception.

**Trends to look out for** – The Conservatives are likely to be trying to defend it's remaining rural strongholds in the East of the district. The Independents have already got a foothold in many of these areas and further gains are certainly a possibility.

Labour will be hoping to gain a further foothold in this authority, eyeing up potential further gains in more urban areas such as Bideford.

The Greens may also scent some potential success here, as they did not stand in most seats in the last election however ended up winning two seats/

**Local Plan Status** – The first joint North Devon and Torrige Local Plan 2011-2031 has been adopted and will shape the future of northern Devon. Torrige District Council adopted the plan, along with North Devon District Council, on Monday 29 October 2018. No further updates on the local plan status have occurred since.

# Wiltshire

## Swindon Borough Council

**Current Control** - Conservative ●

**Election Type** - Thirds

**Last Election Held** - 2022

### Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	32
Labour	23
Independent	1



**What happened last time** - The Conservatives maintained majority control of the Council that they have held since 2004. However, they lost several seats to the Labour Party following a decline in the national polls for the Conservatives.

**Trends to look out for** - Swindon is seen as a bellwether area in national polls both at a local and national election level. It is seen as a top target seat for the Labour Party in these elections and where Sir Keir Starmer launched Labour's local election campaign. We can expect to see considerable resources spent on Swindon alongside national media attention.

There are more Conservative defences this time compared to 2022, meaning a Labour victory is more possible. Key Labour targets include Haydon Wick, Liden, Eldene & Park South, Lydiard & Freshbrook, Penhill & Upper Stratton and St Margaret & South Marston.

The Conservatives, meanwhile, will be hoping to make a gain in the Central ward where they have had success in recent years. If national polls are to be believed and the results from last year repeated, it looks to be a difficult night for the government here.

**Local Plan Status** - The Council adopted the Swindon Local Plan in March 2015, providing the development strategy to deliver growth to 2026. The council have started the process of updating its local plan and a 'call for sites' process has just concluded on 31st March 2023. Now the process has been undertaken, an updated Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) will be produced.

# West of England

## South Gloucestershire Council

**Current Control** - Conservative ●

**Election Type** - Whole

**Last Election Held** - 2019

### Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	33
Liberal Democrats	17
Labour	11



**What happened last time** - Similar results to 2015. The Conservatives retained control of the Council, which they have run since 2007, but on a reduced majority, sliding from 40 seats to 33 (partly due to substantial boundary changes reducing the overall number of seats). The Liberal Democrats increased from 16 to 17 seats, whilst Labour lost three seats.

**Trends to look out for** - The Conservatives have a razor-thin majority on the Council. Although most incumbent Tory councillors are standing once again, the Council Leader, Cllr Toby Savage, is standing down at this election.

They are defending a seat in Filton against Labour with a majority of 1 and are almost sure to fall. Closer races, like Charlton and Cribbs and Parkwall and Warmley wards, are expected, which may determine whether the Conservatives cling on.

An anti-Conservative coalition appears to be a likely outcome. The Liberal Democrats seem to have maxed out their potential number of seats they can win in their Thornbury and Yate stronghold. Beyond the marginals, Labour must overturn some significant majorities in the Kingswood and Filton and Bradley Stoke constituencies to gain enough seats to take outright control.

**Local Plan Status** - The Council is developing a new Local Plan that will manage growth in the area for at least the next 15 years. After resetting the scope and timeline for preparing this at its October 2022 Cabinet meeting, they intend to bring forward the next consultation stage. This builds on two previous consultation phases and is pencilled-in for the second half of 2023.

# North Somerset Council

**Current Control** – No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019

## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	13
Green	4
Independent	14
Liberal Democrats	10
Labour	6
No group	3



**What happened last time** – The Conservatives lost control of the Council they had held since 2007, and a ‘rainbow coalition’ of Independents, Liberal Democrats, Labour, and Green councillors was formed. The leader of the Council is currently Independent Member Steve Bridger.

**Trends to look out for** – The Conservatives will be looking to defend what remains of their seats in North Somerset. These are threatened by a combination of Liberal Democrats, Independents and Greens in the more rural and suburban wards and challenges from Labour in Weston-Super-Mare.

Labour will be hoping that demographic changes in Weston Super Mare and Worle play to their advantage in these elections. They will target several Conservative seats to build a more significant presence in Clevedon. However, resources in North Somerset will be limited as the party looks to make landmark gains elsewhere in the South West.

The Independents hope to consolidate their 2019 gains, particularly in Portishead and the rural part of the borough. Meanwhile, the Lib Dems will aim to keep their seats in Weston Super Mare and make further inroads in the rural areas of the authority.

The most likely outcome for the Council remains No Overall Control, albeit with fewer Conservative members.

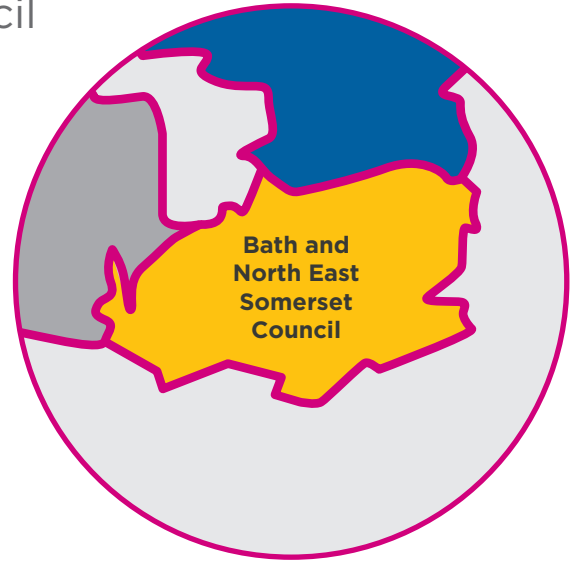
**Local Plan Status** – Following the government planning reforms, the Council has decided to await clarity before finalising a revised version of the local plan. Consultation on a revised local plan is now not expected to occur before Summer 2023 with submission for examination in Autumn 2023.

# Bath and North East Somerset Council

**Current Control** - Liberal Democrat ●

**Election Type** - Whole

**Last Election Held** - 2019



## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Liberal Democrats	36
Conservative	10
Independent	6
Labour	5
Green	1
No Party	1

**What happened last time** - The Liberal Democrats comfortably gained control of the council from the Conservatives, making substantial gains, both in urban Bath and in the surrounding rural and suburban areas.

**Trends to look out for** - It is highly unlikely that there will be a change of control here and the Liberal Democrats will be hoping to make further gains from the Conservatives in Keynsham and the more rural wards in the authority. Whilst at the same time they will be cautiously watching for any potential Green advance in urban Bath, with wards such as Lambridge and Odd Down being possible Green targets.

Labour will be hoping to consolidate its position as the main opposition to the Conservatives in Jacob Rees-Moggs, North East Somerset constituency and will be heavily targeting former mining towns such as Radstock whilst hoping to make gains in its former stronghold area of Keynsham South.

**Local Plan Status** - In January 2023, Councillors in B&NES voted to adopt a partial update to the local plan which runs until 2029. As part of this update B&NES has become the first council in England to successfully adopt an energy-based net zero housing policy as part of its commitment to tackling the climate emergency.



# Gloucestershire

## Tewkesbury District Council

**Current Control** – Conservative ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019

### Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	23
Liberal Democrats	7
Brockworth First	4
Tewkesbury & Twyning Independents	2
Green	1
No group	1



**What happened last time** – The Conservatives held control of the Council albeit on a much-reduced majority, losing ten seats in this stronghold that they have controlled since 2007.

**Trends to look out for** –. Whilst 2019 was a terrible election year for the Conservatives, the other parties will hope they fall further still and lose overall control of the Council.

The Conservatives are likely to remain the largest party and hold healthy majorities in many of their wards. However given national polling the Liberal Democrats and Independents may make enough gains between them to force the Council into No Overall Control.

**Local Plan Status** – Tewkesbury is part of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) in partnership with Gloucester City Council and Cheltenham Borough Council. The JCS sets out a strategic planning framework for the three areas. The JCS was adopted by all three councils in December 2017 and is now undergoing review.

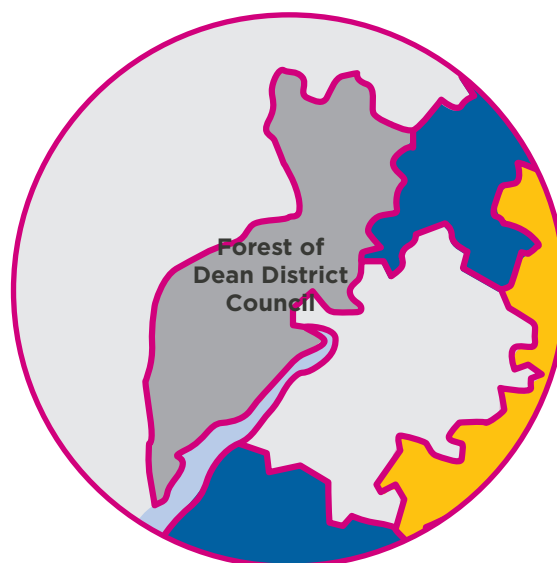
The Tewkesbury Borough Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in June 2022 at a Special Meeting of the Full Council.

# Forest of Dean District Council

**Current Control** – No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019



## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	6
Labour	3
Green	7
Independent	8
Progressive Independents	7
Independent Alliance	5
Liberal Democrats	2

**What happened last time** – The 2019 elections resulted in No Overall Control of the Council and a broad-ranging combination of political representatives. Following the election, an administration was formed between the Independent, Green and Labour councillors. Councillor Tim Gwilliam, an independent councillor who had served as leader of the Council since July 2017, was re-elected as leader.

**Trends to look out for** – There has been significant political turmoil in the political administration. The council leader removed the Greens from his cabinet due to “disloyalty”. Council Leader Tim Gwilliam has also confirmed he will not be standing in the elections.

In standard times, the Conservatives may be looking to take advantage of the infighting at the Council and make gains. However, the national state of play may make it hard for them to do this. With the declining industrial presence in the area, Labour also no longer has the base to be a serious player here.

With all things considered, another hung council seems the most likely outcome for the Forest of Dean.

**Local Plan Status** – The Forest of Dean Local Plan is under review. Considering feedback from the Issues and Options and Preferred Option consultations (held in 2022), they developed and consulted on a Second Preferred Option strategy, which supersedes the first. It is still subject to evaluation, including possible alternatives, potential sites and policies. At this stage specific sites are not identified although general areas considered appropriate for development are referred to.

The next formal stage in the process will be to seek guidance for the draft Local Plan and confirm a strategy. This is likely to involve a meeting of Full Council which will take place after the 4 May 2023 elections and the public will be asked for comments on the draft plan in Spring 2024. After this consultation, they will update the draft plan based on comments and agree on a publication version. The plan will be submitted for examination in Autumn/Winter 2025/2026, so it can be examined and formally adopted by the Council.

# Cotswold District Council

**Current Control** - Liberal Democrat ●

**Election Type** - Whole

**Last Election Held** - 2019

## Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	13
Green	1
Independent	1
Liberal Democrats	18



**What happened last time** - The Conservatives had controlled the Council since 2003. Still, they lost ten seats in the 2019 election. The Lib Dems won overall control of the Council for the first time since local government reorganisation in 1973.

**Trends to look out for** - The Liberal Democrats may extend their control over the authority at the expense of the Conservatives.

To do this will need electoral expansion into rural areas of the authority where the Conservatives hold some healthy majorities. It is worth noting that the Conservatives held up reasonably well in the 2021 Gloucestershire County Council elections. However, the national situation has changed, and more substantial losses this time around would indicate that the Conservatives are in a dire national situation.

**Local Plan Status** - The Cotswold District Council Local Plan was adopted in August 2018. The Council is partially updating it's Local Plan, and first stage of the Partial Update was to identify Issues and Options that the Local Plan needs to respond to. A six-week public consultation was held between February and March 2022; another public consultation will occur later in 2023 and early 2024.

# Dorset

## Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

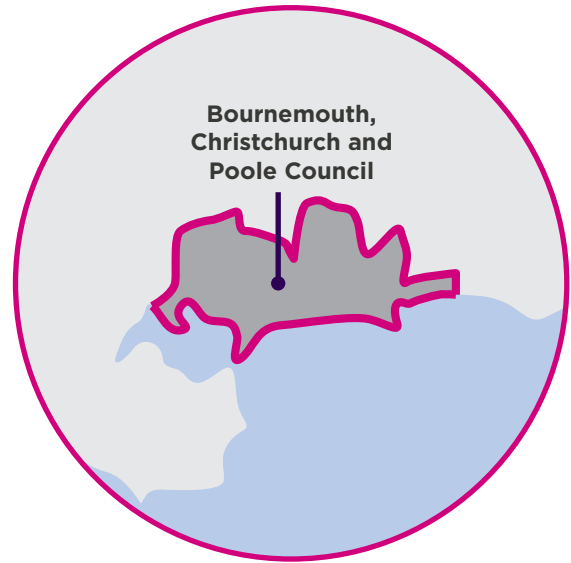
**Current Control** – No Overall Control ●

**Election Type** – Whole

**Last Election Held** – 2019

### Current State of Play

Party	Seats
Conservative	35
Green	4
Independent	7
Liberal Democrats	13
Labour	3
Poole Engage	5
Poole Independents	5
Un-aligned	4



**What happened last time** – The election resulted in No Overall Control, with no party winning the 39 seats required. The Conservatives were the largest party on the Council but lacked a majority. The Conservatives held seats in Bournemouth, with other parties and independents performing well in Christchurch and Poole.

The newly formed Christchurch Independents group, the third largest group with seven seats, said they would be open to working with all parties except the Conservatives.

Subsequently, Liberal Democrat Vikki Slade was elected council leader of a 'Unity Alliance' of all the parties except the Conservatives and UKIP, with 39 members.

However, since then, the Unity Alliance lost control of the Council to the Conservatives following a series of by-elections and a vote of no confidence in Councillor Slade.

Gaining power from the Unity Alliance in 2020, the Conservatives have been met with a series of obstacles and have suffered major setbacks, which saw public frustration rise. The interventions by the central government over the sale of beach huts and the proposed budget and council tax rise caused the recent resignation of the BCP Leader Councillor Mellor.

**Trends to look out for** – There has been a great deal of political turmoil in BCP over the last 4 years.

The newly appointed Conservative Leader Councillor Broadhead has an uphill fight ahead of the election to restore public confidence. The Council's reaction to the major oil leak in Poole Harbour is currently being tested.

The Liberal Democrats will heavily target Conservative seats in the Bournemouth and Christchurch area. The Liberal Democrats have often struggled to gain traction but are hopeful that recent events can turn the tides. Meanwhile, Labour and the Greens will target the Bournemouth and Poole suburbs with a growing student population. The Conservatives will be defending their seats from the Liberal Democrats and attempting to reclaim their old territories around Poole Town and Hamworthy from the Poole Independent Group.

The most likely outcome following the elections is No Overall Control with the Independents to act as kingmakers and help one of the major parties to form a majority another Unity coalition.

**Local Plan Status** - Consultation for the Issues and Options stage ran from 10 January - 25 March 2022. The feedback and evidence will inform the next stage of plan preparation when they publish a draft Local Plan in 2023.

