

South East England Councils

Member update: May 2018 local election headlines



There were elections in 29 South East local authorities on 3 May 2018 – 6 unitary councils and 23 districts. In most, a third of seats were contested; 4 areas contested half their seats and 2 areas – Eastleigh and Hastings – held all-out elections.

Changes of control May 2018

Mole Valley DC moved to No Overall Control (NOC) from Conservative control. May's elections saw another 5 councils (Elmbridge, Hart, Maidstone, Milton Keynes and Portsmouth) remaining NOC, although small changes in political balance seen in some of these councils may re-open local discussions about which party or coalition forms the administrations.

Breakdown of political control in all South East councils

Across all 74 South East authorities the breakdown of political control is now:

- Districts – Conservative 43, NOC 6, Labour 3, Lib-Dems 2, Independents 1.
- Unitaries – Conservative 6, Labour 3, NOC 3.
- Counties – Conservative 6, NOC 1.

No single party made significant gains or losses, either nationally or in the South East.

As the media reported, a range of parties across the South East gained support from former UKIP voters as UKIP did not field candidates in many areas. UKIP did not win any South East seats in 2018. A number of councils retain UKIP councillors elected in previous years, while others have seen UKIP members switch to other affiliations. There remain 36 UKIP councillors across the South East.

Looking across all 3,469 councillors in the South East, the current state of the parties is:

Conservatives remain the largest political party in the South East with 2,329 councillors across all tiers. This is a decrease of 38 seats from 2017. The party has majority control in 55 councils. It is also the largest single party in 9 NOC councils (Elmbridge, Hart, Lewes, Maidstone, Milton Keynes, Mole Valley, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth and Thanet).

Labour are the second largest party with 423 councillors. This is an increase of 23 seats from 2017. Labour have majority control of 6 councils (Crawley, Hastings, Oxford City, Reading, Slough and Southampton). They are also the largest party in 1 NOC council (Brighton & Hove).

Lib-Dems are the third largest party with 398 councillors, an increase of 17 seats from 2017. They have majority control of 2 councils (Eastleigh and Eastbourne).

Smaller parties. Four groups (Independents, Ratepayers, UKIP and Greens) have a combined total of 319 councillors – an overall fall of 7 seats since 2017. Independents lead Epsom & Ewell.

Party standings: share of the vote and seats 2018 vs 2017

Comparing 2018 share of the vote to last year's position, the Conservative vote share fell, Labour and Lib-Dems increased and there were mixed fortunes for smaller parties. Figures below show total votes cast and seats for all current councillors in the South East, not just those elected this year.

▼ **Conservatives:** 67.2% of votes, down from 67.8% last year. **2018:** 4.45m votes/ 2,329 seats. Loss = 38 seats.

▲ **Labour:** 13% of votes, up from 12.47%. **2018:** 862,149 votes/ 423 seats. Gain = 23 seats.

▲ **Lib-Dems:** 12.3% of votes, up from 12%. **2018:** 814,842 votes/ 398 seats. Gain = 17 seats.

Combined smaller parties: 7.5% of votes, down from 7.7%. **2018:** 495,467/ 319 seats.

▲ **Independents:** 3.8% of votes, up from 3% last year. **2018:** 249,322 votes/ 165 seats. Gain = 51 seats.

▼ **Ratepayers:** 1.8% of votes, down from 1.98%. **2018:** 121,394 votes/ 87 seats. Loss = 7 seats.

▼ **UKIP:** 0.6% of votes, down from 1.6%. **2018:** 42,340 votes/ 36 seats. Loss = 55 seats.

▲ **Greens:** 1.2% of vote up from 1.1%. **2018:** 82,411 votes/ 31 seats. Gain = 4 seats.