

South East England Councils

Member update: May 2019 local election headlines



There were elections in 57 South East local authorities on 2 May 2019 – 11 unitary councils and 46 districts. In 33 councils all the seats were contested and in a further 24, a third of seats were contested.

Changes of control May 2019

A total of 13 district councils changed control in May, some 28% of those holding elections. There were no changes of control in unitary councils. District changes were:

- 9 districts moved from Conservative to No Overall Control (NOC) – Arun, Chichester, Folkestone & Hythe, Guildford, Rother, South Oxfordshire, Swale, Tandridge and Waverley.
- 3 districts changed from Conservative to Lib-Dem control – Mole Valley, Vale of White Horse and Winchester.
- 1 district changed from NOC to Labour – Gravesham.

Breakdown of political control in all South East councils

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

- Districts – Conservative 30, NOC 15, Lib-Dems 5, Labour 4, Residents 1.
- Unitaries – Conservative 6, Labour 3, NOC 3.
- Counties – Conservative 6, NOC 1.

As the media reported, Conservatives lost seats in many areas, with some voters switching allegiance to the Lib-Dems, Labour, Independent/ Residents' groups and the Green Party. The UKIP vote declined, leaving them with just 10 councillors in the South East.

Looking across all 3,396 councillors in 2019 in the South East, the current state of the parties is:

Conservatives remain the largest political party in the South East with 1,825 councillors across all tiers. This is a decrease of 504 seats from 2018. The party has majority control in 42 councils. It is also the largest single party in 11 NOC councils.

Lib-Dems are the second largest party with 625 councillors, an increase of 227 seats from 2018. They have majority control of 5 councils (Eastbourne, Eastleigh, Mole Valley, Vale of White Horse & Winchester). They are the largest party in 3 NOC councils (Arun, Portsmouth & South Oxfordshire).

Labour are the third largest party with 502 councillors. This is an increase of 79 seats from 2018. Labour have majority control of 7 councils (Crawley, Gravesham, Hastings, Oxford City, Reading, Slough and Southampton). They are also the largest party in 1 NOC council (Milton Keynes).

Smaller parties. Four groups (Independents, Residents, Greens and UKIP) have a combined total of 444 councillors – an overall increase of 125 seats since 2018. Residents lead Epsom & Ewell and Independents/ Residents are the largest groups in 2 NOC councils (Guildford and Hart).

Party standings: share of the vote and seats 2019 vs 2018

Comparing 2019 share of the vote to last year, the Conservative vote share fell while Labour, Lib-Dems, Independents, Residents & Greens increased their shares. UKIP's share fell. Figures below show total votes cast and seats for all current South East councillors, not just those elected this year.

▼ **Conservatives:** 57.75% of votes, down from 67.2% last year. **2019:** 3.8m votes/ 1,825 seats. Loss = 504 seats.

▲ **Lib-Dems:** 16.95% of votes, up from 12.3%. **2019:** 1.12m votes/ 625 seats. Gain = 227 seats.

▲ **Labour:** 14.78% of votes, up from 13%. **2019:** 982,186 votes/ 502 seats. Gain = 79 seats.

Combined smaller parties: 10.5% of votes, up from 7.48%. **2019:** 696,939/ 444 seats.

▲ **Independents:** 5% of votes, up from 3.76% last year. **2019:** 335,120 votes/ 212 seats. Gain = 47 seats.

▲ **Residents:** 2.7% of votes, up from 1.83%. **2019:** 181,249 votes/ 134 seats. Gain = 47 seats.

▲ **Greens:** 2.5% of vote up from 1.24%. **2019:** 169,063 votes/ 88 seats. Gain = 57 seats.

▼ **UKIP:** 0.2% of votes, down from 0.6%. **2019:** 11,507 votes/ 10 seats. Loss = 26 seats.