

HAMPSHIRE ELECTION RESULTS 2023

May 2023 Election Results in the South East



"Following the local elections, many eyes are turning to the next General Election, and whether Labour can win for the first time since 2005, or the Conservatives can pull a victory out of the fire despite recent poor results. In these uncertain times, it is vital to have the best political insight and be able to recognise the opportunities that lie ahead, as well as the pitfalls.

At Luken Beck, we are particularly focused on the immediate effects on town planning in England. Our work takes us across the South of England, as well as the Midlands and other regions, and like our clients, we are closely monitoring the results.

The industry is already grappling with significant challenges such as the underfunding of local authority teams, the Planning Inspectorate's demand for fair treatment, the housing crisis, environmental issues and the extensive consultation on regulation reform.

At the local level, we crave stability and predictability. We wonder whether the current plans and future policies will continue to be supported or hindered, and which councils will remain united or become divided.

That's why Fairthorn's political insights are invaluable for us. They help us understand who we are working with or against and enable us to develop."

- Nigel Jarvis, Director, Luken Beck

INTRODUCTION

Based on national polls, the 2023 local elections in Hampshire were set to be a challenge for the Conservatives. The party has traditionally been the most dominant in the county, and after the dust settled, it retained most of the councils it previously held, and only two now appear under threat, pending coalition negotiations.

The Liberal Democrats strengthened their position in Eastleigh and Winchester and look set to run both districts for several years to come. The party's coalition with Hart Community Campaign in Hart is set to continue, and it looks set to retain minority control in Portsmouth. It fell short of defeating the Conservatives in the Test Valley and New Forest, but the door is ajar in East Hampshire, which entered No Overall Control and the balance of power now rests with the Whitehill & Bordon Community Party.

Aside East Hampshire, the other authority where 'extra time' will be needed to establish who is in power is Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council. There was a Conservative minority administration before the elections, and it could survive if the opposition parties fail to reach a coalition deal.

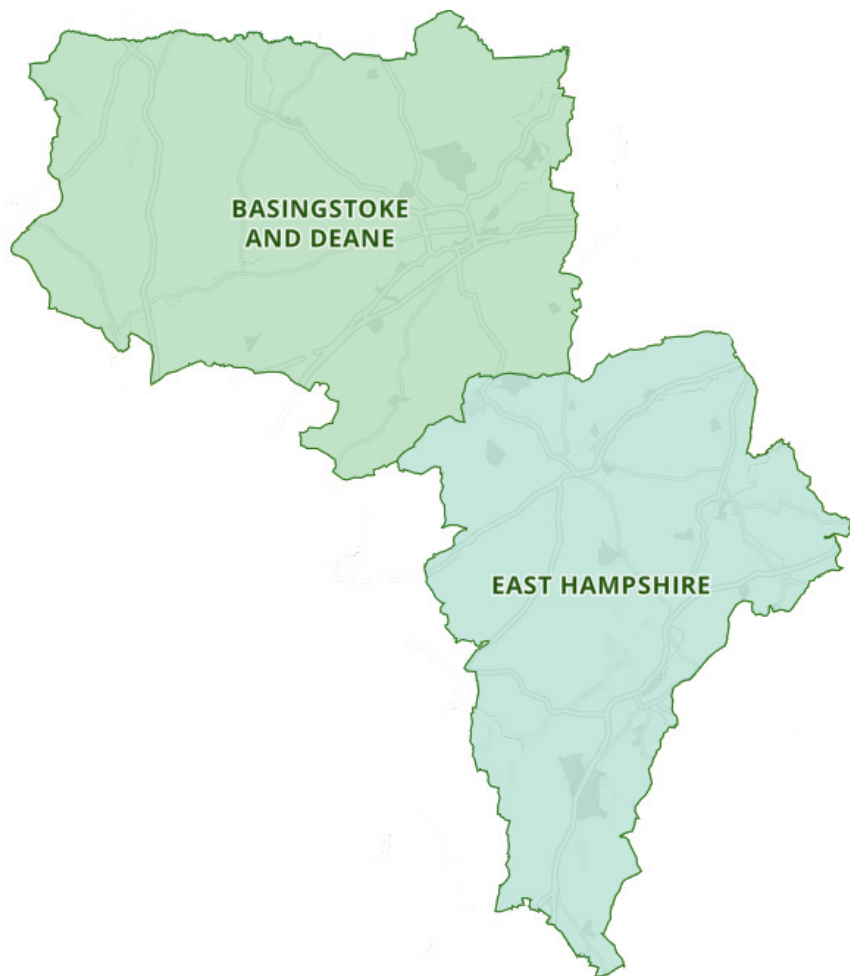
The situation here is complex as there would need to be a three-way agreement between Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and the Basingstoke & Deane Independents who are chiefly comprised of Labour dissidents. If they cannot work together, then Basingstoke will stay blue.

As for Labour, it posted record-breaking results in Southampton, but had no realistic chance of capturing any other councils this year. However, poor Conservative results in Rushmoor mean that Labour could take that district in 2024.

Please get in touch with miles.willshire@fairthorn.co.uk to discuss how we can assist you. To help with navigating the current uncharted waters, our team of senior consultants, made up of politicians and former journalists, can provide specialist sector and local knowledge which will enable us to outline important insights for the industry.



BASINGSTOKE & DEANE AND EAST HAMPSHIRE



BASINGSTOKE AND DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Type of Election	One third of seats contested
Administration	No overall control
Commentary	As expected, the Conservatives suffered losses in Basingstoke & Deane, with Labour taking one seat, and the Liberal Democrats gaining two. The Conservatives remain the largest party with 23 of the 54 seats while Labour has 10, the Liberal Democrats 9, and the remaining dozen are held by Independents, including the sizeable Basingstoke & Deane Independent Group, which is chiefly comprised of dissident Labour members who fled the party during Jeremy Corbyn's tenure. Fairthorn will be watching closely to see if a left-of-centre coalition emerges or whether the Conservatives continue to govern as a minority administration.

EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Type of Election	All seats contested
Administration	No overall control
Commentary	The Conservatives have traditionally held power in East Hampshire, but the party lost its outright majority following this year's all-out elections. With 19 of the 43 seats, they are three members short of the finishing line. The Liberal Democrats won 14 seats while the Whitehill & Bordon Community Party have six. The Greens have two, there is one Independent, and a sole Labour member. As with Basingstoke, Fairthorn is paying close attention to see if a non-Conservative administration emerges, which hinges on the Whitehill & Bordon Community Party. It has indicated via social media that it will partner with either the Conservatives or the opposition parties depending on who offers the best deal for the area it covers.

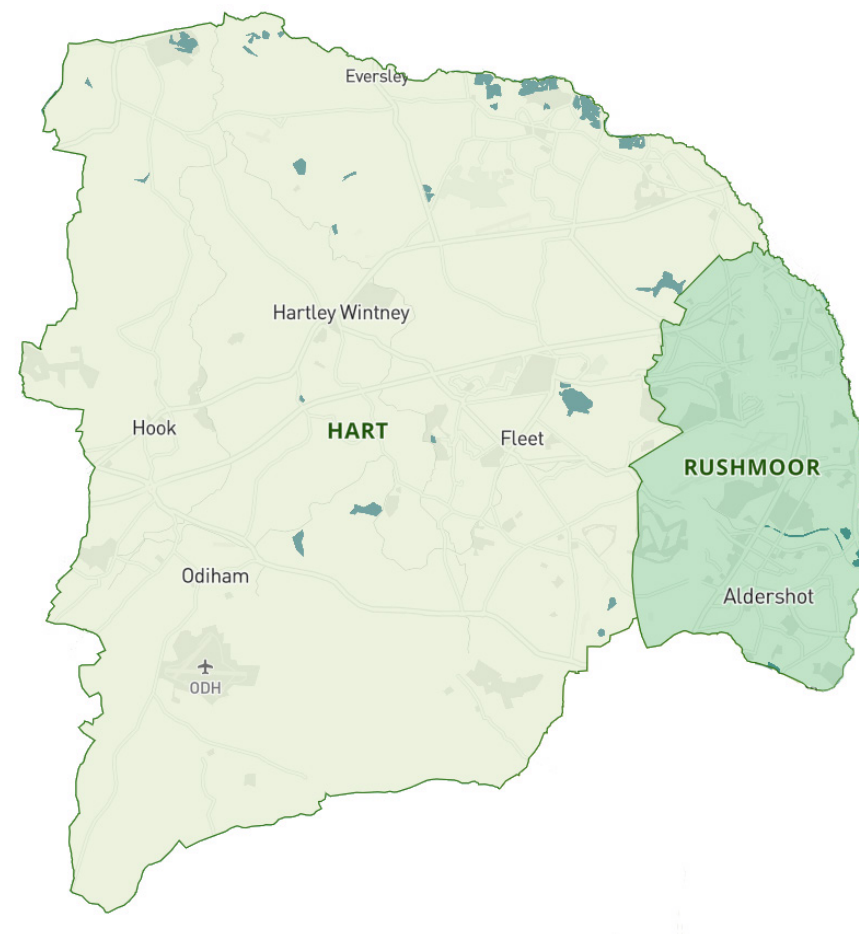
HART AND RUSHMOOR

HART DISTRICT COUNCIL

Type of Election	One third of seats contested
Administration	Liberal Democrat and Hart Community Campaign coalition
Commentary	In Hart it looks set to be a case of 'as you were' with the Liberal Democrats and Community Campaign Hart running the authority with the Conservatives as the opposition. The two ruling parties each won four seats, and this included the authority's Liberal Democrat leader, Councillor David Neighbour, comfortably retaining his seat in Yateley East. No party is close to an overall majority.

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

Type of Election	One third of seats contested
Administration	Conservative majority
Commentary	The Conservatives retained power in Rushmoor, but only because one third of the seats were being contested rather than all of them. Labour won seven wards while the ruling party only managed four, with one Liberal Democrat victory. The fact the Conservatives remain in charge is down to past victories and if similar results occur next year, then Rushmoor could turn red, and with Southampton firmly 'in the bag' for Labour, this is likely to be the party's top target in Hampshire for the 2024 local elections.



EASTLEIGH AND WINCHESTER



EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Type of Election	One third of seats contested
Administration	Liberal Democrat majority
Commentary	In Eastleigh, the Liberal Democrats' stranglehold on power continues unabated. A third of the seats were contested and apart from the traditionally Independent enclave of Bishopstoke, the party won every single ward, often by comfortable margins. There is no obvious sign that the Liberal Democrats will cede control in Eastleigh any time soon.

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Type of Election	One third of seats contested
Administration	Liberal Democrat majority
Commentary	In recent years, England's historic capital has seen pitched battles between the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, but the Liberal Democrats are now firmly in the ascendancy. They made further gains in this year's elections and now hold 30 (two thirds) of the 45 seats while the Conservative have just 12. The remaining seats are held by two Greens and an Independent. Given the Liberal Democrats' commanding position, Winchester looks set to remain under the party's control for at least the medium term.

NEW FOREST, TEST VALLEY AND SOUTHAMPTON

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Type of Election	All seats contested
Administration	Conservative majority
Commentary	The New Forest has traditionally been a Conservative stronghold, and the party managed to retain its outright majority, but it wasn't comfortable. The party incurred losses and now has 26 of the 48 seats with the Liberal Democrats holding 14 as the largest opposition party. In many respects it's a case of 'no change', with the Conservatives doubtless breathing a sigh of relief that they have retained control in a year when they faced one of their sternest challenges.



TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Type of Election	All seats contested
Administration	Conservative majority
Commentary	It was a similar picture in the Test Valley to the New Forest, with the Conservatives under pressure to retain a traditional stronghold in an adverse political climate, and getting the job done. The district was a key target for the Liberal Democrats, at least in terms of pushing the authority into No Overall Control, but they only secured 17 seats while the Conservatives took 26. The result arguably flattered the Conservatives as they won several narrow battles, while the Liberal Democrats had more votes across the district, but not in the 'right places'. As a result, the Test Valley remains blue.

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

Type of Election	All seats contested on new boundaries
Administration	Labour majority
Commentary	In Southampton, Labour won a record 35 seats while the Conservatives managed just nine. The city has frequently changed hands between the parties, but given the scale of Labour's victory, the party would seem likely to retain power in the medium term, which is about as stable as Southampton politics can be. In other news, the Liberal Democrats won all three seats in Bassett, a traditionally Conservative stronghold and the childhood home of Rishi Sunak. The Green Party won its first seat in the city in Portswood. There is one ward, Coxford, which did not declare a result due to the death of a Conservative candidate and this ballot will be rescheduled in the coming weeks, but will not affect the balance of power.

HAVANT AND PORTSMOUTH



HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

Type of Election	One third of seats contested
Administration	Conservative majority
Commentary	Such was the dominant position of the Conservatives in Havant, and the fact only a third of the seats were being contested, there was never any doubt they would still be in charge. However, given the party's traditional dominance, this year's results were scruffy compared to past successes. Of ten wards contested, they won five, with the Greens picking up a seat, and Labour and the Liberal Democrats winning two apiece. Interestingly, the Conservatives lost both seats on Hayling Island, with Hayling East turning red, while Hayling West went gold.

PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Type of Election	One third of seats contested
Administration	Liberal Democrat minority (likely to continue)
Commentary	In Portsmouth we predicted the Liberal Democrats would strengthen their position but fall short of a majority, and this turned out to be the case. The ruling party gained one seat while the Conservatives had a wretched time and held just one (Drayton & Farlington) of seven they were defending, losing ground to the Liberal Democrats, Labour, and the Portsmouth Independents Party. Overall, there would appear to be no likely change in governance, with the Liberal Democrat minority administration continuing.



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