



The local elections: what we know so far

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As results from local elections in England come in, many at Westminster are more concerned about what they mean for the next general election, rather than the local issues these councillors can act on.

The overall picture will not be clear until later today, many councils only started their counts in the daylight of Friday. So far, we know Labour have had very good results, perhaps unsurprising given the party hasn't won a general election in nearly two decades. Local elections are too often used to punish the national government, but something else is at play. Labour is winning back key councils, the likes of Plymouth and Medway as well as strong pro-Brexit communities like Stoke-on-Trent. The party will also take comfort in winning seats on councils like Rushmoor in affluent Hampshire.

The Labour leader said: "This was all about the cost of living and we had a positive case to make. We understood what it is like not to be able to make ends meet and we said what we would do to help people with their everyday bills. And the Government, the Prime Minister, said nothing and that is because they are the problem, not the solution."

As of midday on Friday, the Conservatives have so far suffered a net loss of 260 councillors and lost nine councils to no overall control. The prime minister has acknowledged some "disappointing" results, but insists the Tories are making progress in "key election battlegrounds".

The results are also a good showing for the Lib Dems, with a totemic triumph in Windsor as well as gains in heavily leave-voting areas of Essex. The Greens have also picked up seats, including beating the Tories into third place in the bellwether seat of Worcester. Independents are also on the rise and while these positive results for the smaller parties may not be reflected in the Commons next year, it provides a strong base for local action and influence in battleground seats.

It is important to remember while these are important results for local communities and the base for strong activism and campaigns, very different dynamics are at play in general elections - not least the personalities and politics of the main party leaders. There is also much water to pass under the bridge before the nationwide test at a general election widely expected to be in the spring or autumn next year.

For more on these election results and what they mean for national politics, please email scott@gkstratgy.com