

PREFACE

This is the latest in a series of books to be issued which, when taken together, are intended to be a definitive source of statistics for elections in Harrow since the passing of the Local Government Act 1894.

The starting point for the current volume is the Borough Election of 2022. The election saw the introduction of new electoral arrangements in Harrow, with 55 councillors being elected from 22 wards: 11 wards each elected three councillors, the remaining 11 each elected two councillors. This contrasted with the previous arrangements that had been in place since 2002, where 63 councillors were elected from a uniform pattern of 21 three-member wards.

The 2022 election saw many retirements from the council: of the 62 sitting councillors (there was one vacancy) only 43, or 69%, contested the election. Of those, arguably a further three were 'making up the numbers' in wards that were 'difficult' for their party; taking these into account the percentage seeking re-election dropped to 63.5%.

The large number of retirements was not confined to Harrow. The BBC's London political editor, Tim Donovan, noted in an article¹ that almost a third of London's borough councillors were retiring at the 2022 election. A number of factors were offered as contributing to the high rate of attrition, to which I have added two suggestions of my own:

- Ward boundary changes and reduced numbers of councillors in many boroughs.
- The strain of austerity in local government, especially with the policies introduced by coalition government in 2010 still affecting local government finance some years later.
- The impact of the Covid-19 epidemic, leading to councillors reassessing their personal circumstances.
- The perception, especially following the rise of social media, that councillors' personal safety could be at risk.
- A feeling among the backbench councillors of an administration that the 'Cabinet system', adopted by many local authorities, sidelines them from important elements of the decision-making process.
- Interventions from planning inspectors or the Mayor of London leading to reduced local control of the siting and nature of new residential developments.

When the votes were counted on 6 May, Harrow delivered one of the few bright results for the Conservative Party, as control was wrestled from the Labour Party.

As always, I welcome feedback and corrections from readers.

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1 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-61105717>