

PRESS REPORTS OF THE BOROUGH ELECTIONS

Extracts from the *Harrow Times*, Thursday 12 May 2022

TORIES ARE TRIUMPHANT IN HARROW TAKEOVER

The Conservatives clinched a shock victory in Harrow, offering the party a spark of hope on what was a difficult night in London. The Tories assumed overall control of the council for the first time since 2006. Voters elected 31 Conservatives, edging out Labour, who took 24 seats. It means the new Tory administration will have a majority of seven. New ward boundaries meant there were just 55 seats up for grabs, eight fewer than in 2018.

Closely fought wards included North Harrow, where long-standing Tory councillors Chris Baxter and Janet Mote won by just a handful of votes. The Conservatives began celebrating when they managed to win two seats in the previously Labour held Edgware ward. They then took a further seat in the Labour stronghold [sic] of Rayners Lane to give them real belief.

Cllr. Paul Osborn, the new leader of Harrow Council, described the result as a “big day for Harrow” and showed the Conservatives “can win in London”. He cited high council tax and fears over tall buildings as reasons for why people chose not to vote Labour.

Harrow was seen as a soft target seat for the Conservatives in London, with suggestions it could go either way right up until polling day. The Tories had attacked Labour’s approach to street cleaning and tackling fly-tipping in the borough, as well as the fact council tax had been raised by the maximum amount for the eighth consecutive year. They were critical of the administration’s handling of the ‘streetspace’ programme, which saw controversial low-traffic neighbourhoods and pop-up cycle lanes installed and later removed following public outcry — at a cost of £75,000.

There was also a strong showing by independent candidates, many of whom said they were inspired to stand in response to what they saw as an ineffective council. They ran on the back of community-led campaigns, such as those opposing road closures, contentious planning applications and support for local businesses, and said they would fight for residents without any political constraints.

Ultimately these concerns translated into enough votes to give the Conservatives a gain, as they won the trust of the people of Harrow for the next four years.