

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 Harrow elections.

The starting point for the current volume is the somewhat surreal Borough Election of 2002. The election had a strange air for most participants because of the almost complete absence of Liberal Democrat candidates. After the Lib Dem agent lodged their nomination papers, the Returning Officer ruled that 60 nominations were invalid because of an error when completing the forms. There was insufficient time left for the agent to arrange for the completion of new nomination papers. The mistake occurred because of the strict provisions of legislation designed to stop the use of misleading party descriptions by candidates. The Liberal Democrats had been one of the first to suffer at the hands of such maverick candidates, when, in 1994, a "Literal Democrat" polled over 10,000 votes in the European Parliament constituency of Devon and Plymouth East.

The 2006 Borough Election results are the next to be recorded. The election was noteworthy because it was the first time since 1990 that Harrow's Conservatives had enjoyed success: a combination of calamitous national headlines undermined Labour's attempt to run Harrow Council for a third term. First, the mortgage arrangements of a Cabinet Minister, the late Tessa Jowell, came under scrutiny. There were then claims that people lending money to the national Labour Party were being proposed for honours, such as peerages. In the last week or so of the campaign two further issues dogged Labour. Newspapers revealed that Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott had been having an affair with a civil servant, and second it appeared that foreign nationals recommended for deportation upon completion of a prison sentence were in fact being released back into the community. In the circumstances Harrow's Labour Group may have been relieved to win 24 seats, more than Labour secured in the neighbouring boroughs of Hillingdon or Brent, for example.

The next group of council election results are for 2010, where unusually high turnouts were experienced on account of the Parliamentary General Election held on the same day — the first time this has happened in Harrow's history. The higher turnout and an unusual split in Conservative ranks in Harrow on the Hill ward contributed to handing Labour a majority on Harrow Council at the same time as the party lost over 90 MPs, including Tony McNulty in Harrow East, in the General Election. It is probable that this outcome was not anticipated by the local Tory and Labour leaders.

The unexpected formation of an 'Independent Labour Group' (ILG) on Harrow Council in May 2013 presented new challenges in keeping this record accurate and up-to-date: an Appendix devoted to the development attempts to record the main events and facts of the following 12 months in an impartial and accurate manner. The ILG stood candidates in most of Harrow's wards at the 2014 election: none were successful.

The final set of results to be included in this volume arise from the 2018 election. In the run-up to the election the national political situation had been tumultuous. Labour had been mired by accusations of anti-Semitism amongst a tiny minority of its membership, whilst the Conservative Government was struggling with its 'Brexit' negotiations and the fall-out from the *Windrush* scandal that led to the resignation of Home Secretary Amber Rudd. In the end there were few changes on Harrow Council compared with 2014. Perhaps most noteworthy was the fact that for the first time since 1968 only two parties — Conservative and Labour — won seats. Possibly it is the case that electors cast their local votes on local issues; that might not be such a bad thing!

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