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First Surrey Borough with no Conservative Councillors

4 May 2024



The Conservatives have been wiped out in Woking after voters handed the Liberal Democrats a huge mandate. The final tally tightened the Lib Dems grip on power giving them 24 seats, up four from last year's election – and left the Tories with none and Labour with just one seat on the bankrupt local authority. The remaining five seats are held by independents.

The Conservatives came into the day holding just four of the council's 30 seats but they failed to hold on to any as ward after ward continued to punish the party – which as recently as 2021 had been the borough's largest group.

The result makes it the first council in Surrey not to have a single Conservative councillor and serves as a major warning to the party of a difficult road ahead in the upcoming general election.

Josh Brown, the former Conservative councillor who lost his seat in the Byfleet and Byfleet West ward said: "The Woking Conservatives will continue to hold the Liberal Democrats, Independent and Labour on the council to account with regards to increases in council tax and increased borrowing."

He would later add: "People of Woking have clearly had their say and we respect that, but the process going forward is who is going to hold this super majority to account? "I think there will be a muted scrutiny function and that Woking and all of our residents will be worse off."

The biggest swing of the day came in Canalside with the Liberal Democrats overturning a Labour majority of 570 to take the seat.

Leader of the Council Councillor Ann-Marie Barker, who held on to her Goldsworth Park seat said:"It's a huge result for the Liberal Democrats, given the year we've had (referencing the Section 114 bankruptcy notice).

"To get such an overwhelming majority, resulting in existing councillors with increased majorities and gaining four seats. It's a massive responsibility and we've got a huge mandate to take it forward and we've showed that we can do that over the last couple of years. Scrutiny is very important. We still have independent and Labour councillors, but the importance for scrutiny is critical friends and constructive criticism – and that should come from both within and beyond the group.

"First priority is to get the new councillors trained inducted and working on their roles to deliver for residents and clearly finances are in our mind all the time and our work to deliver on our budget and next year's budget."

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