**NORTH-WEST ELECTIONS, THURSDAY 2nd MAY 2024**

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**CONTEXT**

1. **This local election sees contests in 22 NW councils, the highest number of any region. Nearly half (12 of 28) metropolitan borough contests are being held in the NW. 459 council seats are at stake.**
2. **There are also metro mayor contests in Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region, a mayoral election in Salford and Police and Crime Commissioner elections in Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside (and Cumbria and Derbyshire). It is the final big test of public opinion before the general election.**
3. **Labour defends 17 councils and will expect to hold all. Five councils are under no overall control: Bolton; Burnley; Hyndburn; Pendle and Stockport. Labour gains are possible in Bolton and Hyndburn but Stockport looks difficult and in both Burnley and Pendle the party has been hit by resignations – in Burnley over Keir Starmer’s initial refusal to demand a ceasefire in Gaza, a factor also in Pendle but where discontent was broader among Labour councillors over claimed national interference in local decision-making.**
4. **The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats do not hold any NW councils being contested but the Liberal Democrats do run Stockport as a minority administration.**
5. **The comparison is with 2021 when these seats were last fought/councillors were elected, in an election postponed by a year due to the Covid shutdown. 2021 was the last good election year for the Conservatives. They gained 235 seats nationally and Labour lost 327 (the Lib Dems gained 8). This means the Conservatives, on their current poor poll rating, risk losing a very large number of seats. In the NW the Conservatives gained 36 seats in 2021 and Labour lost 30. The Lib Dems lost 12 NW council seats and the Greens gained 12.**

**THE FIVE NO OVERALL CONTROL COUNCILS TO LOOK OUT FOR:**

**BOLTON: Labour lost overall control in 2019. The Conservatives then ran a minority administration until Labour became the largest party again last year and has since led the council as a minority group. There are nine ‘super-local’ ‘District First’ councillors. The Conservatives hold two of the town’s three parliamentary seats.**

**LABOUR NEEDS 3 GAINS (FROM 20 SEATS BEING CONTESTED) TO TAKE OVERALL CONTROL**

**BURNLEY: (NO OVERALL CONTROL). Labour lost overall control in 2019. The party ran the council as a minority administration after the 2023 elections but the resignation of the council leader Afrasiab Anwar and ten colleagues in November 2023, in protest at Keir Starmer’s initial hesitation in demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, saw Labour lose control. These ex-Labour councillors are now independents and form part of a Cooperative Alliance group which runs the council and includes 7 Lib Dems and 7 Greens.**

**HYNDBURN: Labour lost two seats and overall control in 2022 after 11 years in charge and the party has been hit by internal rows. The Conservatives formed a minority administration in 2023. They and Labour hold an equal number of seats.**

**LABOUR NEEDS 2 GAINS (FROM 12 SEATS BEING CONTESTED) TO TAKE OVERALL CONTROL**

**PENDLE: This is always marginal and has fluctuated between No Overall Control and Conservative control several times in the last few years. The Conservatives lost overall control again last year, replaced by a minority Labour-Lib Dem coalition. However, Labour has lost all its councillors including the former council leader (and 10 town councillors) after they quit, complaining over national interference in local Labour decisions. Labour’s position on Gaza may have contributed.**

**STOCKPORT: Under No Overall Control for years but the Lib Dems hold the most seats, run the council as a minority administration and have a slim chance of taking overall control – their only prospect of capturing a NW council at this election. Labour has a very slight chance of taking overall control but trail the Lib Dems by 5 seats. The Conservatives lost all their 5 seats last year.**

**LIB DEMS NEED 4 GAINS (FROM 21 SEATS BEING CONTESTED) TO TAKE OVERALL CONTROL. LABOUR NEEDS 8 GAINS.**

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| COUNCIL | **SEATS UP** | **CON** | **LABOUR** | **LIB DEM** | **OTHERS** | **CONTROL** | **COMMENTS** |
| **BLACKBURN with DARWEN** | **1/3rd** **(17)** | **11** | **31** |  **0** | **7 For Blackburn with Darwen****2 Independent** | **LAB** | **LAB OC SINCE 1997 APART FROM 2007-2011 AND SAFE.** |
| **BOLTON** | **1/3rd****(20)** | **15** | **28** |  **7** | **3 Farnworth & Kearsley First****6 Horwich & Blackrod First****1 Independent** | **NOC – LAB MINORITY RUN** | **LAB LOST OC IN 2019, SHEDDING 12 SEATS 2018-19. ‘SUPER-LOCAL’ COUNCILLORS MAKE OVERALL CONTROL TRICKIER BUT THEIR NUMBERS FELL IN 2023 AND LAB ONLY NEEDS 3 GAINS** |
| **BURNLEY** | **1/3rd****(15)** | **7** | **11** | **7** | **4 Burnley & Padiham Ind****7 Green****11 Burnley Independent Group****2 Independent** | **NOC –**  | **LAB LOST OC 2019 BUT RAN AS LARGEST PARTY UNTIL 11 RESIGNATIONS OVER GAZA. RESIGNEES FORMED INDEPENDENT GROUP AND RUN COUNCILWITH LDs and GREENS** |
| **BURY**  | **1/3rd****(17)** | **11** | **30** | **0** | **7 Radcliffe First****3 Independent** | **LAB** | **TWO MARGINAL WESTMINSTER SEATS WON BY CONS 2019 (WAKEFORD DEFECTED TO LAB IN BURY S). COUNCIL LAB OC SINCE 2011 - - WILL REMAIN SO**  |
| **CHORLEY** | **1/3rd (14)** |  **5** | **37** | **0** |  | **LAB** | **LAB OC SINCE 2012 AND VERY SAFE**  |
| **HALTON** | **1/3rd (18)** |  **2** | **49** | **3** |  | **LAB** | **LAB SINCE CREATED. 2 CONS DARESBURY; 3 LDs BEECHWOOD & HEATH** |
| **HYNDBURN** | **1/3rd** **(12)** | **16** | **16** | **0** | **2 Greens****1 Independent** | **NOC** | **LAB HELD 2011-21 BUT LOST 2 SEATS AND OC 2022. ONLY NEED 2 GAINS TO REGAIN OC** |
| **KNOWSLEY** | **1/3rd** **(15)** |  **0** | **31** |  **3** | **7 Greens****5 Independent** | **LAB** | **SAFE LAB** |
| **MANCHESTER** | **1/3rd****(32)** |  **0** | **87** |  **4** | **4 Green****1 Independent** | **LAB** | **MOST SOLIDLY LABOUR CITY IN UK** |
| **OLDHAM** | **1/3rd** **(20)** |  **8** | **33** |  **10** | **3 Failsworth Independent****3 Independent****3 Oldham Group** | **LAB** | **LAB OC SINCE 2011 AND SHOULD HOLD BUT NOT ENTIRELY SAFE** |
| **PENDLE** | **1/3rd****(12)** | **13** | **0** |  **7** | **10 Independent Group****1 Independent B****1 Independent C** | **CON** | **CONS LOST OC IN 2023 AFTER 2 YEARS. LAB TARGET FOR LARGEST PARTY AT LEAST BUT THE PARTY WAS ROCKED BY ALL 1O OF ITS COUNCILLORS QUITTING (PLUS 10 TOWN CILLRS) OVER ‘INTEFERENCE’ FROM LAB CENTRAL** |
| **PRESTON** | **1/3rd (16)** | **10** | **31** |  **7** |  | **LAB** | **LAB OC SINCE 2011**  |
| **ROCHDALE** | **1/3rd****(20)** |  **9** | **46** |  **3** | **2 Middleton Independents** | **LAB** | **ALL-OUT ELECTION. LAB SINCE 2011. LAB WESTMINSTER BY-ELECTION FIASCO AS SEAT LOST TO GEORGE GALLOWAY BUT COUNCIL SAFE** |
| **ROSSENDALE** | **ALL (30)** |  **9** | **21** |  **0** | **2 Community First****1 Green****2 Independent** | **LAB** | **LAB REGAINED THE OC IN 2022 THEY HAD LOST IN 2021: HAD HELD SINCE 2012. ALL-OUT ELECTION** |
| **SALFORD** | **1/3rd (20)** |  **8** | **50** |  **2** | **2 Independent** | **LAB** | **LAB SINCE 1973**  |
| **SEFTON** | **1/3rd (22)**  |  **5** | **51** |  **9** | **1 Independent** | **LAB** | **LAB SINCE 2012**  |
| **STOCKPORT** | **1/3rd (21)** |  **0** | **24** | **29** | **3 Green****3 Independent****Ratepayers****3 Edgeley Community****1 Independent** | **NOC - LD MINORITY RUN** | **USUALLY HUNG. LIKELY TO STAY SO. LAB MINORITY RUN 2016-2022. LD MINORITY RUN SINCE. LDs NEED 3 GAINS FOR OC** |
| **TAMESIDE** | **1/3rd (19)** |  **6** | **51** | **0** |  | **LAB** | **VERY SAFE LAB** |
| **TRAFFORD** | **1/3rd (21)** | **10** | **41** | **6** | **6 Green** | **LAB**  | **WAS CON NW FLAGSHIP URBAN COUNCIL FOR 15 YEARS UNTIL 2018. LAB NOW VERY DOMINANT.** |
| **WARRINGTON** | **ALL (58)** | **10** | **36** |  **8** | **4 Independent** | **LAB** | **LAB SINCE 2011. ALL-OUT CONTEST** |
| **WEST LANCASHIRE** | **1/3rd****(15)** | **15** | **26** |  **0** | **4 Our West Lancashire** | **LAB** | **LAB REGAINED CONTROL 2023, MAKING GAINS FROM THE CONS and OWLs**  |
| **WIGAN** | **1/3rd (25)** |  **2** | **64** |  **0** | **5 Independent** **4 Independent Network** | **LAB** | **VERY SAFE LAB.**  |
| **COUNCILLOR TOTALS ON COUNCILS BEING CONTESTED** |  | **CONSERVATIVES** **172****(14%)** | **LABOUR****794****(66%)** | **L DEM** **105****(9%)** | **OTHERS** **107****(9%)** | **GREENS****30****(2%)** |  |

**THE MAYORAL ELECTIONS**

**The NW has two Labour metro mayors and one council mayor seeking re-election for a third term.**

**There has been a change in the electoral system from Supplementary Vote, under which if a candidate failed to get 50% of the vote on first count, all but the top two candidates were eliminated and their second preferences distributed to the two remaining candidates to First Past the Post - one vote only and most votes wins.**

**The change will make no difference in the metro mayor cases. Andy Burnham and Steve Rotheram were elected on the first count in 2017 and 2021. They will surely win again.**

**In Salford, Paul Dannett did – just - need Supplementary Vote transfers to get him over 50% in 2017 (49.6% at first count) but not in 2021 (59% of the vote on first count).**

**METRO MAYORS**

**GREATER MANCHESTER**

**Andy Burnham’s vote shares in the previous two contests have been 67.3% (2021) and 63.4% (2017).**

**Burnham has won an overall majority of the vote in every council in both his mayoral victories.**

**Burnham’s highest vote share in 2021 was 77.3% in Manchester and lowest in Bury at 60.8%.**

**The Conservative candidate has been runner-up twice but with only 19.6% in 2021 and 22.7% (2017).**

**The current GM council distribution of seats by party also tells the story.**

**GREATER MANCHESTER COUNCILS BY SEAT TOTALS**

**LABOUR 452**

**CONSERVATIVE 73**

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT 61**

**GREEN 13**

**DISTRICT FIRST 30**

**INDEPENDENT 19**

**The original Conservative candidate, Dan Barker, defected to Reform UK and is their candidate. Laura Evans stands again for the Tories. Nick Buckley, who stood for Reform UK in 2021, now stands an independent. He has pledged a referendum for Bolton on whether to quit Greater Manchester. There are also Green and Lib Dem candidates.**

**LIVERPOOL CITY REGION**

**Steve Rotheram is in a similarly comfortable position to Burnham as he also seeks a third term.**

**Rotheram’s vote shares were 58.3% in 2021 and 59.3% in 2017. The nearest (or least distant) challenger was the Conservative candidate – Jade Marsden (19.6% of the vote) in 2021 and Tony Caldeira (20.4%) in 2017.**

**Rotheram just failed to secure an overall majority of the votes cast in Wirral in 2017 (49.4%) but did so in the five other councils making up the Liverpool City Region.**

**In 2021, Rotheram managed an overall majority in all six councils making up LCR in 2021, ranging from 68.2% in Knowsley to 52% in St Helens.**

**The distribution of party seats across the LCR councils also tells the story.**

**LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COUNCILS SEAT TOTALS**

**LABOUR 240**

**CONSERVATIVE 26**

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT 21**

**GREEN 30**

**INDEPENDENT 13**

**LIBERALS 3**

**DISTRICT FIRST 3**

**Jade Marsden stands again for the Conservatives and Tom Crone, a Liverpool City councillor, likewise again for the Greens. Rob McAllister-Bell, also a Liverpool City councillor, stands for the Liberal Democrats for the first time.**

**COUNCIL MAYOR**

**SALFORD**

**Salford was one of few cities to vote in favour of having an elected mayor in 2012 (56% to 44%).**

**Paul Dennett seeks a third term, having been first elected in 2016.**

**His majority over the Conservative candidate on first count was 12,399 in 2017, rising to 18,658 in 2021 (almost a 36-percentage point lead).**

**POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ELECTIONS**

**Like mayoral elections, these have axed the Supplementary Vote and switched to First-Past-the-Post. In Cheshire and Lancashire, second rounds were required in the past with no candidate reaching 50% on first count.**

**Merseyside: Emily Spurrell (Lab) won with a majority of almost 107,000 (57%) of the vote in 2021 over the Conservative Bob Teesdale (23%) in 2012. Spurrell is standing again (she is currently on maternity leave) and should be very comfortably re-elected.**

**Cheshire: A ‘swing’ post. Conservative-held: 2012-17. Labour 2017-21. Former Assistant Chief Constable, Conservative John Dwyer, regained the seat by just over 12,000 votes in 2021 and stands again but it could switch to Labour.**

**Lancashire: This swung from Labour’s Clive Grunshaw (elected in 2012 and re-elected in 2016) to the Conservatives’ Andrew Snowden in 2021. The majority was only 9,000 though; it could revert.**

**(Derbyshire: PCC was a CON gain in 2021 – could revert back to Labour. Cumbria has had a Conservative PCC since creation of the post in 2012. Big majority in 2021 but previously fairly close contests).**