

Lib Dems win big in local elections

This has been an historic victory for the Liberal Democrats with our best result in decades.

It's little wonder Rishi Sunak is running scared of a General Election, because he knows the Liberal Democrats are set to take swathes of seats across the Conservative Party's former heartlands.

The message from these elections is clear: people are fed up with being let down and taken for granted by this Conservative Government – it is time for a change.



Gaining control of councils

Liberal Democrats gained majority control of twelve councils. This is the highest number of councils gained by the Lib Dems since 1995, which came ahead of the party's sweeping gains against the Conservatives at the 1997 election.

Councils gained: Chichester, Dacorum, Guildford, Horsham, Mid Devon, South Hams, South Oxfordshire, Stratford on Avon, Surrey Heath, Teignbridge, West Berkshire & Windsor and Maidenhead

We also held control of all seventeen councils we were defending.

Councils held: Bath & North East Somerset, Chelmsford, Cotswold, Eastbourne, Eastleigh, Hinckley & Bosworth, Kingston upon Hull, Mole Valley, North Devon, North Norfolk, Oadby & Wigston, St Albans, Three Rivers, Vale of White Horse, Watford, Winchester & Woking.



Gaining seats

In councils up and down England, Liberal Democrats made gains.

We gained 407 councillors net, with net gains in more than 100 councils.

The biggest number of gains were in Mid Devon (+21), Horsham (+15), Chichester (+14), East Riding of Yorkshire (+14), Stratford on Avon (+14), Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (+13), West Berkshire (+13), Windsor and Maidenhead (+13), Sevenoaks (+11), Surrey Heath (+11).

In total, we elected 1,628 councillors in these elections.



20% of the vote

The BBC's projected national vote share put the Liberal Democrats on 20%.

This is the best result since 2010 and just 6% behind the Conservatives.

- Among our gained councils is Surrey Heath, where we have taken control from the Conservatives in Michael Gove's back garden. Senior Conservative cabinet ministers will now be looking nervously over their shoulders.
- Another key target where we have done well is Elmbridge, which contains Dominic Raab's Esher and Walton seat. We have gained 6 councillors here, taking 4 from the Conservatives, and are now the largest party.
- It's clear that sleaze and scandal surrounding Conservative Ministers over recent months has had a profound impact. Nadhim Zahawi is experiencing a Shakespearean Tragedy in Stratford on Avon as his seat is now controlled by the Lib Dems after we gained 15 seats and took control.
- Just a few weeks ago we launched our Local Election campaign in Dacorum in Hertfordshire, where Ed Davey foreshadowed today's results by toppling a Blue Wall of hay bales in a tractor. Today we took control of the council here – the first time Liberal Democrats have run the council since its creation.
- Following our stunning victory in Tiverton & Honiton last year, we've had a great result in Devon in these elections. We gained Mid Devon and

Teignbridge, held North Devon, and made a total of 52 gains across the county.

- After we made gains in Hull overnight to keep control of the council, we've also won seats from Labour in Liverpool – gaining 6 seats from Labour as they lost 9.
- Despite this sea of excellent gains, we were sorry that Mayor Dave Hodgson did not win re-election in Bedford, missing out by just 145 votes.

The Conservatives have crumbled. The Blue Wall is turning gold.

Now it is clear that the country needs a General Election so the Conservatives can be removed from power in Government.

Today's results have shown the country that Liberal Democrats can do just that.

Help us keep winning
– join our team today.

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Author:

Tackling soaring food prices

People are going through the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. Energy costs are up, mortgage bills are up, rent is up. But one of the biggest contributors to the crisis is food.

The **cost of the weekly shop has soared** over the last twelve months, now costing families an extra £600 a year.

The price of essential foods that we all use every day has gone through the roof. Cheese is up by 50%; milk by 40%; and eggs by 30%.

People are really struggling just to afford the basics.

And despite this, the **Conservative Government has done absolutely nothing to help**. It's no wonder that on their watch the UK's food inflation has hit 20%, the highest it's been since the 1970s.

Hard-working families shouldn't have to worry about putting food on the

table. **People deserve a fair deal.** That's why we've set out a five-point plan to bring down food bills:



1. Invest an extra billion pounds in British farms, to boost food production

We should be supporting our farmers to boost the UK's environmentally-friendly and sustainable food supply.

Starting by targeting support at shortage areas, we can protect ourselves from import shocks, put more good-quality food on the shelves, and bring down prices for the long term.



2. Cut energy bills for farms and businesses

Last month, the Government cut energy support for businesses by 85%, forcing farmers and shops to raise their prices. We'd put the support back up, to cut costs for producers and retailers.

And in the meantime, the Government should ensure that energy-intensive farms, such as those producing poultry, pig, dairy and fruit and vegetables, qualify for extra support under the current scheme.



3. Let our farmers and fishers recruit the staff they need

The Government's unfair visa rules have left our farmers and fishers producing less food because they can't recruit enough workers. Tonnes of fruit and veg went to waste last year as a result.

The Government must fix its broken visa system which is holding back our food supply, by scrapping arbitrary salary thresholds.



4. Investigate profiteering by big food corporations and supermarkets

A handful of big corporations control huge parts of our food and grocery markets, and there's alarming evidence they could be unfairly raising their prices at consumers' expense.

The Government must order an investigation by the market competition watchdog – the CMA – and crack down on profiteering. And they should give the Groceries Code Adjudicator more power to protect farmers from big supermarkets, keeping prices lower.



5. Free school meals for every child in poverty

Unfair rules put in place by the Conservatives in 2018 have excluded 800,000 children growing up in poverty from Free School Meals. And another 200,000 eligible children are missing out because they're not registered.

The Government must immediately end this injustice by scrapping the arbitrary household income threshold, and automatically enrolling every eligible child.

British people are struggling with eye-watering food prices and yet this Government is refusing to help. The Conservative Party is so out of touch they might as well be on a different planet.

It's the **Liberal Democrats** who have put forward a proper plan to make food cheaper. Now ministers need to stop sitting on their hands and put it into action.

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Author:

Chalk streams hit by 14,000 hours of

sewage discharges last year

England's chalk streams are a source of great national pride. Chalk streams are a unique waterway found primarily in the South of England and Yorkshire. They have been referred to as "England's rainforest" for their special qualities which allow wildlife and plants to thrive. They are a haven for iconic species like the otter, kingfisher and salmon amongst many others.

Today's new analysis of Environment Agency data finds they are being polluted with endless amounts of sewage discharges.

This truly is scandalous. Chalk streams must be protected from these destructive sewage dumps."

Ed Davey

The worst offender is Wessex Water, guilty of 1,013 separate sewage discharges into chalk streams across the West of England.

The worst chalk stream sewage discharge lasted a staggering 2,969 hours in the River Till, a tributary of the Hampshire Avon in Wiltshire by Wessex Water, which is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest as it is home to the Water Crowfoot, providing habitat for fish and snails.

Meanwhile, Thames Water discharged sewage into the Misbourne in Buckinghamshire for 1,206 hours last year. Southern Water discharged sewage 62 times in the River Meon last year, lasting over 1,000 hours.

The figure for sewage discharges may be much higher than feared. The Liberal Democrats have uncovered a large number of monitors designed to measure sewage overflows are in fact broken. **One in five sewage discharges in chalk streams either had a faulty monitor or no monitor installed at all.** Shockingly, one in four of Yorkshire Water's sewage monitors setup in chalk streams was recorded as broken last year. Across the country, one in ten chalk stream sewage monitors were faulty last year according to Environment Agency data.

Stop Sewage Dumping

Tax water companies' huge profits and fix our sewage system.

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