

[Long applauds work being done by Legal Services Agency](#)

The Legal Services Agency paid £120m to lawyers for legal aid work in the last financial year, according to provisional figures.

[Minister Lyons opens £29m shared housing development in Ballymena](#)

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has officially opened a new housing development of 135 shared homes at the St Patrick's regeneration site in Ballymena.

[Appointment to the NI Judicial Appointments Commission – \(NIJAC\)](#)

The First Minister Michelle O'Neill and the deputy First Minister Emma Little Pengelly have appointed His Honour Judge Mark McGarrity to serve on the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC).

[Ministers welcome pilot scheme to better support child victims of exploitation](#)

The Health, Justice and Education Ministers have welcomed Northern Ireland's inclusion in a pilot scheme which will strengthen protection for children at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation.

Green Party members elect two councillors as deputy leaders

Members have elected two high profile local councillors as co-deputy leaders of the Green Party of England and Wales.

Mothin Ali and Rachel Millward will serve alongside new leader Zack Polanski who was announced earlier in the day.

Rachel is co-leader of Wealden District Council in Sussex and Mothin is the first Green councillor to represent Gipton and Harehills ward in Leeds.

Mothin said: "I'm delighted to be part of the new Green Party leadership team that will build on our most recent successes in local councils up and down the country. Next year will be a huge year for growing our councillor numbers again and making new breakthroughs."

"I know from my own experience in winning my council seat from Labour that people have lost trust in the Labour government being able to take on the racism of Reform and offer real change for our communities."

Rachel said: "The Green Party's appeal is to everyone who is fed up with the tired, old two-party system and wants to see real change in our communities and across our country."

"I know from helping to turn a traditional Conservative area Green, that people respond when they there is a party embedded in their community able to make change happen. At council we have delivered on housing, health and nature restoration. I look forward to helping the Green Party to deliver even more change across the country."

Notes to Editors

Rachel shares leadership of Wealden District Council in Sussex.

Rachel helped to end 50 years of Conservative domination and delivered real change at council delivering on housing, health and nature restoration, charging double council tax on second homes to protect those struggling with the cost of living, and achieving fourth place nationally for climate credentials.

Rachel founded Birds Eye View, an international women's film festival addressing the reality that only 7% of films were directed by women.

She was awarded a Clore leadership fellowship, named a Woman to Watch by Arts Council England, and nominated for a Woman of the Future Media Award.

- Mothin Ali Biography

Mothin was elected as a Green Party councillor for Gipton and Harehills ward in Leeds in May 2024. He was the first ever Green to represent the ward, beating a 17-year Labour incumbent with a 20% swing and a 7% rise in turnout.

Mothin is an accountant, with over 20 years of experience working with small businesses.

He is a keen gardener and launched the Dig It Out campaign to tackle racism in horticulture. He has taught permaculture for over 10 years

In July 2024, during the Harehills riots, he stepped in to protect the local community, standing between rioters and police, helping to de-escalate the situation and literally put out fires.

Mothin supports young voices in politics and was a part of the Inner East Leeds Youth Summit – an initiative to show schoolchildren in Leeds how democracy works.

[Adblock test \(Why?\)](#)