


LONDON LOCAL ELECTIONS PREDICTIONS 2018

BARKING & DAGENHAM

Current Council: Labour 48, Independent 1, Vacant 2

EU Referendum: Leave 62%, Remain 38%

Barking & Dagenham has consistently been one of the safest boroughs for Labour in the whole of the Capital with the Party winning all 51 Council seats in both 2010 and 2014. Prior to this, the borough was home to a high-profile BNP presence (they won 12 councillors in 2006) but like the Party nationally, their presence has all but evaporated.

Despite the borough's large Leave vote, it is hard to see the Conservatives making much impact and the Party was reportedly struggling to recruit a full slate of candidates although ultimately 51 candidates were found.

Council Leader Darren Rodwell has shown himself to be a strong supporter of pro-development policies in a borough with one of the Capital's lowest house prices.

Prediction: It is very hard to see anything but another Labour clean sweep in this very reliably Labour borough.

BARNET

Current Council: Conservative 31, Labour 30, Liberal Democrat 1, Independent 1

EU Referendum: Remain 62%, Leave 38%

In normal circumstances, based on recent London polls, Labour should be very well placed to win outright control of Barnet for the first time. However, the constant series of negative headlines accusing Labour figures of anti-Semitism is a major problem in a borough with a Jewish population of around 20%.

At the 2017 General Election, the Conservatives narrowly defended all three Parliamentary seats in Barnet but former Cabinet Minister Theresa Villiers saw her majority cut from over 7,500 to only 353 in Chipping Barnet. Chipping Barnet has historically been the safest for the Conservatives of the Barnet Parliamentary seats but has the lowest Jewish population and now contains the wards which look most vulnerable to Labour attack. In contrast, Labour appear to be struggling in some of the Hendon wards and have reset their targeting to reflect this.

The Conservatives in Barnet have attracted some controversy in the past for their "easy Council" model which heavily relied on outsourcing services however this Council term has not attracted such controversy and they have managed to run a fully functioning Council despite having a majority of one.

Barnet will be one of the most hotly contested boroughs right the way up to close of polls on 3 May.

Prediction: Without Labour's recent travails over anti-Semitism, Barnet should have been a relatively easy Labour gain. We think they will still take outright control of the borough for the first time but only with a narrow majority.

BEXLEY

Current Council: Conservative 45, Labour 13, UKIP 3, Independent 1, Vacant 1

EU Referendum: Leave 63%, Remain 37%

One of the most notable features of the local elections in Bexley is the boundary changes which are dramatically reducing the number of councillors in the borough from 63 to 45. This will have a significant impact on the workings of the Council as the remaining councillors will be required to serve on more committees and their workload will undoubtedly increase.

While the boundary changes mean that the Conservative majority in Bexley will inevitably drop, the nature of the borough's population means the Party is unlikely to be in any danger of losing control. The borough is much whiter and older than the London average and the Conservatives won their two Parliamentary constituencies in the borough with comfortable majorities at the 2017 General Election.

The Labour vote is largely restricted to the North of the borough with few marginal wards. We expect the three UKIP councillors to lose their seats.

Prediction: Given Bexley's largely white, Brexit-voting demographic, the Conservatives should not have too much trouble holding here with a comfortable majority.

BRENT

Current Council: Labour 56, Conservative 6, Independent 1

EU Referendum: Remain 60%, Leave 40%

Brent has seen major regeneration in recent times in particular around Wembley Stadium which includes the state of the art new Council offices. By supporting this new development, Brent under the leadership of Councillor Muhammed Butt has gained the reputation as a Council which is prepared to support large regeneration projects and taller buildings.

Politically, Labour approach May's elections in a very strong position. The days when Brent was controlled by a coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats now feels like ancient history. The Liberal Democrats who at the start of this decade were a major force in the borough were reduced to one councillor at the 2014 elections in Mapesbury ward who has subsequently left the Party. Furthermore, the Conservatives only now hold two wards at opposite ends of the borough - Brondesbury Park and Kenton. The atmosphere in the Conservative Group of six councillors has not always been harmonious and they appear exposed to further Labour advances in Brondesbury Park in particular.

It is likely the Conservatives will hold onto Kenton (as they did in a recent by-election) but Labour is well placed to win all of the other wards in the borough.

Prediction: Labour will consolidate their position by taking four additional seats - three in Brondesbury Park from the Conservatives and one in Mapesbury from the Liberal Democrat turned Independent.

BROMLEY

Current Council: Conservative 48, Labour 7, UKIP 2, Independent 3

EU Referendum: Remain 51%, Leave 49%

Many commentators have been predicting a terrible result for the Conservatives in London on 3 May. Some have even predicted that the Conservatives will be reduced to controlling one or two boroughs. Should this worst-case scenario for the Conservatives come to pass, one of their last remaining boroughs will be Bromley.

Bromley is simply the strongest current London borough for the Conservatives and is extremely weak for Labour by the standards of the Capital. The main threat to the Conservatives was traditionally the Liberal Democrats who have a historical presence in the Orpington area but they were wiped off the Council in 2014 and are no longer a serious threat.

Labour may be able to make some minor progress in the North of the borough and in Bromley Town ward but the scope for large scale gains which seem likely in many boroughs is limited in this true-blue bastion.

Prediction: An easy Conservative hold in what is now the Party's safest borough in the entire Capital.

CAMDEN

Current Council: Labour 39, Conservative 11, Liberal Democrat 2, Green 1, Independent 1

EU Referendum: Remain 75%, Leave 25%

Despite only gaining control of the Council in 2010, Labour now dominates the political climate in Camden with a splintered opposition. A good example of Labour's success was Tulip Siddiq's resounding victory at the 2017 General Election in Hampstead & Kilburn which went from a key marginal with a Labour majority of just over 1,000 to a safe Labour seat with a majority of over 15,000.

This outcome in a seat which was heavily targeted by the local Conservatives who were fielding their then Council Group Leader Claire-Louise Leyland has led to considerable pessimism among the blue team. This has been demonstrated by Leyland standing down from the Council and a number of selected Conservative candidates backing out of standing at the eleventh hour. This can possibly be explained by the unpopularity of Brexit in this largely Remain voting borough. Indeed, veteran Conservative councillor Andrew Marshall recently defected to the Liberal Democrats in protest at the Conservative Government's stance on the issue.

The Liberal Democrats have had considerable success in Camden in the past and are attempting to use their Party's strong opposition to Brexit for their electoral benefit.

The Greens will be focussing much of their energies in London to try to protect London Assembly Member Sian Berry who is defending her Highgate ward seat and is vulnerable to a challenge from Labour.

Labour are much-changed from the start of the Council term with former Leader Sarah Hayward standing down at this election along with former Cabinet Member for Planning Phil Jones. Hayward's replacement, Georgia Gould, has impressed with her strong but consensual style of leadership to date and has kept the more radical, Momentum activists in the borough largely on the periphery despite Labour having a block of Momentum councillors.

It remains to be seen whether the anti-Semitism issue has the potential to damage Labour in target wards like Hampstead Town and Swiss Cottage which have a significant Jewish population. However, based on the 2017 General Election results the Conservatives can only justifiably have confidence in winning all three councillors in Frognal & Fitzjohns ward.

Prediction: Further Labour gains as the Conservatives are reduced to a handful of councillors.

CROYDON

Current Council: Labour 39, Conservative 29, Vacant 2

EU Referendum: Remain 54%, Leave 46%

London's largest borough in terms of population and councillors, is also one of its most politically divided. A fervently Labour North is joined by a strongly Conservative South with the centre of the borough staging most of the close contests. And so it proved once again in May 2017 as Labour's Sarah Jones defeated Minister for Housing Gavin Barwell by a majority of over 5,000. Barwell has since become Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister.

This time round, Labour are in the driving seat with the potential to expand their territory in Croydon Central and eat into some of the Conservative heartland areas of the South of the borough. The Conservatives are campaigning by accusing the Labour administration of incompetence around the town centre regeneration which includes a new Westfield shopping centre and criticising Labour's plans for development of green belt sites.

Croydon is currently a two Party state and it seems unlikely that any other Party will win a seat on 3 May. These elections are being fought on new ward boundaries with more two member wards and some one member wards being created. We doubt whether the new boundaries will have a huge impact on the eventual number of seats and we expect that Labour will be able to hold on without too many issues.

Prediction: Labour to consolidate their position in the Croydon Central parliamentary seat but the Conservatives to largely hold their ground in the South of the borough.

EALING

Current Council: Labour 53, Conservative 12, Liberal Democrat 4

EU Referendum: Remain 60%, Leave 40%

Another borough which was formerly a bellwether marginal which is now safely in Labour's control. The demographic change resulting in an increased BME vote in many Ealing wards has undoubtedly strengthened Labour's position in recent years. Furthermore, many core Conservative supporters in the borough were middle class, professional Remain voters and this demographic group is currently not overly receptive to the Government's messaging on Brexit.

Julian Bell, the Council's Leader since 2010 has run a tight ship which has largely been seen as a moderate, pro-development administration. In addition, Momentum has struggled to gain a foothold in the borough. This has proved to be an electorally successful approach and Labour now have a chance to reduce the Conservatives to single digits. Labour should gain the sole Conservative seat in Cleveland ward, the last remaining Conservative seat in the Ealing North constituency.

Furthermore, based on their abject result in the Ealing Central & Acton constituency at the 2017 General Election, the Conservatives look vulnerable in middle class, Remain-voting wards such as Ealing Broadway and Ealing Common. It remains to be seen how entrenched the Liberal Democrats are in Southfield ward where they have enjoyed representation for a number of electoral cycles.

It is certainly plausible that the Conservatives could be reduced to only one ward in Ealing – Hanger Hill – where Group Leader Greg Stafford and former Ealing Central Parliamentary candidate Joy Morrissey are both restanding. In short, Ealing is a good example of a borough in which David Cameron's brand of more liberal Conservatism was a better fit than Theresa May's more traditional approach.

Prediction: Labour to reduce the Conservatives to one last remaining outpost in Hanger Hill ward.

ENFIELD

Current Council: Labour 39, Conservative 22, Independent 1, Vacant 1

EU Referendum: Remain 56%, Leave 44%

The Enfield Southgate constituency has its place reserved in Labour election folklore with the famous decapitation of Michael Portillo in 1997. At the 2005 General Election, however the seat returned to type and the Conservatives had high hopes of not only holding Southgate but also regaining Enfield North at the 2017 General Election. However, it didn't quite work out like that as Labour added 9,000 onto their previously precarious Enfield North majority and Bambos Charalambous defeated David Burrowes by over 4,000 in Southgate.

In such an environment, Labour are firmly on the attack and looking to build on successes at the 2010 and 2014 Council elections by further diminishing the Conservative presence on the Council. The Conservatives only look truly safe in Cockfosters, Grange and Highlands wards so it is conceivable that they will be struggling to make double figures if the outcome is as bleak for the Party as the polls indicate. Town ward, which as its name implies contains much of the old market town of Enfield looks like one of the closest contests.

The Conservative decline here appears to result from changing demographics and a failure to connect with an increasingly ethnically diverse electorate rather than the impact of Brexit, in a borough with a respectable Leave vote.

Prediction: Labour to increase their majority by taking more seats in the Enfield Southgate constituency.

GREENWICH

Current Council: Labour 42, Conservative 9

EU Referendum: Remain 56%, Leave 44%

Greenwich has long been considered one of Labour's most reliable boroughs in London despite the Eltham parliamentary constituency which makes up much of the South of the borough being a perennial Conservative target in General Elections.

In recent years, Greenwich has embraced regeneration with the Peninsula development seeing a growth of tall buildings and new homes in the borough. Labour appear politically unassailable with a sizeable majority and little sign of threats either externally or internal threats from Momentum activists.

The Conservatives are not quite dead as demonstrated by their success in the Eltham North by-election in November 2016, in which they won a seat off Labour. However, at this election they will do well to hold onto their remaining wards in Eltham and they are likely to lose their existing councillor in Blackheath Westcombe ward.

Prediction: Labour to take all seats in Blackheath Westcombe ward and increase their majority.

HACKNEY

Current Council: Labour 50, Conservative 4, Liberal Democrat 3

Current elected Mayor: Philip Glanville (Labour)

EU Referendum: Remain 79%, Leave 21%

Former Cabinet Member for Housing, Philip Glanville successfully stepped up to the elected Mayoralty in Hackney when longstanding Mayor Jules Pipe was appointed Sadiq Khan's Deputy Mayor for Housing in 2016.

Home to fashionable Shoreditch and the tech companies of Old Street, Hackney's role in London's creative economy is on the rise. Politically, the borough remains solidly Labour, albeit not quite as monolithically so as its near neighbour Islington.

At this election the key battles will be in the heavily Jewish ward of Springfield which currently has three Conservative councillors and where Labour's recent negative headlines around anti-Semitism could be a major problem for the Party. Sadiq Khan has recently been campaigning in the ward but in the present climate, this could be a difficult seat to gain. It is more likely that further inroads will be made in the sole Liberal Democrat ward of Cazenove, where two of the three Liberal Democrat councillors are standing down and which looks like a viable target for Labour.

Prediction: A straightforward Labour hold for elected Mayor Philip Glanville. Labour to defeat the Liberal Democrats in Cazenove ward but the Conservatives to hold on in Springfield ward.

HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Current Council: Labour 26, Conservative 20

EU Referendum: Remain 70%, Leave 30%

The days when Hammersmith & Fulham was a tax-cutting prototype Conservative Council which was hailed as the "new Wandsworth" and "David Cameron's favourite Council", are now a distant memory as Labour look set to make major gains.

Following Conservative victories in 2006 and 2010, some predicted that the borough was on its way to becoming a relatively reliable Conservative borough but this theory was blown apart by Labour's fantastic result in 2014 which saw them claw back control of the Council with a majority of 6 against all odds. Since then, Labour Hammersmith MP Andy Slaughter has transformed what was previously considered a semi-marginal Parliamentary seat into a majority of over 18,000.

Many of the borough's most prominent Conservative councillors including former Council Deputy Leader Greg Smith (Town ward) and twice Hammersmith Parliamentary candidate Charlie Dewhirst (Ravenscourt Park ward) have announced their retirement from the Council and the Party looks highly exposed to a rampant Labour Party in a number of wards including Ravenscourt Park, Sands End and Avonmore & Brook Green. Rumours abound that even Town ward, the former ward of ex-Council Leader Stephen Greenhalgh may be under threat from Labour.

Certainly this is the sort of borough where the Conservatives are placed under considerable pressure due to Brexit, which is highly unpopular with many of the younger professionals who live in this local authority and it is highly likely that Stephen Cowan's Labour administration will be returned with an increased majority.

Prediction: One of Labour's strongest results in London sees the once dominant Conservative Group reduced to single figures.

HARINGEY

Current Council: Labour 49, Liberal Democrat 8

EU Referendum: Remain 76%, Leave 24%

Haringey is probably the London borough which has received most media attention of all over the past twelve months. This is nothing to do with a close contest between the parties but entirely due to the strong radicalisation of the local constituency Labour Parties in both Tottenham and Hornsey & Wood Green.

The issue which triggered what is essentially a Momentum-backed take over of the Labour Party in the area, is the so-called Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) between the Council and Lend Lease. The HDV was strongly supported by Council Leader Claire Kober and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Alan Strickland.

When Labour selection contests started, it was obvious that a number of deselections of moderate councillors would take place. A number of councillors including Kober and Strickland decided to ultimately fall on their swords and a number of their Council Cabinet colleagues were formally deselected and replaced with Anti-HDV, Momentum-backed candidates.

The Liberal Democrats were somewhat of a threat to Labour's domination of the borough when Lynne Featherstone was elected as MP for Hornsey & Wood Green in 2005 and held the seat in 2010. However, the Party has nosedived in recent times and Featherstone is now a member of the House of Lords. Without her campaign infrastructure firing on all cylinders, it seems likely that despite all their internal issues, Labour might be well-positioned to make further gains on 3 May in wards such as Muswell Hill and Fortis Green.

We can then expect a new Council leader to be chosen shortly after the elections with former Cabinet member Peray Ahmet (Noel Park) and current Deputy Leader Joseph Ejiofor, likely contenders.

Prediction: Labour's local difficulties fail to translate into the election result as they come close to wiping out the Liberal Democrats.

HARROW

Current Council: Labour 32, Conservative 27, Liberal Democrat 1, Independent 3

EU Referendum: Remain 55%, Leave 45%

Harrow has a somewhat chequered recent political history. After the 2010 local elections, the ruling Labour Group suffered a number of difficulties with several changes in Council Leaders and ultimately a schism which resulted in some Labour councillors leaving the Party, forming their own Independent Labour Party and siding with the Conservatives to enable them to run a minority administration from 2013-14.

Despite, both Labour factions contesting the 2014 elections, the Independent Labour Group did not win any seats and Labour were returned with a wafer-thin majority. Since then, the borough has witnessed some intense political struggles with Conservative MP for Harrow East, Bob Blackman, holding onto his seat at the 2017 General Election after a close contest with Labour GLA member Navin Shah. Meanwhile Labour has consolidated its position in the once marginal Harrow West parliamentary seat.

While Labour should hold onto the Council on 3 May, with Jeremy Corbyn, Sadiq Khan and Theresa May all recently campaigning in the borough, it is clear that the two main Parties still see Harrow as a somewhat marginal borough and we expect the Conservative vote here to be more resilient than some neighbouring boroughs such as Brent and Ealing.

Prediction: Minimal changes as the Conservative vote proves more durable than in many other London boroughs.

HAVERING

Current Council: Conservative 23, Residents Association 10, East Havering Residents 8, UKIP 6, Independent Residents 5, Labour 2

EU Referendum: Leave 70%, Remain 30%

Havering is a most untypical London borough. It had the highest vote for Leave in the EU referendum and its population is considerably older and whiter than the Capital's average.

Moreover, its politics are significantly out of kilter with most of London with a very small Labour presence on the Council, a number of UKIP councillors and a large number of residents association councillors who have held the balance of power in recent years.

Perhaps it is a result of these outlier trends which have created a culture whereby in 2017 some councillors supported a move for Havering to leave Greater London, the so-called "Hexit". Ultimately a majority of Havering councillors voted to remain part of London but the borough's unique political identity continues.

This election should see a real opportunity for the Conservatives to make progress in Havering at the expense of a deflated UKIP and residents association councillors. This is one London borough where the national headlines around Brexit should help the Conservatives and given their excellent General Election results, they should be well-placed to potentially win a small majority.

Prediction: The solitary Conservative gain of the night in this most untypical London borough.

HILLINGDON

Current Council: Conservative 42, Labour 22, Vacant 1

EU Referendum: Leave 56%, Remain 44%

Hillingdon has remained in the blue column since the Conservatives won control in 1998 and it is likely to remain so this year. Labour have been focussing their campaign on the wards in Boris Johnson's Uxbridge & South Ruislip constituency which saw the Foreign Secretary's majority slashed to 5,000 at the 2017 General Election. Labour see this election as preparing the ground for a full-on assault on the seat at the next General Election.

Labour have their strength in the South of the borough where Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell is the local MP. They will be looking to win a full slate of councillors in the currently split wards of West Drayton, Charville and Uxbridge South along with challenging the Conservatives in Yiewsley (a rare Conservative gain in London in 2014) and Brunel where they will be looking to mobilise the large student population.

On balance, it is likely that they will fall short and that Hillingdon will remain under Conservative control.

Prediction: The Conservatives hold on in the political home of Boris Johnson and John McDonnell.

HOUNSLOW

Current Council: Labour 47, Conservative 10, Vacant 2, Independent 1

EU Referendum: Remain 51%, Leave 49%

Like several other West London boroughs, Hounslow was a one-time battleground borough which has evolved into a safe Labour borough in recent years.

This year, the contest in Hounslow will be between the Conservatives and Labour in the Chiswick wards that the former still hold. Given the strong Remain vote in Chiswick and Turnham Green and Labour's emphatic victory in the Brentford & Isleworth constituency in 2017, it will be an uphill struggle for the Conservatives.

While we don't expect a Conservative wipe out there is the potential for Labour to make additional gains in Chiswick especially as they are secure in the rest of the borough.

Prediction: Labour further consolidate their grip on the Council by making gains from the Conservatives in Chiswick.

ISLINGTON

Current Council: Labour 47, Green 1

EU Referendum: Remain 75%, Leave 25%

In the political and physical home of Jeremy Corbyn, there is little sign of Labour's stranglehold being loosened. The main question in these elections here will be to see if Labour can remove the sole opposition councillor, Green Caroline Russell and create a one-Party state. The chances are that they will be successful in this endeavour.

It is easy to forget that the Liberal Democrats controlled Islington from 1999-2006. While Corbyn is in the ascendancy it is hard to see them regaining a foothold in the borough.

Prediction: A full house for Labour in Jeremy Corbyn's home borough.

KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

Current Council: Conservative 37, Labour 11, Liberal Democrat 2

EU Referendum: Remain 69%, Leave 31%

Since its creation in 1964, the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea has been the strongest London borough for the Conservative Party in London, if not the entire country. However, three events have recent resulted in some commentators to start to think the previously unthinkable about whether the Royal borough could somehow cease to be a Conservative bastion.

Firstly, Brexit was deeply unpopular in a borough with a very large percentage of EU citizens especially in the South Kensington area. Secondly, the victory of Labour in the Kensington parliamentary constituency at the 2017 General Election sent shockwaves through the political establishment in the borough and beyond. Finally, the Grenfell Tower disaster and the Council's perceived problems in dealing with the fallout, has had profound implications for the political climate. Most obviously, former Council Leader Nick Paget Brown and his Deputy Rock Feilding-Mellen are standing down from the Council, as are an entire generation of former Cabinet members including Tim Coleridge, Tim Ahern and Warwick Lightfoot. They are not alone. Of the 37 sitting Conservative councillors, 17 are not contesting their seats. In their place are a new generation of younger, more ethnically diverse Conservative candidates who are vigorously campaigning in a way rarely seen in Kensington & Chelsea. New leader Elizabeth Campbell has been tasked with addressing the myriad of issues from Grenfell and restoring the Conservative reputation locally.

And they certainly need to campaign, as Labour are looking to target wards outside their North Kensington heartland wards and are putting up a strong campaign in Chelsea Riverside ward (which includes the World's End Estate) along with Notting Hill wards such as Pembridge and Norland.

The Liberal Democrats will be looking to win all three councillors in Earl's Court ward where ward councillor Linda Wade has been a strong opponent of Capco's development of the area around the Earl's Court exhibition centre.

Another Party has entered the fray. Advance, who are led by former Liberal Democrat Kensington candidate Annabel Mullin are standing on a mixture of strong opposition to Brexit and large regeneration projects in the royal borough. Although they have the support of some in the influential amenity societies, it remains to be seen how electorally successful they will be.

In the end, such a diverse range of opposition to the Conservatives may be counter-productive, and we expect Kensington & Chelsea to remain true blue on 3 May albeit with a few gains from opposition parties.

Prediction: The embattled Conservatives take a hit to their large majority but still retain control.

KINGSTON UPON THAMES

Current Council: Conservative 27, Liberal Democrat 18, Labour 2, Independent 1

EU Referendum: Remain 62%, Leave 38%

The Conservatives winning control of Kingston in 2014 was something of a surprise and was a portent to Ed Davey losing his Parliamentary seat in 2015. Four years on and Davey is back having ended James Berry's two-year spell as an MP for Kingston & Surbiton at the 2017 General Election and the Liberal Democrats are feeling confident about their chances of regaining the borough.

All indications are that they are on track to make the gains necessary to regain control and the Conservatives will be adversely impacted by Brexit in a strongly Remain voting borough. We expect a fairly comfortable Liberal Democrat gain.

Prediction: The Conservatives four year control of Kingston ends with the Liberal Democrats emerging victorious.

LAMBETH

Current Council: Labour 58, Conservative 3, Green 1, Independent 1

EU Referendum: Remain 79%, Leave 21%

Another Labour-controlled borough where the major interest on election night will be if Labour can wipe all remaining opposition off the Council. Three of these opposition councillors are Conservatives in Clapham Common ward.

However, one of these councillors is vacating her seat to stand in more promising territory in Wandsworth and another has moved to Wales. In the light of this and this borough's strong Remain profile, we predict Labour will comfortably gain this ward and gain the final seat from the Greens making this a Labour clean sweep.

Prediction: Labour defeats the Conservatives in Clapham Common ward and win a clean sweep.

LEWISHAM

Current Council: Labour 53, Green 1

Current elected Mayor: Sir Steve Bullock (Labour) (not restanding)

EU Referendum: Remain 70%, Leave 30%

As with its neighbour in Lambeth, there's little to see here in terms of changes with Labour likely to win all Council seats and their new Mayoral candidate, Damien Egan, likely to win comfortably.

By current standards, Egan is a Labour moderate and is the current Cabinet Member for Housing. We should not expect him to deviate dramatically from the policies of his longstanding predecessor Sir Steve Bullock.

Prediction: A landslide victory for new Labour elected Mayor candidate Damien Egan and Labour's Council candidates.

MERTON

Current Council: Labour 36, Conservative 20, Residents Association 3, Liberal Democrat 1

EU Referendum: Remain 63%, Leave 37%

All indications in Merton are that the main parties are focussing most of their efforts on the currently Conservative-held wards in the Wimbledon Parliamentary constituency.

The main opportunities for Labour to gain seats appear to come in the Wimbledon Parliamentary constituency wards of Trinity, Raynes Park and West Barnes. The Liberal Democrats are largely focussing their efforts on Dundonald ward which includes some of Wimbledon town centre. The Conservatives look safe in Village, Hillside and Wimbledon Park wards so may be significantly reduced in number but there is no chance of a wipe out. Labour look safe in their wards in the Mitcham & Morden Parliamentary seat.

Prediction: Labour continue to make inroads into the Wimbledon part of the borough and increase their majority.

NEWHAM

Current Council: Labour 58, Independent 1, Vacant 1

Current elected Mayor: Sir Robin Wales (Labour) (not restanding)

EU Referendum: Remain 53%, Leave 47%

Newham has elected only Labour councillors since 2010 but the key figure in the borough has undoubtedly been its elected Mayor, Sir Robin Wales. Sir Robin has over many years, acquired a reputation as one of the leading Council leaders in support of regeneration across London. While this Sir Robin's pro-development approach has transformed parts of Newham, in particular the Olympics site at Stratford, he has angered some on the Left of the Labour Party which culminated in his eventual ousting by Custom House councillor, Rokhsana Fiaz.

While Fiaz is not the Momentum firebrand that some have incorrectly portrayed her as, she is campaigning for much greater social and affordable housing delivery which if introduced is likely to have serious consequences for developers' profit margins. While it is as certain as we can be that Fiaz will be elected, it remains to be seen whether she will govern as a pragmatic moderate or an ideologue.

Prediction: No change in the Labour monopoly in Newham as Rokhsana Fiaz is chosen as the new elected Mayor.

REDBRIDGE

Current Council: Labour 36, Conservative 24, Liberal Democrat 3

EU Referendum: Remain 54%, Leave 46%

Few London boroughs have swung as dramatically to Labour as Redbridge in recent years. Labour had never controlled the borough until 2014 but are now in a strong position to increase their majority.

Labour have benefitted from having two high profile campaigning MPs in Ilford in Wes Streeting and Mike Gapes and while neither are popular with the Corbyn leadership, their results at the 2017 General Election demonstrate significant cross over appeal.

The local Conservatives appear rather demoralised after two bruising defeats in Ilford North and are likely to be reduced to a small number of seats in their core North West of the borough.

Prediction: Labour continue to transform what was once a safe Conservative borough into a Labour heartland despite criticisms of the Party leadership by local MPs.

RICHMOND UPON THAMES

Current Council: Conservative 37, Liberal Democrat 14, Labour 2, Independent 1

EU Referendum: Remain 69%, Leave 31%

The 2017 General Election saw the return from the political wilderness of the two big beasts of Richmond politics- Vince Cable and Zac Goldsmith. Since then, Cable has become Leader of the Liberal Democrats and given their strong heritage in the borough and its emphatic Remain vote, they will be hoping to gain control of the Council.

The Richmond Conservatives recently changed Leader and the new man at the helm, Paul Hodgins, will be hoping to claim his own mandate but is somewhat vulnerable to an unhelpful national situation around Brexit and Heathrow airport.

The Liberal Democrats may be slightly handicapped by an electoral pact with the Green Party which means they are only fielding two candidates in six wards with the Greens not standing in the remaining wards. If Liberal Democrats don't transfer their allegiance to the Green candidate, there is the potential for the Conservatives to take the third seat in these six wards. While this isn't an ideal scenario for the Liberal Democrats, we expect they will just about emerge with a majority.

Prediction: The Liberal Democrats narrowly gain control of the borough from the Conservatives as the Liberal Democrats' electoral pact with the Greens nearly backfires.

SOUTHWARK

Current Council: Labour 48, Liberal Democrat 13, Conservative 2

EU Referendum: Remain 73%, Leave 27%

Southwark is another borough being elected on new boundaries. Labour will be looking to reduce the size of the Liberal Democrat Group who no longer have the coat-tails of former MP Simon Hughes to hang onto.

Unlike some other Inner London boroughs, the Southwark Labour Group has remained broadly united and is regarded as a formidable campaigning machine. We would expect them to increase their stranglehold on the Council and to wipe out the two remaining Conservatives in the process.

Prediction: Labour continue to increase their majority as the Conservatives are wiped off the Council.

SUTTON

Current Council: Liberal Democrat 43, Conservative 8, Independent 2, Vacant 1

EU Referendum: Leave 54%, Remain 46%

Sutton has been the Liberal Democrats strongest borough in the Capital, as they have held control since 1986. They go into this election with a majority of 32 councillors and having survived another attempt by the Conservatives to unseat Carshalton & Wallington MP Tom Brake at the 2017 General Election.

However, they do have some concerns, notably the fact that Conservative MP for Sutton & Cheam Paul Scully, himself a former Sutton councillor, was able to take his majority from under 4,000 to over 12,000 at the 2017 General Election. Scully is now the Vice Chairman of the Conservative Party for London and the Conservatives are pushing very hard on the Council's record around refuse collections. This and the fact that Sutton voted in favour of Brexit has led some commentators to suggest that the Conservatives may have a chance of winning the borough.

Given the sheer number of gains this would require, a Conservative gain seems unlikely but we do expect this to be one of the few London boroughs where the Conservatives make up some ground.

Prediction: The Conservatives make a handful gains from the Liberal Democrats but the latter comfortably retain their majority.

TOWER HAMLETS

Current Council: Labour 22, Aspire 10, People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets 6, Conservative 5, Liberal Democrat 1, Independent 1

Current elected Mayor: John Biggs (Labour)

EU Referendum: Remain 67%, Leave 33%

Although Tower Hamlets politics is notoriously difficult to predict, we expect Labour are in pole position to hold both the mayoralty and to secure an outright majority on the Council. With political independents splintered into numerous factions, Labour should be able to capitalise in order to increase their representation despite some of the Council's most influential Labour councillors such as Joshua Peck, Rachael Saunders and Amy Whitelock Gibbs not restanding.

Both John Biggs and Labour's candidates throughout Tower Hamlets are likely to benefit both from a positive political environment for Labour in London and a heavily split opposition. We therefore expect Labour to increase their presence on the Council and for John Biggs to be re-elected for what will almost certainly be his final term.

However, we would be surprised to see Aspire and the People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets completely wiped out as both still have pockets of support across the borough. The Conservatives are at serious risk of a wipe out with three of their five councillors not restanding and Brexit likely to be extremely unpopular with the Party's core support of financial services workers in the Canary Wharf area.

Prediction: Labour benefit from a split opposition to make gains from Independents and the Conservatives as elected Mayor John Biggs is safely re-elected for a second and probably final term.

WALTHAM FOREST

Current Council: Labour 43, Conservative 16, Independent 1

EU Referendum: Remain 59%, Leave 41%

One of Labour's key targets at the next General Election is the Chingford & Woodford Green constituency of former Conservative Leader Iain Duncan-Smith. This is where most of the action in the campaign has taken place and it will be interesting to see what the chances are of Labour winning further wards in this seat.

The local Labour Party has demonstrated a fair amount of Momentum activity especially in the Walthamstow end of the borough but new Council Leader Clare Coghill appears to be adopting a moderate, pro-development position at present. She will not feel under threat from the electorate on 3 May.

Prediction: No major surprises here as Labour make gains from the Conservatives in Iain Duncan-Smith's now marginal Chingford & Woodford Green constituency.

WANDSWORTH

Current Council: Conservative 39, Labour 19, Independent 2

EU Referendum: Remain 75%, Leave 25%

Of all of the 32 boroughs, most analysts agree that Wandsworth is likely to be one of the closest, if not the closest, result of the night.

Labour had a very good performance across the borough at the General Election last year (gaining an increase in their share of the vote in all three of its parliamentary constituencies), particularly in Battersea and Tooting where there are now two Labour MPs, where they stand to gain the most and, naturally, where they seem to be the most confident.

Putney, looks better for the Conservatives, though some are predicting that that the former Conservative councillor for West Hill ward, Malcolm Grimston, who is running as an Independent candidate, may have an outside chance of retaining his seat in a ward which is seen as a three way battle with Labour and the Conservatives (whose two incumbent councillors are standing down).

The wards which appear most likely to decide the contest are Southfields and West Hill in Putney and Shaftesbury and St.Mary's Park in Battersea. Shaftesbury is the ward of Deputy Council Leader Jonathan Cook.

Based on intelligence from both campaigns and current polling, it is very difficult to call Wandsworth and it could realistically go either way but on balance, given the history of its electorate voting in favour of the Conservative Council while voting Labour nationally, we feel it is most likely to be a narrow Conservative hold.

Prediction: Likely to be one of the closest, if not the closest result of the night. The Conservatives are very slight favourites but it could go either way.

WESTMINSTER

Current Council: Conservative 45, Labour 15

EU Referendum: Remain 69%, Leave 31%

In its 53 year history, Westminster City Council has never not been Conservative-controlled. For most of this time, the Conservatives have held the Council by large margins with three consecutive elections between 2002 and 2010 delivering an identical 36 seat Conservative majority. In 2014, there was a slight tightening with Labour gaining all three seats in Churchill ward (which centres around the Churchill Gardens Estate) and a solitary councillor in Maida Vale ward. However, on the outgoing Council, the Conservatives enjoy a 30 seat majority (one Churchill councillor has subsequently defected to the Conservatives). This has been one of the most reliably Conservative boroughs not just in London but also the whole country.

Gradually Labour has been adding to its four stronghold wards in the North of Westminster and presenting a serious challenge to the Conservatives in some unlikely places. This was first evidenced at the 2016 Mayoral Elections in which Sadiq Khan ran Zac Goldsmith very close in Bayswater, Little Venice, Vincent Square and West End wards. However, it was only after the Brexit referendum (at which 69 per cent of Westminster residents voted Remain) and the 2017 General Election which saw swings to Labour of over 9 per cent in Cities of London & Westminster and nearly 11 per cent

in Westminster North, that Conservatives began to seriously question their chances of retaining control of the Council.

Labour have a number of wards that could potentially be won by the Party which will largely depend on the scale of the swing from Conservatives to Labour in London. These pivotal wards include Bayswater, Little Venice and Regent's Park in the North and Tachbrook, Vincent Square and West End in the South. These wards have not had Labour councillors for decades, or in some cases at all. Labour are seeking to appeal to EU citizens who are eligible to vote in local elections both in their strong anti-Brexit messaging and also in their candidate selection as they have chosen several EU citizens as candidates.

The Conservative administration has delayed the publication of its revision to the Westminster City Plan until after the Council elections. The Council had previously launched a consultation in March 2017 entitled "Building height: Getting the right kind of growth for Westminster" in which the Council raised the possibility of increasing the number of tall buildings in certain strategic locations in the borough. Whether these tall buildings will get built may depend on the forthcoming election results as the Labour Group which is headed by foreign policy expert, Cllr Adam Hug, has indicated that they will oppose future taller building developments and favour low rise, high-density developments. Undoubtedly Labour's opposition to taller buildings in Westminster stems partly from controversial recent taller buildings applications such as the Paddington Cube (initially the Paddington Pole) which have generated significant interest both from the public and from journalists.

Prediction: Conservatives retain control with a significantly reduced majority after losing several once impregnable wards to Labour.