

Topic: What conclusions can we draw from 6th May local election results?

Summary

The English local and parliamentary elections for Scotland and Wales were held on Thursday 6 May. The results in England seemed to broadly favour the Tories at the expense of Labour and other parties. The SNP won 64 seats out of a total of 130 in Scotland with the Tories at 15 seats. The Welsh Labour Party are one short of an outright majority in the Welsh Senedd. Are the “four nations” more divided than ever?

Discussion

Main conclusions drawn from the results

One suggestion is that the Conservatives did well because, as Boris promised, they “got the job done.” Brexit, the pandemic (although admittedly with a bad start), the vaccine roll-out and starting the levelling-up helped, amongst others, the North East of the country.

The Labour Party did not bring to the voters’ attention any credible alternative to the Government’s policies regarding the handling of the pandemic, running the economy nor planning for the future of the UK as an independent country. They may need someone like Andy Burnham to re-energise the party and its reconnection with the voters.

The ruling parties in Scotland and Wales also benefited greatly from the highly successful gamble taken by the UK Government regarding the (early) acquisition of Covid-19 vaccines (in their hundreds of millions) and the efficient distribution throughout all nations of the United Kingdom.

Buckinghamshire results

The Buckinghamshire Unitary Council: The Conservatives have 113 seats out of 147, the LibDems are second with 15, Independents have 14 and Labour trailing fourth with 4, with the Greens only 1.

We wondered whether Martin Tett will continue as leader of the council or whether one of the other candidates will win the position. Other candidates, including Amersham ex-mayor Mimi Harker, are said to be in the running.

The Council has been criticised on the lack of quality in delivering child protection and child services. There were improvements, but after a further review, these were still judged inadequate.

Hillingdon was mentioned as an example of a well-run council, they improved the library services, not closing any of them, but in fact building new ones even adding Costa coffees to them and existing libraries and opening a new 50-meter Olympic size swimming pool and associated leisure facilities. Furthermore, their roads are apparently without potholes, not something we can say is true for Bucks. We can be pleased that the new Amersham leisure and community centre is due to open in the autumn, a project which was started by the now defunct Chiltern District Council.

However, these things do not feature highly in deciding who to vote for. Voting is preponderantly on party political lines.

We all agreed that it would have been better if Buckinghamshire had split into two unitary councils as the northern area’s demographic is vastly different from that of the south, but Mr Tett drove through successfully his preference for a single council for all of Buckinghamshire.

The Amersham-on-the-Hill ward now has 4 Liberal Democrats and none of the other parties were elected.

The Chesham Bois Parish Council had 13 candidates vying for 11 places. The result was 1 Green, 1 Independent and the rest were all non-affiliated to any political party. This should help to enable the members to decide what is right for the parish and not what is party policy.

We briefly discussed the identity of the candidate (Peter Fleet) to replace the deceased Dame Cheryl Gillan as MP for Chesham and Amersham, depending, of course, on voters putting him there.

Financial spending report for Buckinghamshire Council

Buckinghamshire at one time had the worst performing local authority pension fund. The 2019/20 accounts available on the web show a pension liability of around £624m with the underlying deficit to be recovered over 12 years by additional annual contribution. Evidently this leaves less for other priorities.

Pension contributions in respect of senior employees for that year totalled just under £274,000, around 22% of their remuneration.

The British are conservative (with a small c)

Without doubt the British are a people deeply steeped in tradition, with innate respect for authority. The idea of revolution sends shivers of fear running down the backs of most English people, perhaps not to such a great extent in Scotland and Wales. This does not mean that all change is viewed with extreme suspicion, it just takes a long time to come to terms with it.

Scotland

The votes are roughly evenly split between Unionist and pro-Independence parties and a rush for Indyref 2 is thus not forecast. We noted that, under the Barnett formula, Scotland receives an additional per capita funding of £2,450 per annum. Apparently, this is not the highest funding support under the formula as it is exceeded in respect of Wales, Northern Ireland and some regions in the UK.

Voters in England may not all be opposed to Scotland leaving the Union but are not likely to be asked. Much depends on the economic viability of an independent Scottish State, but that may not be high on the list of considerations to be taken into account.

Wales

The Labour Party in Wales appears to be independent of its sister Parties in either England and Scotland and the vote for nationalist parties in Wales is subdued because of it. Does Wales want to be independent at some time in the future? We cannot exclude it.

Conclusion

The contrasting results in the nation states and individual regions in England illuminate differences; the local election was effective in bringing these to light.

The next General Election will be the next major test of political direction.