

There's just one small problem with the forthcoming local polls on May 4th...

Something's wrong with our elections!

Bad things happen when you sign away your democratic rights with the mark of illiteracy!



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While the principle of “one adult, one vote” is well understood, it is not always appreciated that the voting system used is just as important in determining the result of an election. It might come as a surprise to British voters that the First-past-the-post voting system in use for UK general elections and for most council elections is an inefficient and outdated Victorian device devised to cater for a time when an X was the only means of written expression for many people. More importantly, this old-fashioned voting system habitually yields results that do not reflect the wishes of the voters. Crucially, the statistics detailing these discrepancies rarely see the light of day and consequently go unnoticed by the media and the electorate, particularly when it comes to local government elections.

The English Local Election Disasters brought to you courtesy of First-past-the-post

Thanks to the continued use of First-past-the-post in English local elections, there are many examples of councils where the political composition does not reflect how people voted.

The A-Z of English Council Election Results reproduced on page 3 of this paper records that 80% of councils have disparities between votes cast and seats won of 10% and over, with some councils having mismatches as high as 40%. To take 3 examples:-

LEWISHAM: *In 2022, Labour took 100% of the seats with 52% of the vote. The second largest party in terms of votes, the Green Party, had no councillors at all to show for their 22% of the vote and there is no opposition of any description on this Council to hold Labour to account.*

ST. ALBANS: *In 2022, the LibDems took 89% of the seats with 48% of the vote. The Conservatives polled half as many votes as the LibDems, but they ended up with only 4 seats, 7% of the total.*

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE: *In 2021, the Conservatives took 77% of the seats with 40% of the vote on this recently-created unitary authority. Labour, LibDems and Greens polled more votes between them than the Conservatives, but ended up with just 20 out of the 147 seats, while the Conservatives took 113.*

The undemocratic results occasioned by continued use of First-past-the-post (FPTP) for local government elections threaten to have dire consequences for the very fabric of our democracy. There are many local communities where one political party dominates and has done so for decades, albeit in terms of seats taken, rather than votes won. In these places, FPTP elections are a mere formality; the top dogs don't have to put themselves out and opposition parties either put up a token campaign or just give up, resulting in no meetings, no canvassing, no leaflets, no banners or bunting, no discourse at any level, and no indication that there's an election on at all, resulting in abysmal levels of voter participation and a one-party fiefdom which rules forever, in many cases inefficient, complacent and corruptible, being untroubled by any meaningful opposition.

As a result, we are witnessing a worrying decline of political activity in local communities, arguably the coalface of our democracy. Specifically, long gone are the days when being a member of a political party was a mainstream activity (11.3% of the UK electorate in the 1950s, 1.5% today) and only a fraction of the membership that remains is active. The current merging of small local councils into larger impersonal regional units isn't helping either: once "local" becomes "regional", the public's appreciation of the relevance and importance of democracy at the grass roots goes off the boil. As for voter participation, a recently published House of Commons Library briefing paper reveals that turnout for English local elections is only 35.9% on average.

The Supervote: Breathing life back into our local politics and our democracy.

Is there a method of casting and counting votes in local elections so as to ensure fair shares for all, to ensure that, for example, if the Labour Party wins 4 out of 10 votes, they will be awarded 4 out of 10 seats? Yes, there is. It's a British voting system that was invented by a Victorian Conservative MP and which has been in use for local elections in Scotland since 2007, in Northern Ireland since 1973 and in the Republic of Ireland for a century. It is called the Single Transferable Voting system or STV and, while it is a type of proportional representation, it differs from continental systems which are designed merely to give proportional representation of parties. By contrast, STV delivers local proportionality of voters' views, whether party political or not. This makes it ideal for use in council elections where independents and small parties play an important part in community politics. It is the most powerful vote you can bequeath to an electorate which is why an FT journalist once described it as "the Supervote"

An STV local election takes place in wards returning between 4 and 6 councillors. As the name of the system implies, each voter has a single vote which is transferred from one candidate to another according to the expressed instructions of the voter who numbers the candidates in order of preference. The recycling of votes in this way reduces the number of ineffective votes by enabling supporters of minority candidates to have their votes counted for further preferences in favour of popular candidates should their first preferences be eliminated, and the system also allows any surplus votes popular candidates don't need to be similarly transferred.

With STV, seats won will match votes cast, encouraging greater voter participation

To take an example of an STV election in a 5-member ward contested by 12 candidates, the count is best imagined as a trestle table with 12 piles of votes on it, one pile per candidate, sorted according to voters' first preferences. Candidates with little support are then eliminated from the contest and their small piles are sorted according to the further individual preferences of the voters, while the surplus votes of popular candidates are also recycled to ensure that all votes on the table are utilised as fully as possible. In this way, the 12 piles of votes of varying quantities are whittled down until 5 large piles stand testimony to the end of the count and the 5 winners. In a 5 member ward, a candidate will need 17% of the vote to be elected and the transferability of votes ensures that 83% of the voters can identify with a councillor they helped to elect, enabling diversity of representation. This contrasts with FPTP, where a majority of the votes cast are routinely ineffective. For example, in the Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze Ward of Bristol Council, the Conservatives took all 3 of the ward seats with just 36% of the consolidated vote, with the result that, while just over one third of voters had 3 councillors of their political persuasion, the majority of voters in the ward had none.

STV would rejuvenate our local politics because seats won would match votes cast and there would be greater freedom of expression, encouraging greater voter participation.

The Awful A-Z of English Council Election Results

Please note that, while best endeavours have been used to ensure that the following information is accurate, this is an amateur compilation using statistics taken from the Local Election Archive Project and from local authority websites.

315 English Councils are listed below in alphabetical order, each one summarizing the percentage disparity between seats and votes of the dominant party at the most recent local election for that council. English local governance is a hotchpotch of different types of administrations - counties, mets, districts and unitaries - , some electing all their councillors in every fourth year, while others have partial elections spread over a four year period. This explains why there are local elections of some sort somewhere in England every year, while some district councils haven't had an election since 2019.

In the case of councils where all the seats were contested in multi-member wards in a single election, the voting figures have been consolidated to obtain a more accurate representation of party strengths in the wards. Additionally, each entry is accompanied by an **X** rating: **X** denotes a percentage disparity of 10% and over between seats won and votes received by the dominant party; **XX** denotes a percentage disparity of 20% and over; **XXX** denotes a percentage disparity of 30% and over and **XXXX** denotes a percentage disparity of 40% and over. **!** denotes an additional notable defect in the result for that council.

Of the 315 Councils listed, 3% are **XXXX** , 14% are **XXX**, 28% are **XX**, and 35% are **X**.

- X** **ADUR:** In 2022, the Conservatives took 50% of the seats with 39% of the vote.
- X** **AMBER VALLEY:** In 2022, the Conservatives took 60% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
- !** **ARUN:** In 2019, while the Conservatives took 39% of the seats with 35% of the vote, the LibDems won fewer votes (29%) but won more seats than the Conservatives.
- X** **ASHFIELD:** In 2019, Ashfield Independents took 86% of the seats with 67% of the vote.
- X** **ASHFORD:** In 2019, the Conservatives took 55% of the seats with 38% of the vote.
- X** **BABERGH:** In 2019, the Conservatives took 47% of the seats with 31% of the vote.
- XXX!** **BARKING & DAGENHAM:** In 2022, Labour took 100% of the seats with 69% of the vote. Conservatives have no councillors to show for their 26% of the vote and there is no opposition on this Council.
- XX** **BARNET:** In 2022, Labour took 65% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
- XXX** **BARNSELEY:** In 2022, Labour took 80% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
- XX** **BASILDON:** In 2022, the Conservatives took 71% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
- XX** **BASINGSTOKE AND DEANE:** In 2022, the Conservatives took 39% of the seats with 36% of the vote.
- XXX** **BASSETLAW:** In 2019, Labour took 77% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
- XX** **BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET:** In 2019, the LibDems took 63% of the seats with 39% of the vote.
- !** **BEDFORD:** In 2019, the LibDems took 37% of the seats with 28% of the vote, while the Conservatives took 27% of the seats with 33% of the vote.
- XX** **BEXLEY:** In 2022, the Conservatives took 73% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
- X** **BIRMINGHAM:** In 2022, Labour took 64% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
- X** **BLABY:** In 2019, the Conservatives took 64% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
- X** **BLACKBURN:** In 2022, Labour took 65% of the seats with 55% of the votes.
- X!** **BLACKPOOL:** In 2019, Labour took 55% of the seats with 41% of the vote. The Conservatives polled more votes than Labour but won just 36% of the seats.
- X** **BOLSOVER:** In 2019, Labour took 49% of the seats with 37% of the vote.
- X!** **BOLTON:** In 2022, the Conservatives took 45% of the seats with 34% of the vote. Labour polled more votes than the Conservatives but took fewer seats.
- X** **BOSTON:** In 2019, the Conservatives took 53% of the seats with 35% of the vote.
- X** **BOURNEMOUTH C & P:** In 2019, the Conservatives took 47% of the seats with 28% of the vote.
- XXXX** **BRACKNELL FOREST:** In 2019, the Conservatives took 90% of the seats with 48% of the vote.
- XX** **BRADFORD:** In 2022, Labour took 63% of the seats with 43% of the votes.
- XX** **BRAINTREE:** In 2019, the Conservatives took 69% of the seats with 42% of the vote.

XX BRECKLAND: In 2019, the Conservatives took 75% of the seats with 48% of the vote.

XXX BRENT: In 2022, Labour took 86% of the seats with 53% of the vote.

BRENTWOOD: In 2022, the Conservatives took 46% of the seats with 40% of the vote

BRIGHTON AND HOVE: In 2019, Labour took 37% of the seats with 32% of the vote.

BRISTOL: In 2021, the Green Party took 34% of the seats with 32% of the vote

XX BROADLAND: In 2019, The Conservatives took 70% of the seats with 44% of the vote.

XX BROMLEY: In 2022, the Conservatives took 62% of the seats with 36% of the vote.

X BROMSGROVE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 55% of the seats with 42% of the vote.

XXX BROXBORNE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 91% of the seats with 56% of the vote.

X BROXTOWE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 45% of the seats with 32% of the vote. Labour polled a few hundred more votes than the Conservatives but won 6 fewer seats.

XXX! BUCKINGHAMSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 77% of the seats with 40% of the vote on this new unitary authority. Labour, LibDems and Greens polled more votes between them than the Conservatives, but ended up with just 20 out of the 147 seats, while the Conservatives took 113.

BURNLEY: In 2022, Labour took 47% of the seats with 40% of the vote.

X BURY: In 2022, Labour took 57% of the seats with 40% of the vote.

X CALDERDALE: In 2022, Labour took 61% of the seats with 45% of the vote.

XXX CAMBRIDGE CITY: In 2022, Labour took 75% of the seats with 45% of the votes. LibDems and Greens between them polled as many votes as Labour but won only 25% of the seats.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 46% of the seats with 38% of the vote.

XXX CAMDEN: In 2022, Labour took 85% of the seats with 51% of the vote.

CANNOCK CHASE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 46% of the seats with 42% of the vote.

XX CANTERBURY: In 2019, Conservatives won 59% of the seats with 33% of the vote.

X! CASTLE POINT: In 2022, the Canvey Island Independence Party took 36% of the seats with 20% of the vote, while the Conservatives had only 21% of the seats to show for their 37% of the vote.

XXX CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 69% of the seats with 36% of the vote.

XXX CHARNWOOD: In 2019, Conservatives took 71% of the seats with 40% of the vote.

X! CHELMSFORD: In 2019, the Liberal Democrats took 54% of the seats with 37% of the vote. The Conservatives were a mere 30 votes behind the LibDems but won 10 fewer seats.

XXX! CHELTENHAM: In 2022, the Liberal Democrats took 86% of the seats with 55% of the vote. The Conservatives had only one seat to show for a vote total half that of the LibDems.

CHERWELL: In 2022, the Conservatives took 38% of the seats with 35% of the vote.

CHESHIRE EAST: In 2019, the Conservatives took 41% of the seats with 34% of the vote.

X! CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER: In 2019, Labour took 50% of the seats with 34% of the vote. The Conservatives polled slightly more (35%) of the vote but won only 40% of the seats.

X CHESTERFIELD: In 2019, Labour took 58% of the seats with 40% of the vote.

X CHICHESTER: In 2019, the Conservatives took 50% of the seats with 37% of the vote.

XXX CHORLEY: In 2022, Labour took 93% of the seats with 56% of the vote.

COLCHESTER: In 2022, the Conservatives took 33% of the seats with 34% of the vote.

X CORNWALL: In 2021, the Conservatives took 54% of the seats with 37% of the vote.

COTSWOLD: In 2019, the Liberal Democrats took 53% of the seats with 44% of the vote.

XX COVENTRY: In 2022, Labour took 72% of the seats with 48% of the vote.

X CRAWLEY: In 2022, Labour took 50% of the seats for 37% of the vote.

X CROYDON: In 2022, the Conservatives took 47% of the seats with 37% of the vote.

XX CUMBERLAND: In 2022, Labour took 65% of the seats with 39% of the vote.

XX DACORUM: In 2019, the Conservatives took 61% of the seats with 37% of the vote.

DARLINGTON: In 2019, the Conservatives took 44% of the seats with 37% of the vote.

XX DARTFORD: in 2019, Conservatives took 69% of the seats with 49% of the vote.

DERBY CITY: In 2022, Labour took 41% of the seats with 36% of the vote.

XX DERBYSHIRE: In 2021, Conservatives took 70% of the seats with 47% of the vote.

X DERBYSHIRE DALES: In 2019, Conservatives took 51% of the seats for 41% of the vote.

XX DEVON COUNTY: In 2021, Conservatives took 65% of the seats with 42% of the vote.

XXX DONCASTER: In 2021, Labour took 73% of the seats with 38% of the vote.

X DORSET: In 2019, the Conservatives took 52% of the seats with 36% of the vote.

XX DOVER: In 2019, the Conservatives took 59% of the seats with 38% of the vote.
DUDLEY: In 2022, the Conservatives took 52% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
DURHAM: In 2021, Labour took 42% of the seats with 33% of the vote.

XXX EALING: In 2022, Labour took 84% of the seats with 46% of the vote.

X EAST CAMBS: In 2019, the Conservatives took 53% of the seats with 39% of the vote.
EAST DEVON: In 2019, the Conservatives took 33% of the vote with 30% of the vote.

XX EAST HAMPSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 74% of the seats with 46% of the vote.

XXX EAST HERTFORDSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 80% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
 While the Liberal Democrats polled 21% of the vote, they won only 12% of the seats.
EAST LINDSEY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 53% of the seats with 45% of the vote.

XXX EAST RIDING YORKSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 73% of the seats with 38% of the vote.

X EAST STAFFS: In 2019, Conservatives took 64 % of the seats with 45% of the vote.

XXX! EAST SUFFOLK: In 2019, Conservatives took 71% of the seats with 34% of the vote. The Greens came second, polling 22% of the vote, but won only 4 out of the 55 seats.

X EAST SUSSEX COUNTY: In 2021, the Conservatives took 54% of the seats with 42% of the vote.

XX EASTBOURNE: In 2019, the LibDems took 67% of the seats with 44% of the vote.

XXXX EASTLEIGH: In 2022, the LibDems took 93% of the seats with 51% of the vote.
ELMBRIDGE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 35% of the seats with 36% of the vote.

XX ENFIELD: In 2022, Labour took 60% of the seats with 40% of the vote.

X EPPING FOREST: In 2022, the Conservatives took 50% of the seats with 40% of the vote.

X! EPSOM AND EWELL: In 2019, Epsom & Ewell RA took 55% of the seats with 37% of the vote.
 Between them, the Conservatives, LibDems and Labour polled more votes but won only 16% of the 38 seats.
EREWASH: In 2019, the Conservatives took 57% of the seats with 48% of the vote

XX ESSEX COUNTY: In 2021, the Conservatives took 69% of the seats with 48% of the vote. Labour polled more votes than the LibDems but won fewer seats.

XX EXETER: In 2022, Labour took 74% of the seats with 46% of the vote.

XXX FAREHAM: In 2022, the Conservatives took 75% of the seats with 45% of the vote.

XX FENLAND: In 2019, the Conservatives took 67% of the seats with 43% of the vote.

X FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 43% of the seats with 30% of the vote.

X FOREST OF DEAN: In 2019, Independents took 39% of the seats with 26% of the vote.

XX FYLDE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 61% of the seats with 37% of the vote.

XX GATESHEAD: In 2022, Labour took 77% of the seats with 50% of the vote.

XX GEDLING: In 2019, Labour took 71% of the seats with 46% of the vote.

XX GLOUCESTER: In 2021, the Conservatives took 67% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
GLOUCESTERSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 53% of the seats with 44% of the vote.

X GOSPORT: In 2022, the LibDems took 57% of the seats with 40% of the vote.

XX GRAVESHAM: In 2019, Labour took 54% of the seats with 33% of the vote, even though the Conservatives took 41% of the seats with 35% of the vote.
GREAT YARMOUTH: In 2019, the Conservatives took 51% of the seats with 44% of the vote.

XXXX GREENWICH: In 2022, Labour took 94% of the seats with 53% of the vote.
GUILDFORD: In 2019, Guildford and Villages Residents took 31% of the seats with 26% of the vote.

XXX HACKNEY: In 2022, Labour took 88% of the seats with 53% of the vote.

XX HALTON: In 2022, Labour took 89% of the seats with 64% of the votes.

XX HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM: In 2022, Labour took 80% of the seats with 54% of the vote.

XX HAMPSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 72% of the seats with 51% of the vote.

XX HARBOROUGH: In 2019, the Conservatives took 65% of the seats with 40% of the vote.

X HARLOW: In 2022, the Conservatives took 58% of the seats with 48% of the vote.

XXX HARINGEY: In 2022, Labour took 88% of the seats with 52% of the vote.

X HARROW: In 2022, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats with 42% of the vote.

! HART: in 2022, while the LibDems took 36% of the seats with 31% of the vote, the Conservatives had only 27% of the seats to show for their 40% of the vote.

X HARTLEPOOL: In 2022, Labour took 54% of the seats with 42% of the vote.

X HASTINGS: In 2022, Labour took 56% of the seats with 42% of the vote.

XXX HAVANT: In 2022, the Conservatives took 86% of the seats with 48% of the vote.
X HAVERING: In 2022, the Conservatives took 42% of the seats with 30% of the vote.
X HEREFORDSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 24% of the seats for 34% of the vote.
X HERTFORDSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 59% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
XX HERTSMERE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 74% of the seats with 52% of the vote.
X HILLINGDON: In 2022, the Conservatives took 57% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
X HIGH PEAK: In 2019, Labour took 51% of the seats with 34% of the vote.
XX HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH: In 2019, the LibDems took 62% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
XX HORSHAM: In 2019, the Conservatives took 67% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
XXX HOUNSLOW: In 2022, Labour took 84% of the seats with 48% of the vote.
HUNTINGDONSHIRE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 42% of the seats with 34% of the vote.
HYNDBURN: In 2022, Labour took 50% of the seats with 46% of the votes.
XXX IPSWICH: In 2022, Labour took 82% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
ISLE OF WIGHT: In 2021, the Conservatives took 46% of the seats with 39% of the vote.
XXXX ISLINGTON: In 2022, Labour took 94% of the seats with 52% of the vote.
XX KENSINGTON & CHELSEA: In 2022, the Conservatives took 70% of the seats with 44% of the vote.
XX KENT COUNTY: In 2021, the Conservatives took 76% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
X KINGS LYNN & W NORFOLK: In 2019, the Conservatives took 51% of the seats with 40% of the vote.
KINGSTON ON HULL: In 2022, the LibDems took 53% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
XXXX KINGSTON UPON THAMES: In 2022, the LibDems took 92% of the seats with 44% of the vote.
XX KIRKLEES: In 2022, Labour took 61% of the seats with 41% of the votes.
KNOWSLEY: In 2022, Labour took 67% of the seats with 59% of the vote.
X LANCASHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 57% of the seats with 44% of the vote.
XXXX LAMBETH: In 2022, Labour took 92% of the seats with 51% of the vote.
LANCASTER: in 2019, Labour took 35% of the seats with 32% of the vote.
XX LEEDS: In 2022, Labour took 63% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
XXXX LEICESTER: In 2019, Labour took 98% of the seats with 57% of the vote.
XX! LEICESTERSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 76% of the seats with 51% of the vote. Labour took only 4 seats with 21% of the vote and the LibDems polled fewer votes than Labour but took 9 seats.
XX LEWES: In 2019, the Conservatives took 46% of the seats with 26% of the vote.
XXXX! LEWISHAM: In 2022, Labour took 100% of the seats with 52% of the vote. The second largest party in terms of votes, the Green Party, had no councillors to show for their 22% of the vote and there is no opposition of any description on this Council to hold Labour to account.
XX LICHFIELD CITY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 72% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
X LINCOLN: In 2022, Labour took 45% of the seats with 28% of the votes.
XX LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY: In 2021, the Conservatives took 77% of the seats with 55% of the vote.
XX LIVERPOOL: In 2021, Labour took 74% of the seats with 50% of the votes.
X LUTON: In 2019, Labour took 67% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
MAIDSTONE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 39% of the seats with 39% of the vote!
X! MALDON: In 2019, the Conservatives took 55% of the seats with 43% of the vote. Independent candidates won fewer seats (45%), even though they polled more votes (47%).
MALVERN HILLS: In 2019, the Conservatives won 34% of the seats with 30% of the vote.
XX MANCHESTER: In 2022, Labour took 94% of the seats with 66% of the vote.
MANSFIELD: In 2019, Labour took 42% of the seats with 34% of the vote.
XX MEDWAY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 60% of the seats with 34% of the vote.
XXX! MELTON: In 2019, the Conservatives took 78% of the seats with 46% of the vote. The Green Party came second in terms of votes with 20% of the poll but won only one seat.
X MERTON: In 2022, Labour took 54% of the seats with 39% of the vote.
X MID DEVON: In 2019, the Conservatives took 43% of the seats with 33% of the vote.
MID SUFFOLK: In 2019, the Conservatives took 47% of the seats with 40% of the vote.
XXX MID SUSSEX: In 2019, the Conservatives took 63% of the seats with 32% of the vote.
MIDDLESBOROUGH: In 2019, Independents took 50% of the seats with 44% of the vote.
X MILTON KEYNES: In 2022. Labour took 47% of the seats with 36% of the vote.
X MOLE VALLEY: In 2022, the LibDems took 57% of the seats with 45% of the vote.

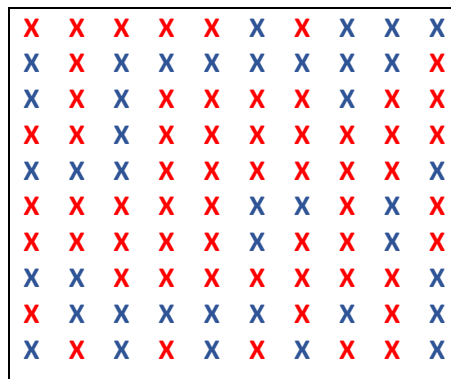
XX NEW FOREST: In 2019, the Conservatives took 77% of the seats with 53% of the vote.
XX NEWARK & SHERWOOD: In 2019, the Conservatives took 69% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
X NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME: In 2022, the Conservatives took 57% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
XX NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE: In 2022, Labour took 70% of the seats with 44% of the votes.
XXXX NEWHAM: In 2022, Labour took 97% of the seats with 56% of the vote.
XX NORFOLK COUNTY: In 2021, the Conservatives took 69% of the seats with 48% of the vote.
X NORTH DEVON: In 2019, the LibDems took 50% of the seats with 31% of the vote.
X NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 57% of the vote with 45% of the vote.
NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
X! NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE: In 2022, Labour took 50% of the seats with 31% of the vote, while the Conservatives had only 22% of the seats for their 33% vote share.
X! NORTH KESTIVEN: In 2019, the Conservatives took 48% of the seats with 38% of the vote. The Lincolnshire Independent Party polled more votes (40%) but won fewer seats (38%).
X NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 63% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
XX NORTH NORFOLK: In 2019, the LibDems took 75% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
XXX N' NORTHAMPTONSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 77% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
NORTH SOMERSET: In 2019, the Conservatives took 26% of the seats with 28% of the vote.
XXX NORTH TYNESIDE: In 2022, Labour took 90% of the seats with 55% of the vote.
NORTH WARWICKSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 60% of the seats with 53% of the vote.
N' WEST LEICESTERSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 53% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
X NORTH YORKSHIRE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 52% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
NORTHUMBERLAND: In 2021, the Conservatives took 51% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
X NORWICH: In 2022, Labour took 61% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
XXX NOTTINGHAM CITY: In 2019, Labour took 91% of the seats with 54% of the vote.
X NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
XX NUNEATON & BEDWORTH: In 2022, the Conservatives took 71% of the seats with 50% of the vote.
XXX! OADBY & WIGSTON: In 2019, LibDems took 92% of the seats with 60% of the vote. Conservatives came second with just under half the votes the LibDems polled, but won only 2 seats out of 28.
OLDHAM: In 2022, Labour took 43% of the seats with 37% of the vote.
X OXFORD: In 2022, Labour took 62% of the seats with 44% of the votes.
! OXFORDSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 33% of the seats for 36% of the vote, while the LibDems took the same number of seats with only 26% of the vote.
X PENDLE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 58% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
PETERBOROUGH: In 2022, the Conservatives took 37% of the seats with 36% of the vote.
X PLYMOUTH: In 2022, Labour took 58% of the seats with 44% of the votes.
PORTSMOUTH: In 2022, Labour took 36% of the seats with 31% of the vote.
X PRESTON: In 2022, Labour took 65% of the seats with 48% of the vote.
XX READING: In 2022, Labour took 67% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
XXX REDBRIDGE: In 2022, Labour took 92% of the seats with 55% of the vote.
REDCAR & CLEVELAND: In 2019, Labour took 25% of the seats with 24% of the vote.
XX! REDDITCH: In 2022, Labour took 64% of the seats with 43% of the vote, while the Conservatives had only 36% of the seats to show for their 44% of the vote.
XXX REIGATE & BANSTEAD: In 2019, the Conservatives took 64% of the seats with 33% of the vote.
X RIBBLE VALLEY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 70% of the seats with 55% of the vote.
XXX! RICHMOND UPON THAMES: In 2022, the LibDems took 89% of the seats with 51% of the vote. The Conservatives were the second largest party in terms of votes but won only 1 seat, while the Greens won 5 seats with far fewer votes than the Conservatives.
XX ROCHDALE: In 2022, Labour took 70% of the seats with 50% of the vote.
ROCHFORD: In 2022, the Conservatives took 39% of the seats with 38% of the vote.
XX ROSSENDALE: In 2022, Labour took 63% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
ROTHER: In 2019, the Conservatives took 37% of the seats with 31% of the vote.
XX ROTHERHAM: In 2021, Labour took 54% of the seats with 30% of the vote.
RUGBY: In 2022, the Conservatives took 43% of the seats with 38% of the vote.
RUNNYMEDE: In 2022, the Conservatives took 43% of the seats with 38% of the vote.

XX RUSHCLIFFE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 66% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
X RUSHMOOR: In 2022, the Conservatives took 61% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
X RUTLAND: In 2019, the Conservatives took 55% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
XXXX! ST. ALBANS: In 2022, the LibDems took 89% of the seats with 48% of the vote. The Conservatives polled half as many votes as the LibDems, but they ended up with only 4 seats, 7% of the total.
XX ST. HELENS: In 2022, Labour took 60% of the seats with 37% of the vote.
XX SALFORD: In 2022, Labour took 75% of the seats with 54% of the votes.
XXX SANDWELL: In 2022, Labour took 87% of the seats with 57% of the vote.
XX SEFTON: In 2022, Labour took 77% of the seats with 49% of the votes.
XXX SEVENOAKS: In 2019, the Conservatives took 85% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
X SHEFFIELD: In 2022, Labour took 53% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
X SHROPSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 58% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
XX SLOUGH: In 2022, Labour took 86% of the seats with 58% of the vote.
X SOLIHULL: In 2022, the Conservatives took 65% of the seats with 55% of the votes.
X SOMERSET: In 2022, the LibDems took 55% of the seats with 40% of the vote.
XXX SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE: In 2022, the LibDems took 82% of the seats with 48% of the vote.
X SOUTH DERBYSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 61% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
X SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 54% of the seats with 40% of the vote.
X SOUTH HAMS: In 2019, the Conservatives took 52% of the seats with 36% of the vote.
X SOUTH HOLLAND: In 2019, the Conservatives took 65% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
XX SOUTH KESTIVEN: In 2019, the Conservatives took 71% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
XXX SOUTH NORFOLK: In 2019, Conservatives took 76% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
! SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE: In 2019, the Liberal Democrats took 33% of the seats with 28% of the vote. The Conservatives took fewer seats (28%) even though they polled more votes (29%).
SOUTH RIBBLE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 46% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
XX SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 75% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
XX SOUTH TYNESIDE: In 2022, Labour took 74% of the seats with 49% of the vote.
XXX SOUTHAMPTON: In 2022, Labour took 76% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
X SOUTHEND ON SEA: In 2021, the Conservatives took 58% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
XXX SOUTHWARK: In 2022, Labour took 82% of the seats with 52% of the vote.
XX SPELTORNE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 59% of the seats with 33% of the vote. Labour came second but won only 4 seats (10%) even though they polled 18% of the vote and received more votes than the Liberal Democrats who nevertheless won twice as many seats as Labour.
X STAFFORD: In 2019, the Conservatives took 55% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
XXX! STAFFORDSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 92% of the seats with 57% of the vote. The Labour Party took only 4 out of 62 seats with 26% of the vote.
X STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS: In 2019, Conservatives took 45% of the seats with 34% of the vote.
XX STEVENAGE: In 2022, Labour took 69% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
X STOCKPORT: In 2022, the LibDems took 48% of the seats with 35% of the votes.
X STOCKTON ON TEES: In 2019, Labour took 43% of the seats with 33% of the vote.
STOKE ON TRENT: In 2019, Labour took 36% of the seats with 34% of the vote.
STRATFORD ON AVON: In 2019, the Conservatives took 55% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
STROUD: In 2020, the Conservatives took 39% of the seats with 34% of the vote.
XX SUFFOLK COUNTY: In 2021, the Conservatives took 73% of the seats with 48% of the vote.
X SUNDERLAND: In 2022, Labour took 62% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
X SURREY COUNTY: In 2021, Conservatives took 58% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
SURREY HEATH: In 2019, the Conservatives took 51% of the seats with 45% of the vote.
X SUTTON: In 2022, the LibDems took 53% of the seats with 36% of the vote.
SWALE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 34% of the seats with 28% of the vote.
X SWINDON: In 2022, Labour took 63% of the seats with 46% of the votes.
XX TAMESIDE: In 2022, Labour took 79% of the seats with 55% of the votes.
XX TAMWORTH: In 2022, the Conservatives took 70% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
X TANDRIDGE: In 2022, the LibDems took 36% of the seats with 21% of the vote.
X TEIGNBRIDGE: In 2019, the LibDems took 55% of the seats with 37% of the vote.

XX TELFORD AND WREKIN: In 2019, Labour took 67% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
TENDRING: In 2019, the Conservatives took 33% of the seats with 32% of the vote.
X TEST VALLEY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
XX TEWKESBURY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 60% of the seats with 37% of the vote.
X THANET: In 2019, the Conservatives took 45% of the seats with 29% of the vote.
X THREE RIVERS: In 2022, the LibDems took 57% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
XX THURROCK: In 2021, the Conservatives took 76% of the seats with 53% of the vote.
XXX TONBRIDGE & MALLING: In 2019, the Conservatives took 72% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
X TORBAY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 42% of the seats with 29% of the vote.
XX TORRIDGE: In 2019, Independents took 50% of the seats with 30% of the vote.
X TOWER HAMLETS: In 2022, The Aspire Party took 53% of the seats with 35% of the vote.
XX TRAFFORD: In 2022, Labour took 68% of the seats with 44% of the vote.
X TUNBRIDGE WELLS: In 2022, the LibDems took 37% of the seats for 22% of the vote.
XXX UTTLESFORD: In 2019, Residents for Uttlesford took 67% of the seats with 35% of the vote.
XX VALE OF WHITE HORSE: In 2019, the Liberal Democrats took 81% of the seats with 55% of the vote.
XX WAKEFIELD: In 2022, Labour took 81% of the seats with 52% of the vote.
X WALSALL: In 2022, Labour took 62% of the seats with 44% of the vote.
XX WALTHAM FOREST: In 2022, Labour took 78% of the seats with 50% of the vote.
X WANDSWORTH: In 2022, Labour took 60% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
XX WARRINGTON: In 2021, Labour took 62% of the seats with 33% of the vote.
X WARWICK: In 2019, the Conservatives took 43% of the seats with 28% of the vote.
XX! WARWICKSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 74% of the seats with 49% of the vote. Between them, Labour, LibDems and Greens won more votes than the Tories but took 25% of the seats.
XXX WATFORD: In 2022, the LibDems took 83% of the seats with 51% of the vote.
WAVERLEY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 40% of the seats with 33% of the vote.
XXX WEALDEN: In 2019, the Conservatives took 75% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
X! WELWYN AND HATFIELD: In 2022, the LibDems took 41% of the seats with 30% of the vote, while the Conservatives had only 23% of the seats to show for their 37% of the vote.
X WEST BERKSHIRE: In 2019, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats with 37% of the vote.
X WEST DEVON: In 2019, the Conservatives took 52% of the seats with 33% of the vote.
WEST LANCASHIRE: In 2022, Labour took 55% of the seats with 51% of the votes.
X WEST LINDSEY: In 2019, the Conservatives took 53% of the seats with 43% of the vote.
XXX WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 71% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
X! WEST OXFORDSHIRE: In 2022, the LibDems took 50% of the seats with 36% of the vote, while the Conservatives won just 25% of the seats for their 37% of the vote.
X WEST SUFFOLK: In 2019, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats with 42% of the vote.
XX WEST SUSSEX COUNTY: In 2021, the Conservatives took 68% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
X WESTMINSTER: In 2022, Labour took 57% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
X WESTMORELAND & FURNESS: In 2022, the LibDems took 55% of the seats with 40% of the vote.
XXX WIGAN: In 2022, Labour took 85% of the seats with 53% of the votes.
X WILTSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 62% of the seats with 47% of the vote.
X WINCHESTER: In 2022, the LibDems took 60% of the seats with 46% of the vote.
X WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD: In 2019, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats with 37% of the vote.
WIRRAL: In 2022, Labour took 39% of the seats with 42% of the votes.
XX WOKING: In 2022, the LibDems took 70% of the seats for 47% of the vote.
WOKINGHAM: In 2022, the LibDems took 50% of the seats with 41% of the vote.
XX WOLVERHAMPTON: In 2022, Labour took 85% of the seats with 57% of the vote.
X WORCESTER: In 2022, Labour took 46% of the seats with 32% of the vote.
XX WORCESTERSHIRE: In 2021, the Conservatives took 79% of the seats with 50% of the vote.
XX WORTHING: In 2022, Labour took 69% of the seats with 48% of the vote.
XX WYCHAVON: In 2019, the Conservatives took 80% of the seats with 51% of the vote.
XX WYRE: In 2019, the Conservative took 74% of the seats with 52% of the vote.
X WYRE FOREST: In 2019, the Conservatives took 42% of the seats with 23% of the vote.
X YORK CITY: In 2019, the LibDems took 45% of the seats with 32% of the vote.

Why First-past-the-post isn't working

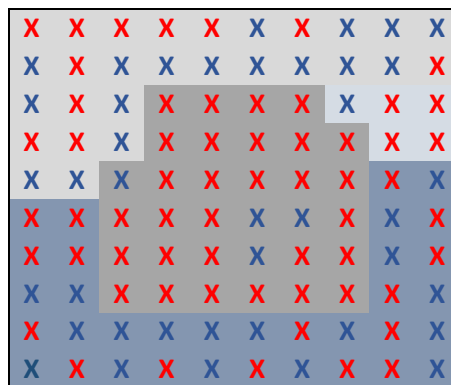
All English councillors serve a 4 year term, but practice varies when it comes to how many councillors there are per ward and whether the entire council is elected in one go or whether elections are spread over 4 years. Unfortunately, the continued use of our Victorian First-past-the-post voting system in English Council elections distorts the results, no matter which permutation of ward representation is chosen. A simple 2-party model shows what can go wrong using the 2 First-past-the-post voting methods in common use in English local elections. The same model can then be used to show how these discrepancies can be eliminated by using the Single Transferable Voting system of proportional representation in multi-member wards. Above is a diagram comprising 100 X's in a grid to represent a community we shall call Smalltown. Each X is coloured to depict supporters of the Red or Blue parties.



First-past-the-post in single member wards

With this method, Smalltown is divided into 3 areas known as wards, each ward returning a single councillor. The Red and Blue Parties field one candidate apiece in each ward and ward residents have one vote each, cast using a single X. The map alongside shows Smalltown divided into North, South and Central Wards, with the ballot papers as Red Party supporters would complete them, and the results for each ward.

The winner with the most votes in each ward is highlighted in yellow, showing that the Blues have won 2 out of the 3 seats in Smalltown using this method.



BALLOT PAPER NORTH WARD You have one vote	
Harry Hardnose <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	
Max Momentum <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	X

NORTH WARD RESULT	
Harry Hardnose <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	18
Max Momentum <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	15

BLUE WIN

BALLOT PAPER CENTRAL WARD You have one vote	
Linda Likeable <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	X
Reggie Rightwing <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	

CENTRAL WARD RESULT	
Linda Likeable <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	29
Reggie Rightwing <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	4

RED WIN

BALLOT PAPER SOUTH WARD You have one vote	
Katie Commerce <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	
Priti Practical <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	X

SOUTH WARD RESULT	
Katie Commerce <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	18
Priti Practical <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	16

BLUE WIN x

But all is not what it seems. If we add the total Smalltown votes for each party, we will find that, while the Blues polled 40 of the votes to win 2 seats, the reds have only one seat to show for their 60 votes. How did that happen? Well, if you look at the Smalltown map, you will notice a concentration of Red voters in Smalltown's Central Ward. While Linda Likeable's 29 votes were impressive, she needed only 5 of those votes to defeat her opponent, who had 4. The remaining 24 could have been put to better use in the other wards where support for the Reds was not as strong. Let's try another way of using First-past-the-post.

First-past-the-post in multi-member wards

With this method, Smalltown has 3 councillors as before but now the North, Central and South wards are all merged, so the 3 councillors all represent the entire town in one large 3-member ward. As a result, Smalltown voters will have 3 votes each to cast on one ballot paper, with the Reds and the Blues fielding 3 candidates apiece. Below is the multi-member ward map, the results table and the ballot paper of a Red Party supporter casting three Xs for the Red candidates.

BALLOT PAPER SMALLTOWN WARD	
Katie Commerce <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	
Harry Hardnose <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	
Linda Likeable <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	✗
Max Momentum <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	✗
Priti Practical <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	✗
Reggie Rightwing <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	

✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

SMALLTOWN WARD RESULTS	
Katie Commerce <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	40
Harry Hardnose <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	40
Linda Likeable <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	60
Max Momentum <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	60
Priti Practical <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	60
Reggie Rightwing <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	40

RED WIN

RED WIN

RED WIN

✗

Now we have a quite different result - 3 Red wins this time - even though the electorate is exactly the same and has voted the same as they did in the single member method. According to this result, Smalltown is now a Red Party stronghold, even though it clearly is not if you look at the vote totals – 180 votes (60%) for the Reds versus 120 votes (40%) for the Blues.

Evidently, all it took to change the result of the election was to change from a single-member to a multi-member ward system and even then neither result accurately reflected the corporate will of the voters of Smalltown. While the creation of a multi-member ward should in theory have enabled different political persuasions to be represented, the way the votes were cast and counted ensured that the Reds swept the board. Some councils have multi-member wards but elect just one member per year. Even so, more often than not, the dominant party's candidates will still prevail year after year. There seems to be little point in having multi-member wards if the way the votes are counted determines that, while 60% of Smalltown voters have 3 councillors of their political persuasion, 40% of Smalltown voters have none.

The Supervote: The Single Transferable Vote in Multi-member Wards

As in the previous method, the multi-member ward is retained but, crucially, the way the votes are cast and counted is entirely different in the quest to achieve fair shares for all.

As the name of the system suggests, each voter has a single vote which can be transferred from one candidate to another according to the expressed instructions of the voter who numbers the candidates in order of preference. Should the voter's first preference have so much support that further votes are not required to achieve election, or so few that further votes will not help, then the vote is transferred to the voter's next preference, and this process is repeated until the vote is spent or the election concluded.

✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

The recycling of votes in this way reduces the number of ineffective votes and gives most ward voters a councillor of their choice.

With STV, there will be a lot more activity as the parties contest every vote and as more voters participate in the election as a consequence. For a start, voters will realise that they now have a choice of candidates; Red supporters in Smalltown North who had previously been lumbered with Max Momentum can now choose between 3 Red Party candidates, and so many have switched to Linda Likeable. Moreover, voters will appreciate that the expression of preferences means that they can vote for who they please – even across party divides if they so desire - without having to think tactically, or worry about wasting their vote; for example, the Red supporter's ballot paper alongside clearly indicates that the voter attaches as much importance to gender as to political affiliation.

STV BALLOT PAPER SMALLTOWN WARD	
Katie Commerce <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	3
Harry Hardnose <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	
Linda Likeable <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	1
Max Momentum <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	4
Priti Practical <i>Red Party Candidate</i>	2
Reggie Rightwing <i>Blue Party Candidate</i>	

Smalltown STV Results Table							
3 to elect. The Quota, the number of votes for a candidate to be elected, is 25							
Stages	First Choices	Transfer Linda Likeable's surplus		Eliminate Max Momentum		Eliminate Reggie Rightwing	
Katie Commerce Blue Party	17	+ 1	18	+ 1	19	+6	25
Harry Hardnose Blue Party	12		12		12	+4	16
Linda Likeable Red Party	39	-14	25		25		25
Max Momentum Red Party	6	+ 4	10	-10			
Priti Practical Red Party	15	+ 7	22	+ 3	25		25
Reggie Rightwing Blue Party	11		11		11	-11	
Non-transferable votes		+ 2	2	+ 6	8	+1	9
Total Vote	100		100		100		100

RED WIN

RED WIN

BLUE WIN



STV: It's fair, with everything for everyone everywhere to play for.

As the above simplified results table indicates, there's a lot going on at an STV election count, but the drama unfolds in stages, as winners emerge and losers are eliminated, with the arithmetic checked at each stage to establish that the votes add up to 100 every time. The Quota of 25 is calculated to be the minimum number of votes a candidate needs to be elected, and surpluses and votes from eliminated candidates are transferred stage by stage until the 3 winners emerge - Linda Likeable and Priti Practical for the Reds and Katie Commerce for the Blues. Party proportionality is achieved, with 2 seats awarded to the Reds for their 60% of the vote, while the Blues have 1 seat to show for their 40%. Note that this process would have worked just as well if all of the candidates had been independents. Note also that, while the effective votes percentage for the two First-past-the-post methods was just 38% and 41% respectively, under STV it was 75% and this figure would have been even greater had the number of seats per ward been increased to between 4 and 6, as is recommended by the Electoral Reform Society. In this way, STV will invigorate our democracy at the grass roots by ensuring that there will be everything for everyone everywhere to play for.