

## **Shinfield and Earley Branch Report**

### **May 2024 Elections**

A lot of effort went into the all up Borough Council elections in May and we faced strong opposition from both the Conservatives and Labour parties across our area.

It was very disappointing to lose some of our brilliant existing councillors in Hawkedon (Andrew Mickleburgh), Hillside (Al Neal), Maiden Erlegh (Mike Smith) and Swallowfield (Chris Johnson). However, we did celebrate the election of new comers Andy Siu-hong Ng and Melanie De Jong, and returning councillors Caroline Smith, Catherine Glover and Stephen Newton. Overall, the party did well to defend so many seats and make gains and whilst WBC is 'No Overall Control' it continued to be led by a Lib Dem Administration, and we are now in the second of a minimum 3-year period (provided we retain at least 1 seat in the upcoming By-Elections).

It is amazing to think back as to how far the local party has come over recent years, it has taken a huge amount of effort and money, and we can't ease off as we want to add to the Lib Dems in Westminster by winning the Woodley and Earley Constituency in the next few years as well as achieving overall control of the Borough Council, retaining control of Earley and Wokingham Town Councils and building our position on Woodley Town Council.

### **By-Elections**

In the meantime, we are working really hard to get Chris Johnson back on the Borough Council via the Shinfield By election and we also need to support the Winnersh By-Election following the sad and untimely passing of Paul Fishwick. Shinfield is really tight between us and the Conservatives, so if you can spare any time to help, please let the office know. A win in Shinfield and holding Winnersh would give us overall control of the Borough Council. If the Conservatives take either or both seats, they will get a massive boost going into the May 2026 elections.

### **Future of our branch**

Unfortunately, I have been a bit incapacitated for several weeks due to a trapped nerve. I had planned to open up a discussion with branch members about a potential merger with the Woodley Branch. The new branch would broadly align with the Earley and Woodley Constituency. There are pro's and con's to a merger and I will try and issue a paper on this shortly so we can then have a proper discussion and make a decision about this. For their part, Woodley members are supportive of merging with us.

After so many elections I also want to reinvigorate our branch meetings, so members hear about what is being achieved by the Town and Borough Councils and members also have the opportunity to put forward their ideas and ask questions of our councillors. I am really hoping that members will engage with this so we can benefit from the combined wisdom, knowledge and innovation we have between us. As we have the Council meeting schedule for 2025, I am hoping we can set up some Branch Meeting dates around them to get this off the ground. It has been a long-held aspiration of mine and it would be great to finally make it happen.

May I thank all of the Branch Exec for their hard work and support over the last year, I hope to see you soon, but may I take this opportunity to wish you a Happy Christmas and a Great New Year in the meantime.

Stephen Newton  
Chair  
Shinfield and Earley Branch