



Interests of electorate should be priority

A personal view - Local elections of councillors in Horsham and District took place in May 2019.

These elections, which are party based, can lead to a conflict of interest as some elected councillors will prioritise their party wishes over and above those of their electorate, which would not arise if the councillors are truly independent.

However, as politics will always play a part in the election process, perhaps voters should be encouraged to give greater consideration to the track record of the candidate and their abilities, rather than the party they represent.

Results for Horsham and District indicate 32 Conservatives, 13 Liberal Democrats, 2 Green Party and 1 Independent were elected, which included re-election of the Leader and Deputy Leader. However, results for the Horsham Wards of: Denne, Forest, Holbrook East, Holbrook West, Roffey North, Roffey South and Trafalgar show 11 Liberal Democrats, and 5 Conservatives were elected to represent these wards.



Therefore, whilst the Conservatives hold the majority for Horsham District, the clear majority for Horsham Town is held by the Liberal Democrats.

It is therefore of concern that the 10 councillors who have been selected for the Horsham Town Policy Advisory Committee comprise 7 Conservatives and 3 Liberal Democrats, despite Horsham

Town being represented by 6 more Liberal Democrats than Conservatives.

However, as only 5 Conservatives are councillors within the Horsham Wards, numbers have been altered by the addition of Conservative councillors representing Warnham and Ruspur, to ensure a Conservative majority.

This anomaly of political intervention is highlighted by an incident where a Conservative councillor represented the needs and wishes of his electorate, which were not in line with those of his party.

As a result, he did not vote in accordance with the party line. This resulted in a rebuke from his party during a committee meeting. Is such action to be permitted in a democratic society?

I also recall once an issue where a local councillor having expressed his views on behalf of a local resident, regarding a planning issue, and where he agreed with the various points that the resident had raised, was happy to back him fully.

However, when it came to voting on the issue, the particular councillor abstained, presumably rather than vote

against the party line, and risk rebuke for his actions.

Both West Sussex County Council and Horsham District Council employ the 'cabinet system'. However, this can lead to a limited number of councillors having an input on decision making.

Should this be abandoned to allow all councillors to have an input? Whilst this could be somewhat unwieldy, would it provide a better and fairer service for the residents of Horsham?

Councillors should surely be allowed, and indeed be expected to speak and vote according to their beliefs and the interests of the people that they have been elected to represent without sanction from their party; shouldn't they?

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns. For more information, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 259038.