

Council Report August 2016

The Brexit vote threatens to plunge us into economic turmoil again, risking jobs and investment across the country. Jeremy Corbyn's call on the morning after the referendum to immediately trigger 'article 50 now' - and subsequent u-turn - showed how unprepared we were for the Leave result.

Our Party's polling has been behind the Tories all year. Only a handful of individual polls - all after the disastrous final Osborne Budget - gave us even a single-point lead, but the rolling average (right) smooths out outlier polls: it's clear that we've not managed to effectively exploit Tory disunity over Europe, or a budget that attacked the poorest in society.

My main concern is that if we ignore the public polling - which is worse than under Miliband - then we risk consigning ourselves to opposition again in 2020. This means five more years of Tory control: no repeal of the bedroom tax, no way for me to help residents affected by Tory benefit cuts, no way for me to ensure we can build even more affordable homes, and no way to put our principles into practice.

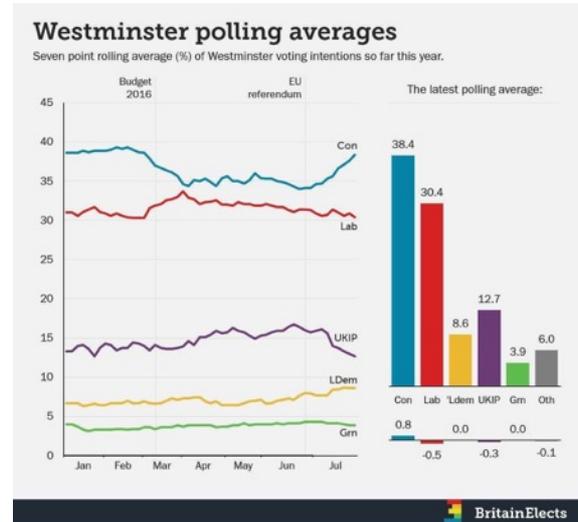
Council business

August is usually a quiet month but it seems politics in 2016 doesn't play by the usual rules!

The Tories called in Cabinet decisions on the redevelopment of Ealing Town Hall and temporary move from one side of Ealing Broadway shopping centre to the other for Ealing Central Library.

The Town Hall discussion focused mainly on access to facilities for community groups. Leader of the Council Julian Bell explained that we had secured a longer deal on low rates for community groups, that the injection of cash from a third-party would secure the building for future generations and there is no threat to the civic and democratic functions that would continue in a refurbished east wing of the building. All parties there supported the principle of development, and in the end with a steer to those negotiating the final deal that an even longer period of guaranteed charges for community users, the decision was allowed to stand.

Much of the discussion on the Library was held in private session, as it concerned the financial details of the deal with British Land to finance the move across the courtyard. The new location will be smaller, with fewer books - but with a much better layout, and stock focused on material that is actually



We've not managed to overcome the Tory polling lead at all in 2016, which is worrying for our prospects at a general election.

borrowed, and at no cost to the Council, this is a good deal for a temporary move before a new library can be provided on the Perceval House site.

The first results of the new waste collection system have come in. In June we saw a year-on-year increase from 48% recycling to a whopping 55%. If we can continue this performance, it will vindicate the move to alternate weekly collection. As a reminder, the Tories believed it would have no impact on recycling whatsoever - despite all the existing evidence to the contrary. It remains to be seen whether they now accept we have done the right thing to save over £2m a year in landfill charges and other associated costs.

South Acton news

Despite the excellent new recycling rates noted above, the changeover to the new waste collection system has pushed a few existing issues to the fore. We are working closely with officers and our contractors to provide better waste management for flats (particularly HMOs and above shops), investigate and deal with some flytipping hotspots and littering across Acton.

Firstly, visits are being made where households aren't currently conforming to the new service. This may be by leaving bins on pavements or presenting black sacks alongside bins, but these education visits are invaluable in making sure residents are aware of how to use the service.

Additional resource is being provided by Kingdom Security to identify flytippers by sorting through rubbish, and warnings are being issued. These can and will be followed up with fines for persistent offenders - up to £400.

The regular Acton Gardens Community Board had a useful update on rent levels following concerns from some residents that new homes would be unaffordable. Despite the Tory definition of "affordable rent" being up to 80% of market value, I'm pleased to say L&Q's rents (L&Q are the housing association involved) are 'target' rents - based on income. Combined with housing benefit, this means that rents when residents move from council to L&Q properties remain **actually** affordable.

Finally, enforcement visits have begun on the problem HMOs in the Avenue Road area, after the period allowed to make adjustments to comply with our various notices has expired. There has undoubtedly been improvement, but feedback from residents is that there may still be breaches. These will be investigated and appropriate action taken - I've asked for us all to be kept up to date with findings.

As ever, do get in touch with myself, Yvonne or Mik if you have any questions, problems or just want to chat!

With best wishes,
Josh, Yvonne and Mik

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