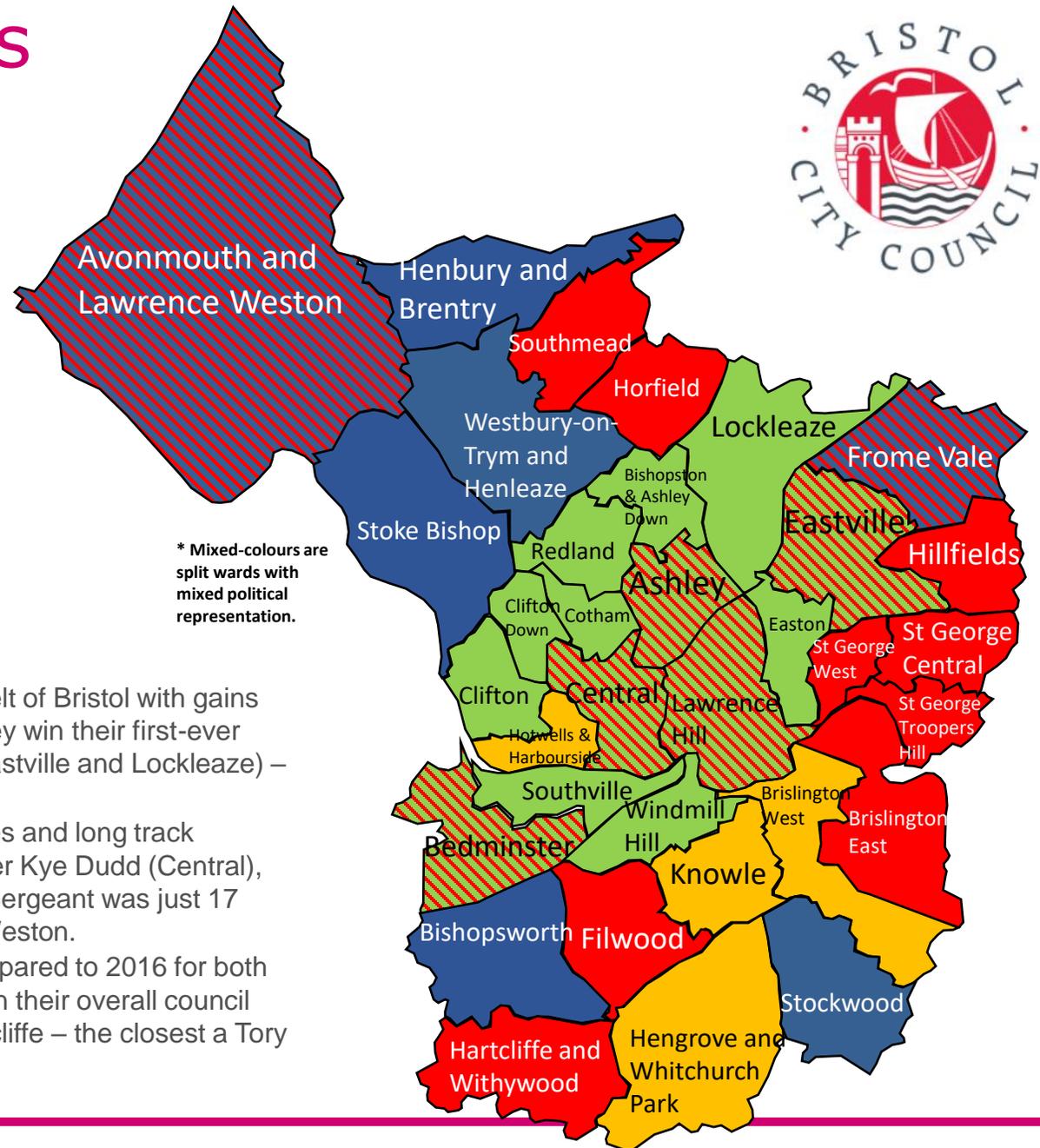
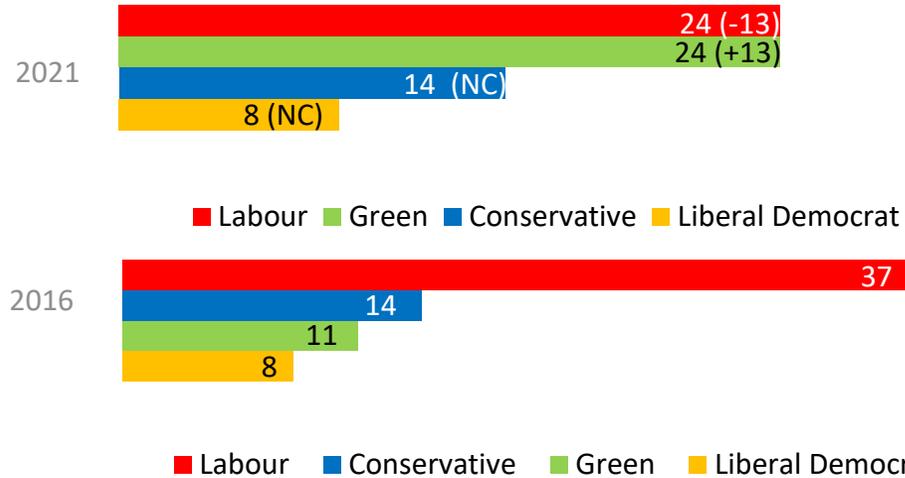


Bristol City Council Elections



Results May 2021: Turnout 41.04%

NOC Gain
(compared to
2016)



Historic Green surge moves party neck-and-neck with Labour

- **Urban Bristol ditches Labour;** the Greens now occupy a substantial central belt of Bristol with gains including Windmill Hill, Lawrence Hill and Bedminster. Perhaps most notably, they win their first-ever seats in the Bristol East and Bristol North West parliamentary constituencies (Eastville and Lockleaze) – a potential springboard for an all-out Bristol assault in May 2024?
- **Not a great day for well-known incumbents;** even councillors with high profiles and long track records were not safe from the surge. Anthony Negus (Cotham), cabinet member Kye Dudd (Central), and Afzal Shah (Easton) all lost their seats. Notable Labour-Green defector Jo Sergeant was just 17 votes short of a victory in the Tory-Labour marginal Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston.
- **Mayoral vote boost fails to trickle down;** despite increases in vote share compared to 2016 for both Tories and the Lib-Dems in the Bristol mayor contest, there was no net change in their overall council seats. Surprisingly, Conservatives were 16 votes short of winning a seat in Hartcliffe – the closest a Tory has come to represent this seat since the Council’s creation in 1973.

Greens draw the battlelines for May 2024 in spectacular gains

With the key prizes of the West of England Combined Authority and Bristol Mayor positions under their belt, the last victory for Labour to secure was repeating their success in 2016 and reseizing an overall majority of elected members on the council. This hat-trick looked unlikely. Observers at the mayoral count saw clear signs that the Green Party were set for a strong showing in the council elections.

Labour lost about a third of their seats; the Greens doubled their number. When significant powers are invested in both mayors, does this matter? Unequivocally: 'Yes'. First, the Greens are now the main opposition party in Bristol. Momentum is behind them. More councillors mean they have an opportunity to raise 'brand profile' in areas of the city outside the urban belt of seats captured last Thursday. Suburban support is essential for a Green mayoral candidate to topple whoever Labour choose to replace Mayor Rees, who has announced he will step down in 2024.

Second, wherever Mayor Rees turns with his policy program, the Greens have greater councillor numbers to question and oppose. Even if this opposition is symbolic in the form of tools like council motions to make political noise. Planning committees will rebalance with equal numbers of Labour and (potentially development-sceptic) Greens. Of course, planning is not political...but could consents for new homes 'gum-up' compared to the previous five years?

For Labour, they have relied upon a broad coalition of voters in Bristol to deliver election success, such as students and blue collar workers. The more radical, central urban element of that coalition drifted towards the Greens at these elections. Can Labour regain these lost voters and, if not, can they prevent a further Green surge (starting to emerge) into Bristol's Labour-leaning outskirts? The 1,000 days or so countdown to the next local election battle begins.



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