

The **GODALMING COMPASS**



LOCAL
ELECTIONS
IN MAY:

*What will you be
voting for?"*

Can We Have MEANINGFUL POLITICS?



Editor's Letter

Can We Have Meaningful Politics?

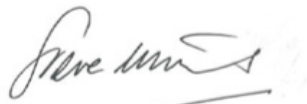
YES WE CAN! THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE.

Hello and welcome to the Godalming Compass, a magazine to help and inspire you to get involved with local politics. In place of party tribalism in Surrey and in Waverley and Godalming, we believe in collaborative politics where progressive minded people work together for the good of our community. For a brief history of some of the things we have done, turn to p.4 – then see our Common Programme for Waverley on p.5 which sets out our ideas for the future.

This magazine contains contributions from non-party people as well as local campaigners and political activists from the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, the Green Party, Women's Equality Party, National Health Action Party, Farnham Residents and others.

For an independent progressive viewpoint, do read Chris Neill's excellent article on p.6. P.7 contains articles by a Liberal Democrat Councillor and a recent recruit to the Green Party – and you'll find the Labour Party's Richard Ashworth contributing an article on democracy on p.8.

Have a look at our guide to voting in the Waverley elections on p.11 and read about our new book "A New Way of Doing Politics" on page 12, about surprising happenings in Surrey during the last General Election.



Editor

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Who is Compass?

Compass is a home for those who want to build and be a part of a Good Society; one where equality, sustainability and democracy are not mere aspirations, but a living reality. We are founded on the belief that no single issue, organisation or political party can make a Good Society a reality by themselves so we have to work together to make it happen. Compass is a place where people come together to create the visions, alliances and actions to be the change we wish to see in the world.

At Compass, we are building a Good Society; one that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic than the society we are living in now.

LOCAL NEWS

*Some of the Things Progressive Collaboration
has Achieved so Far*

Planning Policy

Representatives of the various progressive parties and independents in Waverley who share many common goals, signed a letter proposing that Waverley Borough Council should base its planning policy on the principles of social justice, democracy and sustainability. The letter pointed out that, for years, under a Conservative administration, planning in Waverley has been blighted because of the failure to agree a local plan and noted: "The lack of opposition councillors has meant that the Conservatives have been both complacent and incompetent."

Surrey County Council Cuts in Services

A cross-party group representing Labour, Liberal Democrats, Greens, some Independents and Farnham Residents campaigned against the deeply damaging cuts to services in Surrey and urged participation in the Surrey County Council public consultation, arguing that the policies of austerity were a political choice, not an economic necessity. The joint statement argued that austerity "is having severe consequences to those who need and depend most upon our public services in Surrey, including children with special educational needs and disabilities."

Celebrating 70 Years of the NHS

South West Surrey Compass organised a charity fund raising concert in the Borough Hall in Godalming and raised almost £1000 for the Oakleaf Trust to celebrate 70 years of the NHS.

Green Oak Primary School

Labour, Liberal Democrats, Greens, independents and others campaigned for keeping open Green Oak Primary School in Godalming, threatened with closure by Tory controlled Surrey County Council last year. A cross-party group agreed a joint statement, expressing concern about the proposed closure of Green Oak Primary School and Nursery at Ockford Ridge, Godalming. It highlighted that the proposal to close the school was in direct conflict with the Waverley Local Plan and the Draft Godalming Neighbourhood Plan and highlighted, yet again, the need for better integration of housing development and infrastructure.

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Editorial Team:

Steve Williams
Editor-In-Chief

Rebecca Slama
Design

Susan Ryland
Claire Matthes
Paul Follows
Harold Woolf
Sue Clements

Connect With Us

For further information,
please see:
[surreycommunity.info/
surreycompass](http://surreycommunity.info/surreycompass)
or e-mail us on
[southwestsurreycompass
@gmail.com](mailto:southwestsurreycompass@gmail.com)

To find out about Compass, the
national organisation, please go
to compassonline.org.uk

Write for Us

e-mail us on
[southwestsurreycompass
@gmail.com](mailto:southwestsurreycompass@gmail.com)

About Us

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Some of the things we have done

When We Work Together...

In South West Surrey Compass, we have found out that in the words of the late Jo Cox, MP, **“there is far more that unites us than divides us”**. By working together, we have achieved far more than we could have achieved on our own as individuals or as members of one of the political tribes.

- **Stopping the closure of Green Oak Primary School in Godalming**
- **Campaigning for a planning policy that puts people first**
- **Campaigning for participation in Surrey County Council’s consultation on the cutback in services and urging greater spending on public services such as education.**

South West Surrey Compass Timeline

- July 2015** *Inaugural meeting of South West Surrey Compass*
- 23 June 2016** *Brexit Referendum*
- 5 October 2016** *Public Meeting “Where Now for Progressive Politics?”*
- March 2017** *SW Surrey Labour Party backs Penny Rivers (LibDem) in the SCC elections in May*
- 19 April 2017** *Second Public Meeting – “Progressive Politics Moving Forward”*
- 4 May 2017** *County Council Elections – Penny Rivers (LibDem) wins Godalming North from the Conservatives.*
- 6 May 2017** *Progressive Forum in Farncombe endorses Dr Louise Irvine as a “progressive alliance” GE candidate. Greens stand down.*
- 8 May 2017** *Kate Townsend, Robert Park and Steve Williams expelled from the Labour Party for supporting Louise Irvine*
- 8 June 2017** *General Election: Dr Louise Irvine achieves a massively increased vote*
- 22 November 2017** *Public Meeting on Health*
- 28 November 2017** *SWS Compass establishes a Cross-Party Group*
- 19 April 2018** *Public Meeting “Is a Good Brexit Possible”*
- 22 May 2018** *Public Meeting on Brexit, Democracy and Rights with Gina Miller at Surrey University*
- 10 November 2018** *Evening of entertainment celebrating 70 years of the NHS in Godalming Borough Hall*
- 21 November 2018** *Cross Party Group agrees the Common Programme for Waverley*
- February 2019** *SWS Compass launches its newspaper*

Our Programme for Waverley

Members of the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Greens, Farnham Residents councillors and independents have worked together to produce this Common Programme for Waverley.

Housing

Increase the proportion of houses built for social housing or at an affordable rent;

Create a distinct subsidised “social housing” category;

Challenge reduction to support for sheltered housing;

Restore funding at County Council level for the housing support service;

Reinstate the Godalming Town Council planning committee to provide a local voice on planning

Monitor and ensure that the responsibilities for the homeless are met

Planning

Act to reduce number of empty homes, and hoarding of land and planning permissions;

Insulate more homes;

Reduce/remove exemptions which reduce number of affordable and social houses built;

Get a Waverley Plan established as a matter of urgency after 10 years of Tory delays;

Ensure social housing and other community levies are spent effectively as intended;

Protect green belt from inappropriate development;

Draw up a clear definition of land that can be developed.

Transport

Recognise the significant effect that additional housebuilding plans will have on traffic (already congested in the area) by planning for road changes and for a balanced, pedestrian and cycle-friendly, sustainable and affordable public transport system;

Take action on air quality – move away from diesel towards electric vehicles and encourage commuters to shift from cars to public transport, with a genuine commitment to protect and invest in bus routes.

Environmental Protection

Waverley should lead a sustainable agenda for the 21st century and beyond;

Support divestment in fossil fuels and opposing development of new fossil fuels through ‘fracking’ and other unsustainable approaches;

Protect our environment by promoting deposit schemes for plastic bottles;

Protect natural habitats and biodiversity

Promote strategies for REDUCING and REUSING materials as much as RECYCLING

Well-being, Leisure & The Arts

Encourage access to sports and leisure facilities and the arts for all, at a price that everyone can afford;

Ensure local residents have access to local countryside and are not excluded through high parking charges.

People involved in Compass are united by shared values. Values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought" to be. We strive to behave in ways that model what we want a good society to look and feel like.

Since our inception we have always been a member-led organisation. Now, more than ever we strive to live by our values of democracy and equality. Today we are increasingly an open and democratic space for people who want to develop a new form of politics.

Here are some of the ways we live by our values.

Equality

We have gender quotas for our Management Committee, ensure that every event we organise has disabled access and that we have female representation on every panel. From large donors to individual members, all are treated equally within our democratic structures.

Democracy

Democracy is not just a means to an end – it helps define and shape our Good Society and who we are. In practical terms this means that Compass members steer the organisation by electing our Management Committee and voting on decisions made at our Annual General Meeting. When big issues arise we put them to our members to decide.

Sustainability

This is a thread that we try to weave through all of our

thinking and campaigns as we recognise it as an urgent threat to social justice and wellbeing. Central to our Good Society is making decisions that consider the long term sustainability of our planet.

Pluralism

We believe that no one party or organisation can build a Good Society. We inspire those who share our values to interact in a new and unique space where values are linked to policy and action. Thus, our membership is open to members of all political parties (and none).

We are a home for all those that want to operate within a different kind of politics. One with respect, democracy and open mindedness at its heart. By operating in this way we allow members and supporters to build relationships that are respectful, equal and open. In this way we hope to build a movement that fosters solidarity, kindness and empowerment.



So You're Not a Party Person?

*Not really a "party person" (ie a political party person!)?
by Chris Neill*

Me neither. I joined one and left shortly afterwards. Nearly joined two others but never went through with it. They weren't really "me".

I wanted to be politically active, but none of the parties were really a proper match for my views and feelings about politics. I don't need perfection but I would like to feel like I belong, and that at the same time it's ok to be a bit different to other members, that I can agree with some things and disagree with others. I also want to feel like it's ok to share views and ideas with people from other parties, to recognise that not all the answers are in one place.

It often seems to me that we need to find creative, practical and really thoughtful solutions to problems. In any case I'm much more interested in being in an organisation where people do things according to certain values - with respect, honesty, fairness and sensitivity - than in being

somewhere with a rigid set of agreed policies and rules; that doesn't seem to have got us anywhere.

So, South West Surrey Compass has been a real breath of fresh air. There are people from various different political parties and people, like me, from no party at all. Compass feels like my political home now. It's good to spend time with people who, broadly speaking, feel like I do. We talk to each other and we listen to each other. There is difference and disagreement and that's fine. There is also the shared purpose to build a good society and this gives a sense of community, energy, and hope.

In Compass, there is real active collaboration to try to bring about change. It's even quite good fun sometimes, in a way that I never expected politics to be. If you're interested you might want to come along to a Saturday morning meeting and find out more.

A small amount of opposition can make all the difference

by Cllr Paul Follows, Liberal Democrat, Central and Ockford Ward

Just over a year ago now I was elected in a by election and joined Godalming Town and Waverley Borough Council as a Liberal Democrat. I am totally outnumbered at both councils – and had so much to learn.

I wondered if I would really be able to do anything – to actually make a difference in the time I had before the next elections.

But it's not all about those big, formal votes in the council chamber. Most of my time as a councillor is spent meeting residents and working through those concerns with council officers and doing my level best to address problems on the ground.

At the very least I hope residents know who their councillor is now and can trust I will be there when they need me.

Being so outnumbered in formal meetings though means I must work with others.

One important thing I have learnt is that when one party gets almost total control on a council is that it can turn inward on itself. It is only human nature. But this is the picture at almost every level of local government in Surrey – including Waverley and Godalming.

Having some opposition stimulates debate, it raises questions and brings in new ideas. It keeps everyone honest. Knowing you will be held to account by a proper opposition motivates everyone to be better councillors – and that's better for everyone in Godalming whether you support Conservative, Lib Dem, Labour, Green or Independent.

An End to Party Tribalism

Steve Williams, Guildford and Waverley Green Party

Although we are living in troubled times, I see a lot of hope in politics through the work in which I have been involved since establishing South West Surrey Compass in 2015.

South West Surrey Compass brings together progressive people of all political complexions – Labour, Liberal Democrats, Greens and people with no party political affiliation. I was a member of the Labour Party, I supported Penny Rivers of the Liberal Democrats in the 2017 Surrey County Council elections, I supported Dr Louise Irvine of the National Health Action Party in the 2017 general election in South West Surrey – and I've now joined the Green Party! The reality of life is that there is far more in common for those on the progressive left of the political spectrum than most people realise. Party tribalism seeks to create division where it does not exist. We believe that the important issues of equality, justice, human rights, democracy and sustainability are more important than allegiance to any one political party.

Compass is a national organisation that actively seeks support for progressive political ideas and campaigns for a "Good Society". Locally, we believe it is important that we listen to local residents and campaign actively to put our principles into practice on the ground in our area. We campaigned to keep Green Oak Primary School open on Ockford Ridge. We campaigned for a planning policy that puts people at its heart. We are currently campaigning against Charterhouse School selling off Green Belt land in my own local area, as we previously opposed the sale of important Green Belt land in Binscombe.

When we work together, party tribalism is irrelevant. If we acknowledge that there is more that unites than divides us and set aside our recognised differences, we can focus on what we can do together to improve our community. That is what progressive politics should be all about.

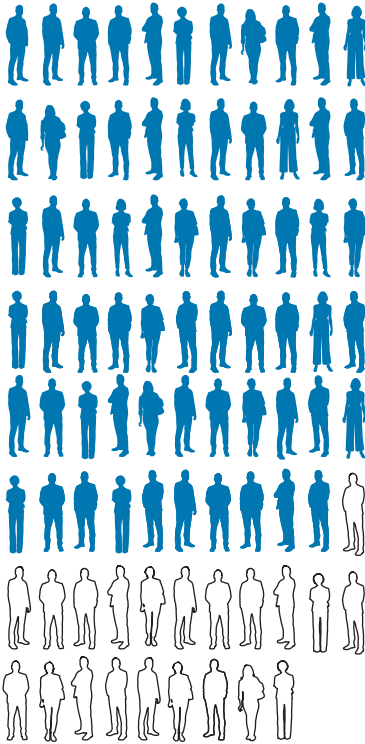
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Surrey boasts:

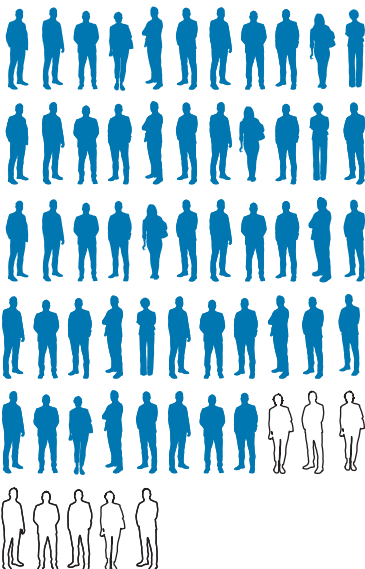
11 (out of 11) Tory MPs,



61 (out of 81) Tory County Councillors.



50 (out of 57) Tory Borough Councillors.



Godalming Town council:

18 (out of 20) Tory Councillors



How do the Tories get away with this?

In the last Waverley elections Conservative candidates won an average 50% of the votes but, after the election 93% of the councillors (53 out of 57) were Conservatives!

This is not democracy.

It happened because the vote for candidates offering a progressive alternative was split. In one ward, one of the Conservative councillors who got in was elected on 38% of the vote – because the opposition was split three ways – between Labour, Liberal Democrats and Greens!

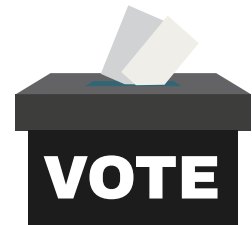
We need to vote wisely.

Check how many votes you have in each election.

(In Godalming wards, you have two ballot forms – one for Waverley Borough Council and one for Godalming Town Council; you have TWO votes for your Waverley Borough Councillors and FOUR votes for your Godalming Town councillors).

Use all your votes for the candidates of your choice. In most wards, there will be only as many non-Tory progressive candidates as there are council seats.

Use all your votes



For example:

Theresa, Jeremy, Vince and Caroline are all going out to vote for the TWO councillors who represent their ward in Ambridge South. They each have TWO votes and will put TWO crosses on the ballot paper.

Theresa goes to vote. She is a Conservative but likes the Liberal Democrat candidate. She uses her two votes for **one Conservative** and **one Liberal Democrat**.

Jeremy goes to vote. He's a Labour supporter but there's only one Labour candidate on the ballot paper. He would like other progressive councillors elected and there's a Green Party candidate on the ballot paper – so he uses his two votes: for **one Labour** and **one Green Party** candidate.

Vince goes to vote. He's a Liberal Democrat supporter but there's only one Liberal Democrat candidate on the ballot paper. He would like to see other progressive councillors elected and there's a Labour candidate on the ballot paper – so he uses his two votes: for **one Liberal Democrat** and **one Labour** candidate.

Caroline goes to vote. She's a Green supporter but there's no Green candidate on the ballot paper. She sees that there is **one Liberal Democrat** and **one Labour** candidate on the ballot paper. So she uses her two votes by voting for them.



Your vote really counts!

In May 2019 the simple solution is to VOTE!

by Richard Ashworth, Godalming Labour Party

Your vote matters and your vote counts. Here's why.

Surrey's Tory County Council hold around £298million – that's approximately a third of a billion – in property investment outside Surrey which is "delivering zero income for county council services" (Lib Dem Research 2018). In the last few years these Tories have presided over discreetly moving large chunks out of the Green Belt for building (pretty much under the radar) and still failed to hit a single house-building target in a generation.

And Austerity is far from over, as you will discover if you attended the consultation meeting (at 10am at the Wilfred Noyce Centre on December 10th) about the deeper cuts coming. These Tories are starving every public amenity from Sure Start to rubbish disposal. And it's about to get worse.

A 30% voter turn-out is typical in local Elections like the ones this coming May in Waverley.

This is not democracy.

A 30% voter turn-out is typical in local Elections like the ones this coming May in Waverley

1. Nobody knows what the 70% who don't vote want. Perhaps they think a non-Tory vote is wasted. It clearly isn't.

2. Local Elections are often won by a couple of dozen votes. Three or four Wards in Waverley traditionally return Tories who are unopposed!

Your vote really counts! Just one or two non-Tory Councillors will make the Tories accountable.

So if you want democracy – even if you just want accountable representatives – vote!

Vote Green, vote Yellow, vote Red, even vote Blue or Purple if you must...But Vote!

And... If you have TWO votes, use two votes; if you have FOUR votes (as in some Town Council wards), use four votes. In May, you may be able to vote (for example) Labour + Green or LibDem + Labour or even, say, 1 Labour, 1 Green, 1 LibDem and 1 Independent if there is more than one councillor for your ward!

This is not democracy.

*Left to right:
Penny Rivers,
Louise
Irvine, Steve
Williams,
Susan Ryland*



A New Way of Doing Politics

by Penny Rivers

Supporters of the progressive cross-party group, South West Surrey Compass, have launched a book that tells the story of the attempt to unseat Jeremy Hunt in the 2017 General Election.

"A New Way of Doing Politics" tells the story of the campaign to elect Dr Louise Irvine, a GP passionate about the NHS, in the 2017 General Election.

Louise and the National Health Action Party, with the help of members of the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, the Green Party and others, challenged Conservative MP Jeremy Hunt, then Secretary of State for Health, in his safe South West Surrey seat. Not so safe now!

This book dispels the view that only marginal seats are worth contesting. It points instead to a new kind of activism, driven by shared progressive values and reaching across party divides, to bring fairness to Britain's antiquated political

system. This has been positively demonstrated in the 2017 County Council elections. Due to this shared progressive vision, the Labour Party made the strategic decision not to contest the Godalming North Division allowing the Liberal Democrats a clearer run. Consequently, I have the privilege of being elected as the Surrey County Councillor for Godalming North, overturning a Conservative majority.

As one of the editors of this book, I testify to the value of the local progressive political movement. Progressive Politics is a positive and pragmatic approach that energises and inspires us to work together. Unless and until this country has a fairer voting system, we need to talk together, work together, campaign together, stand tactically and vote tactically so that we make our vote count. My election as County Councillor for Godalming North is proof that this cooperative vision really works.

“An inspiring call to action for all progressives.”

FRANCES FOLEY, Compass

“There has never been more important time since WW2 when the various Parties, campaigns and caucuses of the Centre/Left should put aside their differences to identify common cause to combat the disturbingly successful march of the right. This book shows the how's and whys behind the process of progressive cooperation.”

ANDREW GEORGE, former Liberal Democrat MP for St Ives

“An invaluable primer for those seeking to chart a path beyond the obsolete landscape of British electoral politics and out of the sorry mess it's dumped us in.”

BARRY LANGFORD, author of “All Together Now”: The Progressive Alliance and the 2017 General Election

“Grown up politics can be done, and this book is the guiding light.”

ANDREE FRIEZE, Green Party Councillor, London Borough of Richmond

“This book delivers hope for politics.”
Dr Phil Hammond, NHS doctor, broadcaster and journalist

A NEW WAY OF DOING POLITICS

WORKING TOGETHER TO CHALLENGE A 'SAFE' TORY SEAT



EDITED BY
STEVE WILLIAMS SUSAN RYLAND
PENNY RIVERS AND
LOUISE IRVINE

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The Tory safe seat is the epitome of entitlement...

“A New Way of Doing Politics” tells the story of those drawn into the campaign to elect Dr Louise Irvine, a GP passionate about the NHS who, with the help of a cross-party team, challenged Conservative MP Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health in

his safe South West Surrey seat. It dispels the view that only ‘marginal’ seats are worth contesting and points instead to a new kind of activism, driven by shared values across party divides bringing democracy to Britain’s antiquated political system.