

What Reform UK's Election Victory Means for Our Communities

Blossom Group ASA CIC | May 2026 | Community Briefing

The 7 May 2026 local elections produced results that will shape the lives of the communities we serve for years to come. Across the country Reform UK made historic gains. But here in East London, the picture was more complex, more hopeful in places, and more frightening in others. This briefing sets out what happened, what it means, and what Blossom Group is doing about it.

The Results: Our Boroughs

Here is what happened on 7 May in the boroughs that matter most to our communities:

Borough	Outcome	Winning Party	Key Change
Newham	Labour holds mayoralty; No Overall Control on council	Labour / Mixed	Independents +24, Greens +14
Waltham Forest	Green Party wins council majority	Greens	Greens +32, Labour -33
Tower Hamlets	Aspire re-elected; Lutfur Rahman wins second term	Aspire	Aspire +9, Labour -14
Redbridge	Labour holds but weakened; Reform gains a seat	Labour (NOC)	Reform +1, Independents +9
Hackney	Green Party takes mayoralty and council majority	Greens	Greens +40, Labour -41
Havering	Reform UK takes full control - only London borough	Reform UK	Reform 28+ seats, Tories wiped out

Borough by Borough: What the Results Mean

Newham. Labour's Forhad Hussain was elected Mayor with 25,538 votes - but the council fell to No Overall Control, with Labour on 26 seats, Newham Independents on 24, and the Greens gaining 14 new seats. This is a profound shift in a borough that Labour has controlled since its creation. It reflects deep frustration with how communities have been served - or not served. Reform came fourth in the mayoral race with 7,313 votes. They did not win council seats, but their presence registered. A warning has been issued.

Waltham Forest. The Greens achieved what many called the most stunning result of the night - going from zero seats in 2022 to a full council majority with 32 seats, while Labour lost 33. This is a borough with a large and diverse community. The message from voters was clear: they wanted something different. The Greens delivered that. Reform made no breakthrough here. This is a result to celebrate and to build on.

Tower Hamlets. Lutfur Rahman and the Aspire Party were re-elected with 38.8% of the mayoral vote, gaining 9 more council seats while Labour lost 14. The Green Party also gained 4 new seats. Reform polled 7.8% in the mayoral race but won no council seats. The community spoke clearly for independent, locally rooted leadership. Whatever view one holds of Aspire's politics, the rejection of Reform in a borough with one of London's largest Muslim populations is significant.

Redbridge. A more complicated picture. Labour's majority survived but was weakened - they lost 15 seats. The Greens gained 5 new seats. The Redbridge Independents gained 9. And Reform won 1 council seat - a foothold, and a warning. This is a diverse borough with large South Asian, Muslim, and Jewish communities. The arrival of even one Reform councillor changes the atmosphere. It must be monitored.

Hackney. One of the most extraordinary results of the night. Green candidate Zoe Garbett won the mayoralty with 47.2% of the vote. The Greens took 40 new council seats while Labour lost 41. A formerly rock-solid Labour borough - one of the most diverse in London - chose Green. Reform polled just 5.3% and won nothing. This is what it looks like when communities are offered a genuine, values-driven alternative. It is cause for real hope.

Havering - the alarm bell. Reform UK took full control of Havering Council, winning more than 28 of 55 seats and wiping the Conservatives out entirely. This is the only London borough now under Reform control. Havering covers Romford, Upminster, and Rainham - areas on the eastern edge of London where some of our communities are being sent by housing allocations. It is also the borough from which Nigel Farage stood for Parliament in 2024. Reform now makes decisions about housing, social care, community grants, and local services for everyone in Havering - including the minority families placed there by housing policy with no say in where they go. This is not abstract. This is immediate.

What Just Happened?

Reform UK has been the defining story of this election cycle. With around 26-27% of the national vote, Nigel Farage's party outperformed every other party and won in areas that have been Labour strongholds since the Second World War. Reform now runs councils across Essex, Sunderland, Thurrock, and Havering, among others.

Reform does not currently hold national power - the general election is not expected until 2029 - but the scale of their local gains means they are now making decisions about services, housing, and community funding in areas where many of our families live.

How We Got Here: Neglect, Dehumanisation, and the Cost of Ignored Communities

At Blossom Group, we have been saying this for years. And we will say it plainly now, because this moment demands honesty.

Reform UK did not rise in a vacuum. Parties like Reform do not generate support from nowhere. They grow in the soil that institutions leave behind - the soil of neglect, of

abandonment, of communities that have been failed so consistently and for so long that they are ready to follow anyone who speaks to their rage, even when that person is directing it at the wrong target.

We have been critical of local authorities, and we will continue to be. Because what we have witnessed, time and again, is the systematic othering of the very communities those authorities are meant to serve. And it begins not with riots or hatred, but with language. With policy. With the small, daily acts of bureaucratic dehumanisation that strip people of their dignity before they even enter a room.

People are not 'residents.' They are not 'taxpayers.' They are not 'beneficiaries.' They are your community. The moment you reduce a human being to a category, a case number, or a cost to the system, you have already begun the process of making them invisible.

We hear the word 'residents' used constantly by councils and public bodies. It sounds neutral. It is not. It strips people of belonging. It positions them as occupants of space rather than members of a living, breathing community with history, culture, relationships, and rights. The same is true of 'taxpayers' - which implies that only those who contribute financially are worthy of concern - and 'beneficiaries,' which carries the quiet suggestion that receiving support is something to be ashamed of, a transaction rather than a right.

Language matters. Because language shapes policy. And policy shapes lives.

We have watched communities left to live with damp and mould in their homes for years, with letters ignored and complaints dismissed. We have watched people pushed through benefits systems so hostile and so complicated that they collapse under the weight of them. We have watched families in fuel poverty, in food poverty, in child poverty, told to contact their local authority and then handed a phone number that rings out. We have watched the NHS become something people fear accessing rather than trust. We have watched the cost of living crisis eat into communities that had nothing left to give.

And through all of this, what have too many local authorities offered? Star ratings. Performance metrics. 'Service delivery.' Tick-box consultations where communities are invited to comment on decisions already made. Strategies written about people rather than with them. Points systems. Thresholds. Eligibility criteria designed to exclude rather than include.

When a council treats its community as a set of problems to be managed rather than people to be served, it sends a message. That message is: you do not matter. Your suffering is an inconvenience. Your voice is noise.

And when that message is sent consistently, over years and decades, to the same communities - the poorest, the most marginalised, the most diverse, the ones with the least power to push back - it creates a wound. A deep, collective wound of being unseen and unheard.

Reform UK did not create that wound. But they are very skilled at pouring salt into it - and pointing at the nearest minority community and saying: they are the reason you are hurting.

That is the oldest trick in the political playbook. Find people who are suffering. Find a scapegoat. Direct the rage. It worked in the 1930s. It is working now.

The thousands of people across this country who are scared and frightened tonight - our communities, our families, the people who come through Blossom Group's doors - they are not collateral damage in a political story. They are the direct consequence of decades of

institutional failure dressed up as policy. Of communities being managed rather than valued. Of people being called 'residents' when what they needed was to be called by their names.

We say to every local authority, every housing association, every council, every public body: look at what your neglect has built. Not just Reform's vote share. The fear in our communities. The hatred on our streets. The children who are afraid to go to school. That is also your legacy. And it is time to own it.

Change does not start with an election result. It starts with how you speak to people. It starts with whether you show up when the mould comes back for the third time. It starts with whether you treat a human being like a human being.

Blossom Group will keep saying this. To councils. To commissioners. To government. To anyone who will listen. And to those who won't - we will say it louder.

Forced Out: How Housing Policy Sends Minority Families Into Hostile Territory

There is another dimension to this housing crisis that rarely gets spoken about openly, but which Blossom Group sees constantly. Minority communities are frequently forced by housing systems - by the allocation of social housing, by the unaffordability of private renting in established diverse areas, by being placed wherever there is availability rather than wherever there is community - to move to areas that are now Reform strongholds.

Areas that are predominantly white, that have little experience of diversity, and that have been shaped for years by anti-immigration media and politics. Families who have built their lives in East London, who have their mosques, their shops, their support networks, their children's schools, are being uprooted and sent to Essex, to outer boroughs, to towns where they have no connections and where, in too many cases, they are not welcome.

This is not an accident. It is the inevitable result of housing policies that treat families as units to be placed rather than communities to be supported. A family moved from Tower Hamlets or Newham to Havering - now a Reform-controlled council - does not just lose their home. They lose their safety net, their cultural infrastructure, their sense of belonging. They arrive somewhere unfamiliar, sometimes hostile, without the networks that kept them afloat. And now they find themselves governed by councillors from a party that has made them, and people who look like them, the centre of its political identity.

Housing policy has been quietly doing what no one wants to say out loud: displacing minority communities from their roots and depositing them in places that are increasingly hostile to their presence. That is not housing management. That is a human rights issue.

We call on every housing authority, every council, every housing association to recognise this. Placing a family is not the end of your responsibility. It is the beginning. The community they are placed into, the support available to them, the cultural and social infrastructure around them - these matter. And when they are ignored, the consequences are felt not just by the families themselves, but on every street they are sent to live on.

The Hatred Is Already Here - And It Is Getting Worse

We will not soften this. The atmosphere on our streets has been deteriorating for some time, and it is getting worse.

Religious hate crimes against Muslims rose by **19%** in the past year, spiking sharply after the Southport murders in 2024 - in which the perpetrator was falsely and deliberately claimed online to have been Muslim - and the riots that followed. In London alone, more than **1,000 Islamophobic hate crimes** were recorded in 2025, and experts estimate that around 80% of anti-Muslim incidents go unreported.

The Islamophobia Response Unit documented a **377% surge** in Islamophobia incidents between 2023 and 2024, with Muslims now accounting for **45% of all religious hate crimes** in England and Wales. Hate mail targeting the IRU's own staff surged by **700%** from 2024 to 2025.

These are not numbers. These are our neighbours, our children on the school run, our elders at the mosque, our women wearing hijab in the street.

Muslim women in Essex have described cars accelerating towards them at crossings. Children have had glass thrown at them. A mosque had red crosses daubed across its walls. A young mother stopped taking her children to school for two weeks after a stranger told her to 'take that rag off your head.'

This is not the Britain we were promised. And it is not the Britain we accept.

Are We Watching History Repeat Itself?

This question is being asked openly now, and it deserves a serious answer.

In the days following the election, Misan Harriman - chairman of the Southbank Centre, London's largest arts venue - posted a video reflecting on the results. He quoted Holocaust survivor Susan Sontag's observation to writer Kurt Vonnegut:

'Ten per cent of any population is cruel, no matter what, and ten per cent is merciful, no matter what, and the remaining 80 per cent can be moved in either direction.'

Harriman called this 'really topical' in light of Reform's surge. He was careful to say Reform voters 'are not devils.' His remarks were clipped, taken out of context, and he was branded a 'crass moron' by Reform's own Treasury spokesman - which tells you something about the tone we are now living in.

The comparison to 1930s Germany must be handled with care and respect. The Holocaust was the industrialised murder of six million Jewish people and millions of others. Nothing happening in Britain today is comparable to that outcome, and we must never diminish what happened.

But historians are making a different, more precise point: it is not the outcome of the 1930s that echoes now. It is the conditions and the process that preceded it. Economic insecurity. Mainstream politics failing people. Populists offering simple explanations and convenient enemies. The gradual normalisation of dehumanising rhetoric. The mechanism called 'othering' - making a group seem alien and threatening - working slowly through language, through newspapers, through political speeches, until it seeps into everyday life.

Academic research across Europe has shown a direct correlation between the rise of hard-right parties and rising hate crimes targeting minorities. We saw it in Germany after 2015. We are seeing it here now.

Once hatred is normalised, once scapegoating becomes the mainstream language of politics, it becomes far harder to pull back. The communities who suffer first and most are always those who were already vulnerable.

Will They Come for Long-Term Migrants?

Yes. This is not scaremongering. It is what Reform's own policy documents say.

Reform has pledged to abolish Indefinite Leave to Remain - the legal status that gives people who have lived here for years, sometimes decades, the permanent right to live and work in the UK. Critically, they say they would retrospectively strip ILR from those who already hold it. People who were told their right to remain was permanent could find it taken away.

Legal experts warn this would face enormous human rights challenges. But the intent is stated. For non-EU nationals from Muslim-majority countries, South Asia, and Africa, the uncertainty is real.

The most important protection available right now is British citizenship. If you or someone you know is approaching eligibility, take legal advice now - before any rule changes come into force.

We Stand With Every Community - Antisemitism Has No Place Here Either

Blossom Group stands with all communities. Every single one. That is not a slogan. It is the foundation of everything we do.

We have spoken at length about the very real and rising threat to Muslim communities, to migrant communities, to people of colour. We do not soften that. But we will not allow this moment to be used to set communities against one another - because that is precisely what divide and rule politics wants. It wants us fragmented. It wants us competing for who is most under threat. It wants us so busy defending our own corner that we stop seeing each other.

We see you. All of you.

That means we stand unequivocally against antisemitism. The Jewish community in Britain has faced a terrifying rise in hate crimes - antisemitic incidents have more than doubled in two years. Jewish families, Jewish schools, Jewish community centres are living with threats and fear. That is unacceptable. Full stop. There are no qualifications. There is no 'but.' Antisemitism is hatred. It is wrong. It has no place in any community that calls itself decent.

We also recognise that the current political moment is being used deliberately to drive wedges between communities that should stand together. The rhetoric of parties across the political spectrum is built on division. Pit Muslim against Jewish. Pit working class against immigrant. Pit long-term resident against newcomer. Keep everyone looking sideways at each other so that no one looks up and asks who is actually making the decisions that are making all of their lives harder.

Divide and rule is as old as power itself. And it only works if we let it. At Blossom Group, we refuse.

Our Togetherness Cafe is not for one community. Our door is not for one faith. Our advocacy is not for one background. We work across more than 90 languages because we understand something that those in power often prefer we did not: our differences are not a threat to each other. They are a gift to each other.

Jewish families, Muslim families, Black families, South Asian families, Eastern European families, white British families living in poverty and forgotten by the same systems - at Blossom, you are all our family. Your pain matters to us. Your dignity matters to us. Your right to live safely, to be seen, and to be treated as a full human being matters to us equally, without hierarchy and without condition.

Everyone is our family. That is not negotiable. That is who we are.

Tommy Robinson's March: What Happened and What It Means

Last Saturday, 16 May 2026, Tommy Robinson's Unite the Kingdom march came through the heart of London. It has now happened. And our communities deserve an honest account of what took place - not reassurance, not spin, but the truth.

Independent estimates placed attendance at around 60,000 people - one of the largest far-right mobilisations in British history, but significantly below the 110,000 to 150,000 who attended in September 2025. Robinson claimed millions. That is false. Hope Not Hate described the atmosphere as more subdued, lacking the intensity of previous rallies. The Met's policing operation cost the public £4.5 million. Thirty-one people were arrested across both demonstrations.

Robinson claimed millions attended. He did not. Independent estimates put the crowd at 60,000. The movement is not unstoppable. That matters.

What happened on those streets was vile. It was racist. It was Islamophobic. Attendees carried placards with anti-immigrant, Islamophobic and antisemitic messages. One flyer seen on the street called for a future for white people. Marchers dressed as Knights Templar and carried large wooden crosses. Christian nationalist slogans were chanted alongside 'Christ is King' and thousands chanting 'Elon' after Robinson told the crowd: 'None of this would have happened if it wasn't for one man. Thank you Elon, on behalf of Great Britain.'

Members of Britain First, White Vanguard, Remigration Now, Homeland, and Patriotic Alternative - a neo-Nazi organisation - were present in the crowd alongside 33 speakers over six hours, most repeating anti-immigration and anti-Islam talking points. Robinson called it a cultural revolution and urged supporters to engage with Reform UK and other nationalist movements ahead of the battle of Britain in 2029.

The Metropolitan Police gave Robinson's march the whole of Whitehall, Parliament Square, and Trafalgar Square while restricting the Nakba Day counter-march route. An Early Day Motion in Parliament described this as dark and biased treatment. The policing of protest in this country is not neutral.

The Nakba 78 counter-march - United Against Tommy Robinson and the Far Right - took place from Exhibition Road to Pall Mall, with thousands from across the country standing in solidarity. And in March 2026, half a million people marched against the far right in the biggest such demonstration in British history. That is the real Britain. That is who we are.

The march was vile and racist. But attendance was lower than September. The movement is not unstoppable - and the half million who marched against the far right in March 2026 proved it.

A Bright Spot: Welcoming the Green Party Wins

Not all of the election results brought fear. Amidst Reform's rise, the Green Party had a remarkable night and we welcome it warmly.

In Hackney, Zoe Garbett won the mayoralty with 47.2% of the vote. In Waltham Forest, the Greens went from zero to a council majority with 32 new seats. In Tower Hamlets, they gained 4 seats. In Newham, 14 new Green councillors were elected. In Redbridge, 5. These are not small gains. They are a transformation.

The Green Party has consistently stood against the hostile environment, against the dehumanisation of migrants and minorities, and for the kind of politics that sees people as people rather than problems. Their councillors tend to show up. Their politics tends to listen. And their wins prove that when communities are offered a genuine alternative built on dignity and justice, they will vote for it.

Every Green gain is proof that another kind of politics is possible. That communities who vote for dignity and for each other can win. That is cause for real hope.

The 2029 general election is three years away. What happens in every ward and every council between now and then matters enormously. Register. Engage. Vote. Your vote is not nothing. Your vote is the opposite of nothing. And parties that stand with your community deserve to feel your support.

What This Means for You - And What You Can Do

If you are worried about your immigration status: Do not rely on rumour or social media. Reform is not in national government. Your rights have not changed today. But seek proper legal advice if you are approaching eligibility for ILR or citizenship.

If you have been the target of a hate incident: Please report it. To the police (999 for emergencies, 101 for non-emergencies). To Tell MAMA for anti-Muslim hate. To the Islamophobia Response Unit. Every report matters.

If you feel frightened or isolated: You are not alone. The Togetherness Cafe is open. Our Community Box team is here. Real Talk with Bal continues. Walk and Talk continues. These are lifelines and we will protect them.

If you are a long-term resident worried about your future: Come and talk to us. We will connect you with immigration legal advice and help you understand what steps, if any, you should take.

What Blossom Group Is Doing

We will continue to advocate loudly and clearly for the communities we serve. We are:

- Monitoring decisions made by Reform-controlled councils affecting housing, grants, and community services, and sharing what we find.

- Strengthening our partnerships with legal, health, and housing advisers so our communities can access accurate information quickly.
- Continuing to tell the real stories of real people - because stories change minds and resist narratives that reduce human beings to problems.
- Engaging with local councillors, MPs, and public bodies to make clear our communities exist, contribute, and deserve to be heard and protected.
- Calling on every local authority, housing association, and public body to stop calling our communities 'residents' and start treating them as the family they are.

A Final Word

We were created to stand with people who are too often overlooked, unheard, or pushed aside. That has not changed. It will not change.

The communities we serve are not a burden on this country. They are part of it. They care for its elderly. They work in its hospitals. They run its restaurants and clean its offices and teach in its schools. They have built lives here, raised children here, buried their dead here. Many of them have been here for decades.

History teaches us that when hatred is allowed to take root - when scapegoating becomes normal, when rhetoric becomes policy, when the vulnerable are made to feel alien in the place they call home - it does not stop on its own. It has to be met. With solidarity. With community. With refusal.

That is what Blossom Group is. A refusal. We are here. We are not going anywhere. And neither are you.

Get in Touch

WhatsApp: 07786 478961 (any language welcome)

Email: info@blossom-group.net

Web: www.blossom-group.net

Blossom Group ASA CIC - Standing with communities across East London.