# Labour wins Banbury Hardwick amid Reform UK candidate’s suspension over Savile defence tweets



Stephen Hartley, a candidate for Reform UK, contested the Banbury Hardwick seat during the local elections in Oxfordshire on May 1. His campaign took a controversial turn following his suspension from the party, which occurred less than 24 hours after the candidate list was released in early April. This decision was prompted by historic tweets that surfaced, in which Hartley expressed defence for Jimmy Savile, a notorious sex offender.

Despite his suspension, Hartley remained on the ballot due to the timing of his suspension, which came after the nominations had closed. The election results revealed that Labour's Andrew Crichton, who currently serves on the Cherwell District Council, won the seat with 567 votes. Hartley, in a close second, garnered 512 votes.

Sean Woodcock, the Labour MP for Banbury, expressed satisfaction with the outcome, stating, "I'm delighted that the people of Hardwick, where I grew up, have elected Andrew Crichton to be their county councillor." He highlighted Crichton's record as a community champion and indicated that he would ensure the area’s interests are adequately represented at the county level.

The controversy surrounding Hartley intensified following revelations of his comments on social media. In multiple posts, including one from April 2022, Hartley remarked, “The established elite don’t like a self-made man, a working class hero. Saville was one, Putin is another. So they make up horrible lies about them and let the media do the rest.” In another tweet from February 2022, he referred to Savile as “a role model of mine” and labelled him a “scapegoat.” These statements provoked widespread outrage among local politicians, with Woodcock stating that Hartley should be "nowhere near public office with such appalling views.”

Criticism also came from other political figures, including Liz Leffman, the leader of Oxfordshire County Council, who described Hartley’s comments as “unacceptable.” Ian Middleton, the leader of the Green group, called his remarks “sick and twisted.” Despite the backlash, Hartley stood by his comments when approached for a response.

In addition to the Labour and Reform UK candidates, Oliver Perara of the Conservative Party received 430 votes, Chris Nelson from the Green Party obtained 146 votes, Christophe Aramini from the Liberal Democrats garnered 170 votes, and Simon Garrett, an Independent, received 98 votes. Interestingly, a total of nine ballots were rejected.

The 2023 local elections saw the Liberal Democrats secure an overall majority in the county council, with 36 councillors elected. Labour secured 12 seats, the Conservatives 10, the Greens seven, and other parties including Reform UK and the Independent Oxford Alliance each won one seat, thereby contributing to a diverse political landscape in the council.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cm2xey4m2ygo> - This BBC News article reports on Stephen Hartley's suspension from Reform UK after his pro-Jimmy Savile tweets surfaced, confirming his candidacy in the Banbury Hardwick ward and the timing of his suspension.
2. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/20121697.listed-councillors-elected-cherwell/> - This Oxford Mail article lists the councillors elected in Cherwell, including Andrew Crichton of the Labour Party, who won the Banbury Hardwick seat with 798 votes.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-65500972> - This BBC News article discusses the 2023 local elections in Oxfordshire, highlighting the Liberal Democrats securing an overall majority in the county council, with 36 councillors elected.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-65500972> - This BBC News article reports on the 2023 local elections in Oxfordshire, noting that the Conservatives lost their last remaining council in the county, with the Liberal Democrats becoming the largest party in Cherwell District Council.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-65500972> - This BBC News article mentions that the Conservatives lost five seats on Cherwell District Council, leading to no overall control, and discusses the subsequent political developments.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-65500972> - This BBC News article reports on the 2023 local elections in Oxfordshire, noting that the Liberal Democrats secured an overall majority in the county council, with 36 councillors elected.
7. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25141597.oxfordshire-candidate-defended-jimmy-savile-came-second/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data