

Central Suffolk and North Ipswich General Election 2024 Summary Report

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Campaign goals:

There were four goals considered at the start of the campaign:








- i. Ensure the Liberal Democrat message is seen by every household sending a Royal Mail delivered electoral address to every door in the constituency (44,100 leaflets). The local parties do not have the ability to deliver to every door so regardless of the household response it gives a rare chance of broader exposure.
- ii. Consolidate and attempt to strengthen the position of the three sitting district ward councillors by producing an A5 leaflet showcasing the councillor alongside the GE candidate (apx 12,000 leaflets).
- iii. Produce around 10,000 additional A4 leaflets using the national template to deliver in the councillor wards and the areas targeted for county council elections.
- iv. Push into social media via Facebook, experimenting to see what sort of results can be obtained.
- v. Attempt to add new supporters, deliverers and members.

Following the withdrawal of the Labour candidate, after being found to have bet against himself, we received a £500 donation from a Labour supporter specifically to print additional leaflets. We also received a number of other donations and so it was decided to add a goal vi. to print an “election breaking news” leaflet to see if we could take advantage of the situation to squeeze Labour and improve our vote share (20,000 plus 10,000).

I consider that we have been successful in all aspects, however it is hard to tell whether point iii has made an impact. It is a disappointment that so many votes still went to Labour when they weren't officially represented, but it is explained by their national momentum and the short time period we had to turn the situation to our advantage. I don't think Labour would have won the seat if they had campaigned properly, although it would have been close and considering the anti-Tory sentiment nationally it leads to the question whether this is a “forever Conservative” Westminster seat under the current voting system. To mount a successful General Election campaign CSNI will need to deliver a leaflet to every house a minimum of every three months until 2029 and then be able to deliver the sustained volume of leaflets that a successful campaign like St Neots managed, where each household received 11 in the six week period.

Result:

The Conservatives held the seat with 32.6% of the vote, down 29.3% on 2019. Lib Dem vote share was up 1% to 11.6%.

 Conservative Patrick Spencer	Votes	15,144
	Share	32.6%
	Share change	-29.3
 Labour Kevin Craig	Votes	10,854
	Share	23.4%
	Share change	+1.6
 Reform UK Tony Gould	Votes	8,806
	Share	19.0%
	Share change	+19.0
 Green Dan Pratt	Votes	5,652
	Share	12.2%
	Share change	+6.6
 Liberal Democrat Brett Mickelburgh	Votes	5,407
	Share	11.6%
	Share change	+1.0
 Independent Charlie Caiger	Votes	366
	Share	0.8%
	Share change	+0.8
 Independent Mike Hallatt	Votes	194
	Share	0.4%
	Share change	+0.4

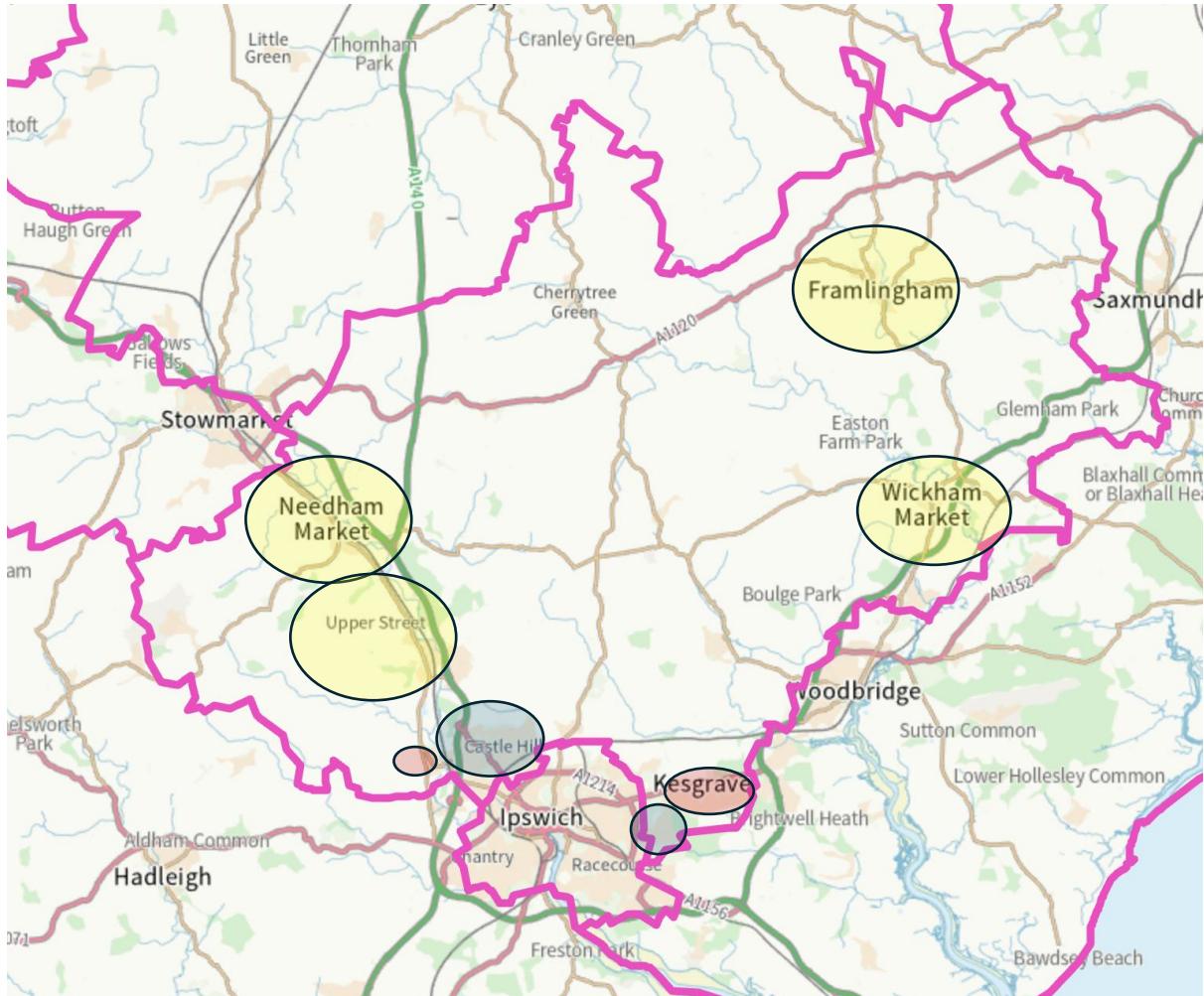
Central Suffolk and North Ipswich turnout

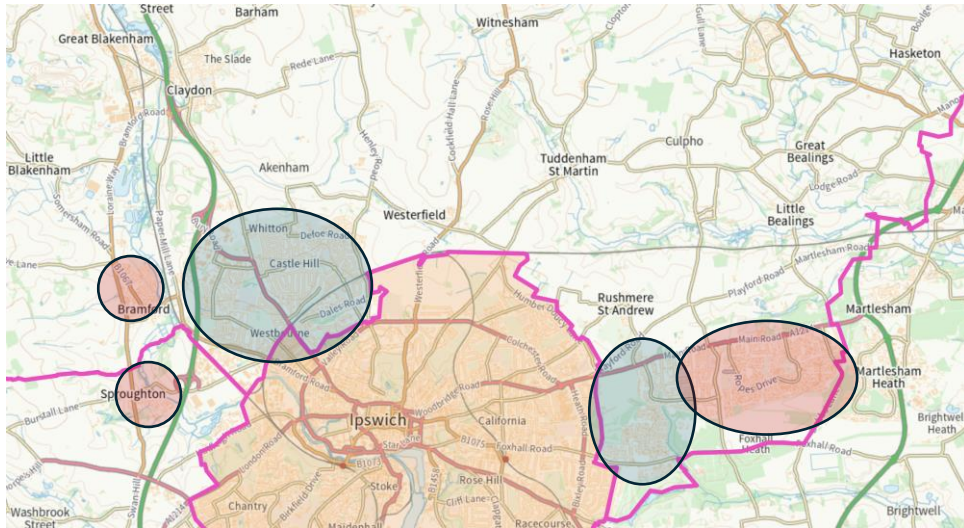
Registered voters:	71,975
Central Suffolk and North Ipswich turnout:	65%
Change since 2019:	-6.50%

Observations:

I consider that the constituency can be split into four areas:

1. Ipswich urban
2. Ipswich suburban
3. Market towns and fringes
4. Rural





Ipswich urban (while technically not the correct term) within the constituency is very Labour or Conservative. This is the area of Ipswich North and the Rushmere Heath and old area of the west of Kesgrave. There is an interesting question as to the value of activity in these areas if it is not consistent and persistent. It is said that nobody notices a leaflet until the fourth one has been put through a door, so without that level of activity how much impact can we make in areas that do not contain our traditional base? This area is an extension to Ipswich [Central] constituency, where James just held our deposit.

Ipswich suburban is Bramford, the newer area of Kesgrave, and very small parts of Ipswich North. These are areas that I think have potential – not tribally Labour or Conservative or where new housing might be bringing in a voter more open to our message.

Market towns and fringes feel like the areas with most potential for us – this is where our three district councillors reside. These areas have been Conservative in the past and have no real Labour leaning. The danger we face is that if we are too quiet they will continue to turn Green, especially with the victory in Waverley Valley.

Rural includes the small villages and settlements across the rest of the constituency. These are traditionally Conservative and from the box counts appear to remain firmly so. The local parties are not resourced well enough to cover these areas and I would suggest they are only worth engaging with where they make up part of a division or ward that we are targeting.

Finance summary:

Source	Money In
Mid Suffok LP	1180
East Suffolk LP	562.5
Ipswich LP	2250
Subtotal	3992.5
Donations	2700
Total income	6692.5

£6,692.50 of income was received for the campaign.

Description	Money out
Leaflets	4014.56
Ancillaries	112.55
Facebook ads	327.93
HQ social media	500
Posters	97.2
Total	5052.24

£5,052.24 was spent on the campaign which ignores the £500 electoral deposit as it was returned.

It is estimated that 96,100 leaflets were printed in total at a cost of 4p per leaflet (this includes delivery costs and the logistics costs of arranging the Royal Mail electoral address).

Local party	Donation	As a % of total	To return
Mid Suffok LP	1180	29.56	484.8
East Suffolk LP	562.5	14.09	231.09
Ipswich LP	2250	56.36	924.37
			1640.26
Total	3992.5		
Income - Expenditure	1640.26		

As less was spent than raised an amount will be returned to each local party in proportion with the amount contributed.

What next:

The acceptance speech by Patrick Spencer was depressing. To paraphrase “I am proud of the achievements of the Conservative Party over the last 14 years and you little people are lucky to have me as your MP”. There was disbelief and then heckling in the count hall at his words, while his was graceless in victory, with no time for any of the other candidates. It seems inappropriate to mention betting in this report all things considered, but if I were a betting man I would put my house on him being a terrible MP with no interest in his constituents and he will instead be spending his time flitting around his Tufton Street mates dreaming up inappropriate policies for the next Conservative manifesto. If my opinion is accurate and he ignores his constituents then it gives a very clear angle of attack that ties into the Liberal Democrats values over the next five years – “we work hard for you in district, we all expect more from our elected representatives”. We cannot sell ourselves purely as an anti-Tory party but we can be there to hold him to account for failure and if we do so well we give ourselves material for leaflets and press releases.

I think the strategy should be to include as part of our newsletters an article from our “Westminster spokesperson” who says “On behalf of everyone we are going to monitor your [MPs] performance and report back every year”. There are three criteria that spring to mind and I think he will fail on –

1. Are you holding regular advice surgeries where constituents can meet and get the help they need?
2. Are you engaging with the people of CSNI, the parish, town, district and county councils to ensure Suffolk’s voice is heard in Westminster?
3. Are you prioritising CSNI as an MP or are you taking other work/representing other interests?

It is my opinion that he will fail all three, so holding him to account for this gives a narrative we can use. We can also build some interaction with the voters by asking them to send us examples of him failing – or succeeding, in case he doesn’t. This could be through a web report form or an email address that people can write to. It also gives us material we can use – “we have heard from you that....”.

Thinking about the upcoming County Council elections it is very apparent that we need four leaflets in one month to make an impact, preferably six in 6 weeks. Can we do that in 1,2, 3 or more divisions across CSNI? I suspect we should attack the number of divisions where we can be certain of delivering that many leaflets and make that limit of our ambition – better to fight and win in two divisions than fight and lose in six (not that 2 or 6 are the right numbers, just examples). This does not prevent us standing in six but making no effort in some – that will depend on the ability to find people willing to stand.