

## With the Tories facing a possible rout in London what ...

Published: January 17, 2026, 12:52 am

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This comes from this morning's [CapX email](#). It's written by Oliver Wiseman, and is published by the [Centre for Policy Studies, a Thatcherite think tank](#):

*If the Conservatives learnt anything last year, it was that pitching yourselves as the party of Brexit and deriding 'citizens of nowhere' comes at a price: namely, that you cannot win over the Somewheres without alienating a lot of Anywheres.*

*Nowhere was that more obvious than in London, where the party's vote share fell by 1.8 percentage points even as its national support rose by 5.5 points.*

But, as he notes, things aren't going well for the Tories in the run up to the May elections. Basing his comments on polling by Lord Ashcroft he says:

*Last month, a YouGov poll put Conservative support in the capital at just 28 per cent and forecast the loss of control of three flagship boroughs in the upcoming council elections: Barnet, Wandsworth and Westminster. Wandsworth has been in Conservative hands since 1978; Westminster has been Conservative-controlled since it was created in 1965. If the results are in line with this poll, Labour's performance would be the strongest of any party in London since 1968.*

And adds:

*The most interesting part of Ashcroft's research isn't the headline numbers, but his categorisation of the capital's electoral battlegrounds. He sorts London's 630 wards into demographically similar areas that offer a revealing picture of the city's political tribes. There are emphatically Labour areas such as wards he describes as 'stuck in the capital', with high levels of deprivation and semi-skilled, unskilled and unemployed residents. Or the 'Barista belt', where the population is mostly young, single people in professional occupations, and people in social housing.*

*It is no shock that such areas — which contain 39 per cent of London's electors — are solidly Labour. What is surprising is the lack of a Conservative equivalent. Yes, there is the outer ring of suburban voters who are older, whiter and more likely to have voted*

*Leave than the average Londoner. But the capital is one of the most prosperous places on the planet. Labour's national leadership team oppose more or less every known ingredient of the city's success. And yet, even among the city's winners — the 'liberally affluent' and residents of 'village London', to use Ashcroft's language — the party of Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell has real appeal.*

Before concluding:

*More generally, if the only party with a credible claim to be trusted to promote and preserve prosperity cannot win support in the capital, then it is not winning that all-important economic argument. And that is a sure sign that something is wrong with the party's pitch to voters not just in London, but across the country.*

Four thoughts. First, it would seem that voters in London do not think that the Tories are making the credible claim that Oliver Wiseman thinks they offer.

Second, he's right to believe that where London leads much of England follows: I am not extrapolating further.

Third, with any remaining confidence knocked out of the Tories, and with the EU noting their failure to convince the country of the merit of their case for Brexit, what then for those negotiations that now dominate too much of our national life?

Fourth, none of this encourages Labour to be more specific as to an alternative, and I am not sure that helps the political life of the country.

What can be said with some confidence is that the turbulence is not over yet.