
Burnley and the BNP and the case for electoral reform

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The Electoral Reform Society

The Electoral Reform Society has been seeking to strengthen our democracy through improvements in our voting system for more than 100 years. The Society recommends the Single Transferable Vote (STV) as the voting system most likely to produce representative institutions, to enhance voter choice and to ensure the accountability of elected representatives to their electorates.

The Society has published this report as a contribution to the debate on the case for reforming the electoral system for local councils. The Society endorses the authors' recommendation of STV for local council elections, but **other views expressed in the report are those of the authors and should not be assumed to reflect the views of the Society.**

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Summary

1. Recent elections in Burnley have seen the British National Party gaining seats on the local council. Electoral success for a party whose policies and activities are, or are perceived to be, threatening ethnic minority communities is understandably a cause for concern. The Electoral Reform Society is of the view that all significant points of view, provided they are expressed in ways that do not violate the law, should be entitled to representation. However, the advance of the BNP in Burnley raised two questions which the Society wished to address:

- Does our present First Past the Post voting system make it more difficult for the BNP to win representation, as some maintain, or might it open the way to them winning control of a council in spite of minority support?
- How would an improved voting system have affected the outcomes of recent elections in Burnley and, in particular, would the use of a proportional voting system such as the Single Transferable Vote have helped the BNP to win seats and to win control of the council?

2. This report is largely based on a survey conducted by the Electoral Reform Society in three wards in Burnley. Over 2000 questionnaires were mailed to voters in June 2003. Nearly 600 were returned – a surprisingly high rate of response. Moreover, about a third of respondents, as well as replying to the questions posed, provided additional comments. It therefore appears that a high proportion of people in Burnley are interested in political issues, are concerned about the society in which they live and welcomed an opportunity to express their views.

3. Our survey sought the views of voters to gain some understanding of the background to the

BNP's success in Burnley. Responses to the questionnaire indicate that:

a) Voters of all parties in Burnley regard crime as the most important issue. Concern over crime is partly, but not wholly, related to race relations.

b) Of those who voted BNP in May 2003, 8 out of 9 gave 'immigration and asylum' as a reason for doing so. Immigration and asylum was also a major issue for those who supported other parties, particularly the Conservatives.

c) About 3 out of 4 voters believe that Burnley has changed for the worse in recent years, but 92.6% of BNP voters were of this view.

d) Most voters expressed the view that race relations in Burnley are good. However, while 69% of non-BNP voters felt that race relations were either 'good' or 'very good' and only 7% said that they are 'poor' or 'very poor' the corresponding figures for BNP voters were 34% and 27%. Asian voters were more likely to regard race relations as good than white voters.

e) Asian voters in the wards surveyed are much more likely to vote Liberal Democrat than for any other party.

f) Comments given by respondents indicate a significant amount of discontent at the performance of Burnley Council (although we are not in a position to judge whether that discontent is justifiable).

4. The survey also asked for respondents' voting histories and preferences:

a) It appears that between 2002 and (May) 2003 support for the BNP increased at the expense of Labour.

b) Only small numbers of supporters of parties other than the BNP gave the BNP as their second or third preference.

c) There is some evidence that many voters who consider themselves supporters of mainstream parties voted BNP in 2003 as a protest vote against Burnley Council.

5. About half of Labour and Liberal Democrat voters in 2003 had been contacted, either by telephone or on the doorstep, by the parties for whom they voted, but only a quarter of BNP voters had been contacted by the BNP.

6. Electoral system

The report examines how different electoral systems might have affected the outcome of recent elections Burnley. It concludes that:

a) First Past the Post:

If the BNP were to maintain its performance of May 2003 in the next two council elections (2004 and 2006) it would increase its seats to at least 18 (we argue that the October 2003 Lanehead by-election in which the BNP lost a seat should not be taken as an indication that support for the BNP is waning). FPTP would therefore allow the BNP to win a disproportionately high share of seats.

Moreover, in FPTP elections it is possible for BNP candidates to win in wards in which the majority of voters regard them as the least desirable candidates.

b) Alternative Vote:

If AV had been used in elections in 2003 (other than in the ward where there were two vacancies and AV could not therefore have been used), the BNP would not have won any seats. However, AV is not a proportional system and is not one that the Electoral Reform Society would recommend.

c) Single Transferable Vote:

If all Council seats had been contested in 2003 using STV (and using the existing 3-member

wards), it is likely that the BNP would have won 12 or 13 seats. However, unlike with FPTP, under STV the BNP would not make further gains in future elections unless there was an increase in its support. On its 2003 performance, the BNP's share of the seats would be capped at this level. This share of council seats would be less than the BNP's share of first preference votes.

7. It is argued that STV would be the best system to use in Burnley, not because of its effect on the number of seats the BNP might win, but because it is the system most likely to produce a council which is more representative of, and responsive to, the needs and concerns of people in Burnley. While we understand the desire to exclude the BNP from Burnley Council because of its objectionable views on race issues, we believe that these issues need to be tackled politically and democratically rather than by an attempt to manipulate the voting system.

8. Moreover, we believe that if STV had been used in past elections to Burnley Council, it is more likely that the Council have been responsive to local problems, that the tensions which have afflicted Burnley would have been better managed by the Council, and that the sense of dissatisfaction in the Council which allowed support for the BNP to grow would not have been as acute.

Introduction

In the last few years electoral support for the British National Party has grown dramatically. Until recently Britain had been spared the rise of the far right which has plagued many countries of western Europe with the intimidation of, and even violence against, ethnic minorities. Advances by the BNP in local elections, albeit only in particular areas of the country, have, however, raised fears that if the BNP were to become a significant force in British politics, race relations and rights of Britain's black and Asian population would be threatened.

The Electoral Reform Society believes that all significant and legitimate political opinions, no matter how distasteful to many people, have a right to political representation. Nevertheless, our concept of democracy is one in which all citizens have equal rights and are entitled to equal respect, and we could not therefore look with equanimity on the growth of a movement which is anti-democratic in that it seeks to deny the rights of minorities. It is our contention that the use of a more proportional voting system than 'first-past-the-post' (FPTP) could help overcome some of the divisions in our society. A voting system that allows all sections of society a voice in policy and decision-making is more likely to foster a political culture based on co-operation and mutual respect than one based on confrontation and in which the winner takes all.

Our primary interest is therefore in how electoral reform might help communities in which problems have led to a style of politics which scapegoats minorities and focuses on conflict between people of different ethnic groups, rather than to a style of politics based on the search for policies which benefit the whole community. Nevertheless, we recognise that changes in voting systems alone will not combat extremism.

Politicians and the media, as political opinion leaders, bear much of the responsibility for fomenting prejudice. Too often they have sought to make divisive approaches to social and economic problems acceptable, rather than promoting conciliation and co-operation. But we believe that an improved voting system which gives all citizens an equal voice and which increases the accountability of councillors to all of their electors could play a role in such a brand of politics. In particular, we believe that the Single Transferable Vote (STV) form of proportional representation, which enhances voter choice and can produce proportional outcomes – not just by party but by whatever other criteria significant numbers of electors use in casting their votes, such as ethnicity, gender and age – is the voting system most likely to achieve this change in political culture.

We recognise, however, that there is a fear that any form of proportional representation might make it easier for extremists to win seats on local councils, providing them with a better platform for spreading their views. A counter-argument is that a proportional system would make it more difficult for extremists to win power. An even stronger case for electoral reform is that it reduces the risk of extremism, which may often be a reaction to local councils perceived as unrepresentative and unresponsive, taking root.

To examine these arguments, we have taken Burnley, where the BNP reached a total of 8 councillors before losing one in a by-election in October 2003, as a case study. At the centre of this study was a survey of people's views and voting histories in three wards. The response to the questionnaire, which we sent to about 2000 voters, was remarkable: almost 600 forms were returned, and nearly a third of respondents went beyond the listed questions by giving additional

comments. We do not claim that this case study provides conclusive answers to why the BNP achieved such success in Burnley, but we believe the evidence we have collected merits careful study by politicians, both local and national, whether or not they share our views on the desirability of electoral reform.

Background

The rise of extremism in Britain

Political movements that espouse racism are not new in Britain although the focus of the far right has changed from predominantly anti-Semitic sentiments in the first half of the twentieth century to immigration from the new Commonwealth and in more recent years to the increasing numbers seeking asylum in Britain. The National Front was formed in 1967 from several smaller parties and aimed at becoming the third party in British politics. It failed to make any real electoral impact although it did fairly well in the 1976 and 1977 local elections and in the Greater London Council elections of May 1977. A splinter group, the National Party won two seats in Blackburn in 1976. In the 1979 general election the NF did not save any deposits from 303 candidates, although at that time the threshold was 12.5% and they did poll more than 5% (the current threshold) in some areas, principally East London. The only deposit the NF saved was in the 1973 West Bromwich by-election. Although its membership remained relatively small (about 12,000 in 1974), the NF's militant tactics and the violence that often accompanied its demonstrations had a serious effect on race relations. While the major political parties opposed its methods and ideology, all parties have been tarnished by incidents of racism within their own ranks, the most infamous being Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968. In 1978 Margaret Thatcher spoke about fears of being 'swamped' and the current Labour government has been just as guilty of using language unhelpful to those seeking racial harmony.

John Tyndall, a NF leader who left following its failure in the 1979 elections, formed the BNP. Most far right support has switched from the NF to the BNP, which presents itself as a respectable voice for anti-immigration views, while the NF remains associated with cruder, and often violent, expres-

sions of racism. Although the present BNP leader, Nick Griffin, dismisses the NF as 'pitiful' racial extremists¹, there is overlap in the support for the two organisations.

While many European countries, such as France, Germany and Austria, saw the far right become a real political threat throughout the 1980s, the BNP failed to make much political impact. Some argue that the BNP's political space was limited by the then Government's stance on asylum and immigration. In 1993 the BNP tasted success, winning its first council seat, in Tower Hamlets, by 7 votes – although the seat was subsequently lost. After this victory, the BNP collapsed into infighting for several years. In the 1997 general elections they stood in 57 constituencies, but only retained their deposits in two (Bethnal Green and Bow (7.5%) and Poplar and Canning Town (7.3%)). Since 1998, the BNP has reportedly doubled its membership to over 3,000², although this cannot be confirmed as Nick Griffin has stated that 'We never reveal the membership'³. The first national test of the BNP's electoral appeal came with the 1999 European elections – it received 102,644 votes (just over 1% of the total). In London's assembly elections in 2000 it won 45,337 votes (3.2%) but no seats. In the general elections in 2001 the BNP contested only 31 seats but in three it passed 10% of the vote – Oldham West and Royton (16.4%), Burnley (11.3%) and Oldham East and Saddleworth (11.2%)

In Burnley in 2002, as a result of local authority boundary changes, elections were held for all council seats. The BNP stood 13 candidates and won 3 of the 45 seats. In the elections of May 2003, the BNP increased their total by 5 (by taking 7 of the 16 seats that were up for election), giving them a total of 8 seats and making them the second largest group on Burnley Council.

1. BNP website
www.bnp.org.uk

2. Searchlight – anti-fascism
newspaper

3. Reader's Digest, 2002

Although the BNP has had problems with internal divisions – though not quite to the extent that the NF did – Nick Griffin, who overthrew Tyndall, has addressed many of its problems and shifted the party image away from the leather and swastikas school of British fascism. There is still a significant measure of Hitler worship within BNP ranks though, and divisions do remain. In October 2003 the BNP lost one of their Burnley seats in a by-election that followed the resignation of its councillor (Luke Smith) after his involvement in violence at the BNP's 'Red, White and Blue' festival that reportedly came about between different BNP factions. None-the-less, the BNP remains the third largest party on Burnley Council and there does not appear to have been any seismic shift in views since the May 2003 election.

Burnley: industrial decline and social degeneration

Why should the BNP have achieved such success in Burnley? Or, as some might ask, why was Burnley so vulnerable to the BNP's advances? It has been suggested to us that the BNP itself was surprised at the ease of its advance in Burnley: in the 2001 general election they targeted their resources on the two neighbouring Oldham seats (with campaign expenditures of £2,136 and ££1,181), but found that a lower intensity campaign in Burnley (where only £350, according to official returns, was spent) produced a roughly equivalent number votes.

Burnley has had a hard deal in recent decades. At one time it was the most important centre of the cotton industry in Britain, boasting over 100,000 looms. Then in 1865 came coal mining, boosting and maintaining the town's prosperity over many years. However, the decline of the cotton industry and the exhaustion of coal seams led to economic problems and social deprivation. In 1929 manufacturing industries in Burnley employed 45,200 people, but by 2000 this had dropped to only a quarter of that number. Although unemployment is relatively low, many of the jobs are in the low-paid, unskilled sectors. Around 40% of the homes in Burnley are dependent on state benefits, and in the central areas of Burnley 15% of properties are vacant.

Unlike many other manufacturing towns, Burnley never had a particularly large ethnic minority

population. The Asian community grew in the post-war years in response to labour shortages in the textile industry, but by 1991 they accounted for only 4.8% of Burnley's population, rising to 7.8% in 2001. This community, however, suffered disproportionately from Burnley's economic decline: about half of its Asian men are unemployed and most Asian families are clustered in poorer terraced-house areas of three inner-wards – Bankhall, Daneshouse with Stoneyholme and Queensgate. House prices in these areas have been falling, affecting Asian and white families alike.

Burnley's political history

Burnley, in common with many similar manufacturing towns, has been a very safe Labour area. In Westminster elections, Labour has often received more than 50% of the votes. In local elections, although there are some wards in which support for Labour has been weak, Labour has generally dominated the local council, often receiving about half of the votes and winning around three-quarters of the seats, often by very decisive margins. Where one party has such complete control of a council and opposition is ineffective, there is a risk that scrutiny of councillors' actions will be weak. In such circumstances it does not follow that councils will be inefficient or that councillors will act inappropriately, but the danger of malpractice increases. In Burnley it appears that this danger was realised.

In 1993 there were allegations that some Labour councillors had been improperly influencing decisions in housing allocations, putting pressure on housing officers to ensure that no people from ethnic minorities, problem families or others considered undesirable were housed in estates in their wards. When these problems were exposed, Labour acted decisively, withdrawing the whip from those considered the culprits. This move, however, was not welcomed by all of the Labour Group and the group leader, who had taken a principled stand, lost her position. Those who were expelled continued as Independents, and some fought and won future elections as such.

One councillor, Harry Brooks, who appeared to sympathise with those who were expelled, had resigned from the Labour group three years earli-

er in protest at what he saw as 'political correctness'. Brooks differed from others in that he was articulate and able to use the local press in publicising his views. He continued as an Independent councillor, retaining his seat in 1995 and 1999, until he stood down in 2001. Brooks claims that he is not racist, but argues that Burnley Council has favoured ethnic minorities in its allocation of resources to the detriment of Burnley's white population. This, he claims, has led to local people seeing a serious decline in the quality of their neighbourhoods with consequences for house prices, causing those who can to move but causing misery for those who cannot. This perception is now widespread in Burnley. The Council's response is that it allocates resources on the basis of need and those areas with high numbers of Asians tend to be the areas of greatest need. Moreover, it is argued that many grants available to the Council are only available for areas of special deprivation.

We are not in a position to judge the rival claims of Brooks and the Council, but it appears that his argument, and his success in promoting it, fuelled resentment towards the Asian minority and exacerbated racial tensions. In June 2001 there were serious disturbances in Burnley that were connected to these tensions, involving fights between white and Asian youths, racist attacks, street conflict between groups and the Police, destruction of property.

In response the Burnley Task Force was set up, a body chaired by Lord Clarke of Hampstead with representatives from community organisations and statutory groups (its composition has been criticised for having been biased towards the Council – both the Chief Executive and Council Leader were members). The Task Force did consult widely, using various methods of inquiry as they sought 'to provide the opportunity for every single person who lives in Burnley to be able to express their views on the issues affecting the town and the ways of tackling them'⁴. The process included sending out a survey to every household in Burnley that elicited over 4,500 returns (10%). At the end of 2001 the Task Force presented its report, making many recommendations for addressing problems in Burnley, for avoiding future violence and for reducing the

racial tensions that were so much in evidence at that time.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the BNP incited the violence in June 2001, they were able to take advantage of the situation. The full Council elections of May 2002 saw the election of 3 BNP councillors and the elections of May 2003 saw 7 elected, which took their total to 8 (one of the 7 was a re-election, and one of the seats won in 2002 was not contested⁵).

A recent by-election in Lanehead ward has reduced the contingent of BNP councillors to 7, and resulted in the Liberal Democrats replacing them as the second largest party on Burnley Council. However, it would be a mistake to assume this suggests that BNP support has passed its zenith because of the particular circumstances of the by-election: it arose from the resignation of a young BNP councillor who was involved in a violent incident with another BNP member. Moreover, as our survey demonstrates, over a year and a half on from the publication of the Task Force report there are still many in Burnley who feel that their Council has not addressed their concerns. Many continue to hold the Asian community and the Council's allegedly unfair allocation of resources responsible for their problems.

4. Task Force report p32

5. It has been suggested to us that this was because the BNP did not want to fight against the independent candidate in that ward, although it is not a matter which we have investigated. The winning BNP candidate in

2002 fought and won in another ward in 2003.

The ERS survey in Burnley

The survey

The Electoral Reform Society conducted a survey of people who had voted in the 2003 local elections in three wards:

- Bank Hall is the 181st most deprived ward in the UK with an Asian population of 14.8%. It has 3 Labour councillors, but the BNP was runner-up in both 2002 and 2003.
- Gannow was a new ward in 2002 when a BNP councillor was elected alongside two Labour councillors. Although the BNP councillor was in third place, the BNP won again when they had to contest the seat in 2003.
- Daneshouse with Stoneyholme is the 62nd most deprived ward in the UK and 75% of its population is Asian. It has two Liberal Democrat councillors and one Labour councillor.

In June 2003, questionnaires were sent by post to 2050 voters, together with a pre-paid return envelope, and 559 were returned. A copy of the questionnaire form is attached as Appendix 2. The number of responses received is in itself significant. For a survey of this kind we did not expect a response rate of more than 5%, but nearly 30% of the questionnaires were returned. Moreover, over one third of the respondents made comments of their own in addition to answering the questions asked. This level of response is very encouraging. It suggests that many people take a keen interest in local politics and are anxious to have their say in issues affecting their community. It suggests that people wanted to be consulted, possibly because they feel they have not been able to have their voices heard through more formal political processes.

Table 1 below analyses respondents by ethnic group and by the parties for which they voted in 2003.

Table 1: Respondents by ethnic group

Party voted for in 2003	All		White	Black	Asian	Other
BNP	139	24.9%	135	0	0	4
Conservative	62	11.1%	58	0	4	0
Labour	202	36.1%	178	3	18	3
Liberal Democrats	101	18.1%	66	0	31	4
Independent	35	6.3%	21	0	13	1
None/other	20	3.6%	15	0	3	2
Total	559	100.0%	473	3	69	14

Comparing the percentages of respondents supporting the different parties with actual votes in the three wards in 2003, it appears that respondents were broadly representative of voters in the ward.

Table 2: Respondents by party

	BNP	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Independent
2003 votes	21.1%	7.2%	29.5%	27.6%	13.0%
Respondents	24.9%	11.1%	36.1%	18.1%	6.3%

In Daneshouse with Stoneyholme ward, neither the BNP nor the Conservatives stood a candidate in 2003. As some respondents may have answered by giving their preferred party rather than their actual vote, the differences in the figures for the BNP and Conservatives can be partly explained.

That Labour supporters appear to be over-represented amongst respondents and Liberal Democrats under-represented surprised us. As electoral reform has been more of a Liberal Democrat than a Labour policy, we had feared that Liberal Democrats might have been over-represented. A possible explanation is that a high percentage of Liberal Democrat voters are Asians – they received nearly 4 times as many votes as Labour in Daneshouse with Stoneyholme which has a high Asian population, and amongst respondents, 31% of Liberal Democrats were Asian compared with only 9% of Labour supporters.

The high response from Labour voters might reflect the depth of the concern within Labour over the rise of the BNP, but it could also stem from a desire to express frustration over the performance of their party (as comments in Appendix 2 suggest).

What people think

A principal aim of our survey was to get information on how voters would rank parties so that we could examine what might have happened if an electoral system using transferable voting (AV

or STV) had been used. However, our preliminary research indicated that the recent success of the BNP in Burnley might have been partly a consequence of people feeling that Burnley Council had not adequately addressed their concerns

What do people see as the important issues?

In our survey we therefore tried to find out what people regarded as their key concerns and on what basis they decided to vote for one party rather than another. We asked people to select from a list of policy issues which two they regarded as the two most important. The table below shows the responses by parties.

Table 3: Voters' key policy issues by party

% party voters mentioning					
	BNP %	Conservative %	Labour %	Liberal Democrats %	Independent %
Education	21.6	27.4	28.2	36.6	40.0
Roads	12.9	1.6	5.4	3.0	0.0
Crime	79.1	74.2	71.3	70.3	68.6
Transport	7.2	6.1	7.9	3.0	2.9
Housing	20.1	16.1	19.3	27.7	31.4
Environment	34.5	45.2	31.2	29.7	20.0
Employment	25.9	16.1	28.2	21.8	31.4
Other	8.6	9.7	5.4	6.9	11.4

The concerns expressed by voters in our survey vary little according to which party the respondent voted for in 2003: this may suggest that voters looked for alternative approaches to issues rather than having different issues that they wanted to be addressed.

The most frequently mentioned issue was crime. Although a higher percentage of BNP supporters selected crime than was the case with other parties, the difference is only slight and for supporters of all parties crime appeared to be by far the most important issue. (It should be noted that some of the above inter-party differences may

arise from local circumstances – roads, for example, may be better in areas where the Conservatives are strong than in areas with large numbers of BNP supporters.)

In a related question, we asked what issues have affected people's decisions on whom to vote for in 2003.

Table 4: Issues affecting voters' choices in the 2003 elections

Issue	Number mentions	Analysis by votes in 2003 (number of mentions / % party voters mentioning)											
		BNP		Conservative		Labour		Liberal Democrats		Independent		None/ other	
Crime / Violence	320	88	63%	36	58%	115	57%	48	48%	24	69%	9	45%
Poor council service	238	74	53%	38	61%	52	26%	47	47%	20	57%	7	35%
Immigration & asylum	256	122	88%	32	52	54	27%	30	30%	10	29%	8	40%
Electoral campaign	40	10	7%	4	6%	14	7%	9	9%	3	9%	0	0%
Government Policies	186	51	37%	28	45%	51	25%	40	40%	13	37%	3	15%
Iraq war	98	10	7%	11	18%	27	13%	35	35%	12	34%	3	15%

The opinions here also demonstrate views on national politics. Once again views are broadly similar although the much higher mentions of immigration and asylum by BNP voters cannot be ignored.

A look at the further comments made by respondents develops the picture. Table 5 gives our analysis of comments by the issues which were raised most often.

It seems that all voters are concerned about a similar range of issues, even if they look at problems from different perspectives and with different views on how they should be solved. National concerns crop up here but, in general, comments concerned local issues. Many BNP voters appear to have responded to the BNP's scapegoating of Asians. Liberal Democrat voters contain a higher number of responses from Asian British voters,

Table 5: Analysis of comments by respondents

Issue	% of comments where topic is mentioned at least once by respondents				
	BNP	Labour	Independent	Liberal Democrats	Conservative
Asians /ethnic minorities	25	18	25	28	20
Crime / police	23	18	6	12	20
Asylum / immigration	22	4	0	16	10
Unfair distribution of community assistance	20	16	25	0	15
Labour – criticism	19	14	25	16	30
Council failure	14	9	19	24	20
Protest vote	9	4	13	0	0
Elderly	6	7	13	4	10
Labour/council not listening	5	2	19	0	10

Note: 'Labour' encompasses views of the party at national level. 'Council failure' is made up of comments on specific council actions or inaction and 'Labour / Council not listening' refers only to comments on the local council not listening – rather than resultant actions or inaction. 'Elderly' is largely made up of comments on the closure of local care-homes, an issue of particular local concern to elderly residents.

and comments regarding Asians / ethnic minorities include concern over personal treatment and fear. There is generally a high level of concern from all parties over the council's performance and of specific criticisms of Labour.

How has Burnley changed over recent years?

Table 6 – Perceptions of changes in Burnley by party supported

	Total	BNP	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Independent
Mostly got worse	75.3%	92.6%	75.0%	55.3%	74.0%	78.1%
No real change	9.2%	3.7%	13.3%	9.3%	12.0%	9.4%
Mostly improved	11.6%	2.2%	10.0%	17.7%	9.0%	9.4%
Don't know	3.9%	1.5%	1.7%	17.7%	5.0%	3.1%

Amongst respondents, 3 out of 4 believe Burnley has "got worse", in whatever way they have chosen to interpret the question. Among BNP voters, however, 92.6% of respondents felt Burnley had got worse. What we cannot tell from these figures, however, is whether these people have turned to

Table 7 – Perceptions of changes in Burnley by ethnicity⁶

	Total	White	Asian
Mostly got worse	75.3%	77.4%	65.2%
No real change	9.2%	7.2%	19.7%
Mostly improved	11.6%	12.1%	6.1%
Don't know	3.9%	3.3%	9.1%

the BNP because of their perception that Burnley has become a worse place to live, or whether it is a result of BNP propaganda. Although a higher percentage of white voters feel that Burnley has become a worse place to live, about 2 out of 3 Asian voters share this view (unfortunately we are not in a position to judge whether this is a reaction to the events of 2001 and the rise of the BNP).

How do people in Burnley view race relations?

We asked people, in simple terms, for their views on race relations in Burnley. Most people felt race relations were good, as shown in tables 8 and 9 below. The next most popular response was, however, 'Don't mix', in-keeping with the view that Burnley is divided into separated – some say ghettoised – communities.

Table 8: Views of race relations by party supported

Party	Very Good		Good		Don't mix		Poor		Very poor	
BNP	14	10%	34	24%	52	37%	19	14%	18	13%
Labour	30	15%	102	50%	50	25%	14	7%	5	2%
Independent	8	23%	18	51%	7	20%	1	3%	1	3%
Conservative	7	11%	26	42%	23	37%	2	3%	1	2%
Liberal Democrats	25	25%	53	52%	15	15%	4	4%	0	0%
Total	84		233		147		38		25	
BNP	14	10%	34	24%	52	37%	19	14%	18	13%
Other parties	70	18%	199	51%	95	24%	19	5%	7	2%

6. Non-white, non-Asian voters represent too small a number in the survey to afford statistically significant analysis and are therefore not included in this table.

Table 9: Views of race relations by ethnicity⁷

Ethnic group	Very Good		Good		Don't mix		Poor		Very poor	
White	61	13%	204	44%	138	30%	33	7%	26	6%
Asian	19	28%	32	46%	8	12%	10	14%	0	0%
Total	80	15%	236	44%	146	27%	43	8%	26	5%

Do people feel they are represented?

We asked people how they felt their parties were represented on the local council. Here we found broad satisfaction amongst Labour and Liberal Democrat voters, but a large amount of dissatisfaction amongst those who voted BNP, Conservative or Independent.

Table 10: Whether voters feel their parties are represented

	Well represented	Fairly represented	Represented	Not represented
BNP	8%	30%	35%	27%
Conservative	4%	27%	40%	29%
Independent	7%	32%	29%	32%
Labour	42%	25%	32%	2%
Liberal Democrat	20%	43%	28%	9%

How party support converts into council seats does of course depend on the electoral system. We therefore asked how people regarded the current electoral system. Only amongst BNP voters was there a majority considering

Table 11: Whether voters believe the electoral system is democratic

	Democratic	Undemocratic
BNP	48%	52%
Conservative	74%	26%
Independent	67%	33%
Labour	82%	18%
Liberal Democrat	62%	38%

7. As in previous tables, non-white, non-Asian voters represent too small a number in the survey to afford statistically significant analysis and are therefore not included in this table.

the electoral system undemocratic. Supporters of Labour; however, which has been advantaged by the present voting system, were much more likely than others to regard the system as democratic.

Voting patterns and preferences

Votes in 2002 and 2003

Although our survey cannot be taken as a full measure of the strength of support for parties as we only have the views of those who chose to respond, our results do show a considerable movement in votes from Labour and towards the BNP from 2002 to 2003.

Table 12: Changes in party support, 2002 to 2003, summary

	2003	2002	2003 as percentage of 2002
BNP	139	109	127.5%
Conservative	62	55	112.7%
Labour	202	264	76.5%
Liberal Democrats	101	71	142.3%
Independent	39	32	121.9%
Other / None	15	27	55.6%

This picture was confirmed when we analysed BNP voters in 2003 by the party for whom they had traditionally voted. Numerically the biggest movement in votes was from Labour to BNP, although when the share of the vote in the sample is considered, a higher proportion of Conservative voters appear to have switched to the BNP.

Table 13: Traditional party of 2003 BNP voters

'Traditional party' of 2003 BNP voters	No.	%age
BNP	50	37.6%
Conservative	22	16.5%
Independent	5	3.8%
Labour	51	38.3%
Liberal Democrat	5	3.8%

Table 14 analyses these shifts in votes in more detail:

Table 14: Changes in party supported, 2002 to 2003, detail

2003	Party voted for in 2002					
	BNP	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Independent	Other/None
BNP (139)	97	8	20	2	4	8
Conservative (62)	2	40	12	1	4	3
Labour (202)	2	1	181	9	5	4
Liberal Democrats (101)	4	3	34	53	4	3
Independent (39)	4	1	12	6	15	1
Other / None (15)	0	2	5	0	0	8
Total (559)	109	55	264	71	32	27

Most of the BNP's gains came from Labour, although in percentage terms, a higher proportion of Conservative voters switched to BNP.

Labour lost more votes to the Liberal Democrats than to the BNP (34, but a net loss of 25), but changes involving the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats should be treated with care; the Conservatives contested Bank ward in 2003 but not in 2002, while the Liberal Democrats contested neither Gannow in 2002 nor BankHall in 2003. Although there was a large swing from Liberal Democrat to Labour in Daneshouse with Stoneyholme in 2003, it is likely that this was a consequence, at least in part, of Labour fielding a non-Asian candidate in a predominantly Asian ward (moreover, the spread of votes in 2002 suggests that in this ward many voters might select candidates on grounds other than party affiliation).

Voting preferences

In our survey we asked people to rank the parties (including 'independents' as a category) in order of preference. The results are shown in the table on the following page.

Table 15: Ranking of parties by respondents

First prefer	2nd preferences	3rd preferences					
BNP		BNP	Con	Ind	Lab	LD	None
	BNP	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Con	20.5%	–	8.4%	3.6%	3.6%	4.8%
	Ind	37.3%	–	4.8%	6.0%	26.5%	0.0%
	Lab	26.5%	–	2.4%	–	10.8%	1.2%
	LD	10.8%	–	–	8.4%	2.4%	0.0%
None	4.8%	–	–	–	–	–	–
Conservative		BNP	Con	Ind	Lab	LD	None
	BNP	12.7%	–	5.6%	1.4%	5.6%	0.0%
	Cons	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Ind	30.4%	2.3%	–	3.5%	21.0%	3.5%
	Lab	16.5%	1.3%	–	–	10.1%	1.3%
	LD	39.2%	1.2%	–	26.2%	8.3%	3.6%
None	1.3%	–	–	–	–	–	–
Independent		BNP	Con	Ind	Lab	LD	None
	BNP	16.0%	–	8.0%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Cons	28.0%	4.0%	–	0.0%	24.0%	0.0%
	Ind	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Lab	28.0%	0.0%	9.3%	–	18.7%	0.0%
	LD	28.0%	4.0%	12.0%	–	–	0.0%
None	0.0%	–	–	–	–	–	–
Labour		BNP	Con	Ind	Lab	LD	None
	BNP	7.9%	–	2.3%	–	3.3%	0.9%
	Cons	16.3%	1.9%	2.3%	–	10.7%	1.4%
	Ind	13.0%	0.9%	–	–	10.7%	0.9%
	Lab	–	–	–	–	–	–
	LD	58.1%	3.3%	23.3%	–	–	2.3%
None	4.7%	–	–	–	–	–	–
Liberal Democrat		BNP	Con	Ind	Lab	LD	None
	BNP	2.8%	–	0.0%	2.8%	–	0.0%
	Cons	26.4%	1.4%	13.9%	11.1%	–	0.0%
	Ind	34.7%	1.4%	–	15.3%	–	2.8%
	Lab	31.9%	0.0%	11.1%	–	–	1.4%
	LD	–	–	–	–	–	–
None	4.2%	–	–	–	–	–	–

Although we asked for lists of preferences in order to look at how different voting systems might have affected the results, the preferences in themselves give useful indication of how voters view the parties.

BNP

More BNP supporters chose independents as their 'party' of second choice than chose any of the mainstream parties. Although only 6% of respondents had voted Independent, 37.3% of those giving BNP as their first preference gave 'Independent' as their second.

About 1 in 4 giving BNP as a first preference put Labour second. This could suggest that a many BNP supporters are former Labour supporters who feel that Labour in Burnley has failed to deliver for them. About 1 in 5 gave the Conservatives as their second choice.

The nature of the BNP vote is discussed below.

Conservative

Most Conservative supporters give the Liberal Democrats and Independents as their second choice, which is as might be expected. Only about 1 in 8 offer support for the BNP.

Independent

Although Independent was the top second choice for BNP voters, this support was not reciprocated by respondents favouring Independents. However, this is an area in which our survey results might not be applicable Burnley-wide because one of the sampled wards (Daneshouse with Stoneyholme) had an Asian independent candidate in 2003. It has been suggested to us that much support for Independents in Burnley generally came from voters with views similar to the BNP, but that is unlikely to have been the case in this particular ward. Our findings on support for Independents should therefore be treated with care.

Labour

Well over half of Labour supporters give the Liberal Democrats as their second choice, but many more would support the Conservatives or Independents over the BNP. Less than 1 in 12 give the BNP as their second preference.

Liberal Democrats

Very few Liberal Democrats would support the BNP (only 2.8%). Second preference votes are split between Independents (34.7%), Labour (31.9%) and the Conservatives (26.4%).

The nature of the BNP vote

From the comments offered by some who voted BNP, from the high number of BNP supporters who gave 'asylum and immigration' as a reason for their choice of party, and from their views on race relations in Burnley, it appears that many BNP voters are simply racist. How many of this category have always been, and will always be, racist, and how many are racist as a result of the BNP's scapegoating of immigrants as the prime source of Burnley's problems, is not something we can tell from this survey.

However, it appears that there are others who voted BNP in protest against what they see as the deficiencies of Burnley Council. A typical comment by people in this category is:

'My vote is purely a protest vote until someone stands up and listens to people properly'

In our analysis of voters' preferences, we were surprised to find over a quarter of people who had voted BNP giving parties other than the BNP, and particularly Labour, as their first preference. This may give some measure of the proportion of those who voted BNP who regard themselves as Labour supporters, but felt that circumstances in Burnley demanded a protest vote.

That some voted BNP but gave the Conservatives or Liberal Democrats as their first preference might be a result of these parties not standing candidates in some of the wards sampled.

We therefore recommend that any future analysis of BNP voters should try to differentiate between:

- Core BNP supporters who will always vote BNP when they have the opportunity to do so;
- Weak BNP supporters whose concern over issues related to race is a result of BNP propaganda (and who might therefore be susceptible to counter-arguments);

- Others who have voted BNP as a result of their dissatisfaction with the local or national performance of the mainstream parties.

Contact by the parties in election campaigns

How people vote in an election can be influenced by party campaigns. We therefore asked people whether they had been contacted, either by telephone or on the doorstep, by any of the parties. 41% of respondents had not been contacted in this way by any party and only 25% had been contacted by more than one. Although, following the 2002 elections, it was clear that Burnley was an area in which the BNP would be a threat, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats combined managed to contact only 55% of those who responded to our survey.

The percentages of respondents (by subsequent vote) contacted (by telephone or on the doorstep) by the parties were:

Table 16: Respondents contacted by the parties

BNP	12.3%
Conservative	11.6%
Independent	9.5%
Labour	45.4%
Liberal Democrats	18.6%

From our survey we are unable to gauge the effectiveness of contacts, but the table below shows that while about half of Labour and Liberal Democrat voters were contacted by the party for which they voted, only a quarter of BNP voters were contacted by telephone or on the doorstep by the BNP. This suggests that, at least in the wards surveyed, the BNP vote was not a result of an intensive BNP election campaign.

A number of media reports, both during the election campaign and immediately afterwards, suggested that some people had voted BNP because they had been contacted by BNP candidates or supporters who appeared to take a keen interest in their affairs and promised to raise issues on

Table 17: Voters contacted by the party they supported

Party	No. voters	Of which contacted by party supported	% of party's voters contacted by that party
BNP	139	34	24.5%
Conservative	62	7	11.3%
Labour	202	106	52.5%
Liberal Democrats	101	50	49.5%

their behalf if elected. Moreover, they had not had similar contact with representatives of other parties. While we cannot be certain that support for the BNP was not swelled in other wards by an intensive BNP campaign, our results indicate that this was not a factor contributing to the BNP vote in the wards surveyed.

The case for electoral reform in Burnley

Did the 2002 and 2003 election results reflect the views of voters?

Local elections in Burnley as elsewhere in England, are at present conducted using the 'first-past-the-post' system (FPTP). Generally in Burnley local elections are 'by thirds', i.e. in every 3 years out of 4, one third of the council seats are elected (in the fourth year county council elections are held). In 2002, as a result of boundary changes, elections were held for all council seats, with voters in, for example, a three-member ward being able to cast three 'X' votes and the three candidates with the highest totals being elected.

FPTP is, however, notorious for being capable of producing quite unrepresentative results (analysis of FPTP in local elections throughout England can be found on the Electoral Reform Society's website, www.electoral-reform.org.uk). Here our concern is whether the seats won by the BNP were a fair reflection of the views of Burnley's voters, and whether a fairer outcome might have been expected if a better voting system had been used.

It is our view that in choosing an electoral system we should seek to be fair to all parties, whatever we might think of their policies. We should not choose a system with the intention of denying representation to a significant number of voters. If there is a party whose views we dislike, we should seek to defeat that party politically by convincing the electorate of the dangers of their election rather than by trying to cover up a political problem through manipulation of the voting system. Even with a party whose views are as abhorrent as those of the BNP, it can be argued that it is better that they are given the representation to which they are entitled so that their arguments can be confronted in open debate. What we wish to examine is whether the BNP in Burnley won greater representation on the

Council than might be considered their entitlement given opinions in Burnley.

In modelling what might have happened if different voting systems had been used, some caution is needed. We cannot assume in a FPTP election that votes reflect voters' preferences because some will vote tactically, casting their votes for candidates considered to have the best chance of defeating those they do not want to see elected, rather than for their favourite candidates. Moreover, a different voting system might have produced a different range of candidates: there is some evidence that in some Burnley wards some parties, believing they did not have sufficient support to win seats did not stand candidates for fear of splitting the anti-BNP vote. Nevertheless, we believe that the analysis that follows demonstrates that a different electoral system would have produced a different and fairer outcome.

Problems with First Past the Post

The problems with FPTP have been well documented (see, for example, the Electoral Reform Society website, www.electoral-reform.org.uk). They include:

- **Outcomes which do not reflect the diversity of views of the voters:** often the winning party can obtain an exaggerated majority (as happened in the 1997 and 2001 general elections where Labour won over 60% of the seats with just over 40% of the votes) but can on occasions deliver power to a party other than the party with most votes (as happened in the 1951 and 1974 general elections and frequently occurs in local council elections)
- **The most unpopular candidate winning:** for example, a candidate might have the support of only 30% of the voters and be strongly opposed

by the remaining 70%, but if the 70% were split between, say, three other candidates, it is possible that the candidate opposed by most would win (we will argue that to a large extent this is what happened in Burnley in 2003)

- **The need for tactical voting** where voters feel that their preferred candidate has little chance of winning and a vote for him or her would therefore be 'wasted'

It has been argued that FPTP makes it more difficult for extremist candidates to win seats. The evidence from Burnley shows that this is not necessarily the case. Nevertheless, some might claim that FPTP at least has kept the advance of the BNP in check, but we will demonstrate that this too is a fallacy.

In the 12 single-seat contests that the BNP fought in 2003, the BNP won 6 with only 36.5% of the vote in these seats. In none did the BNP candidate win more than 50% of the vote – the winning totals for BNP candidates ranged from 38.8% to 44.1%. (In these figures we have left out Whittlefield with Ightenhill ward where two councillors were elected, requiring separate analysis.)

If future elections (2004 and 2006) follow the pattern of 2003, the BNP will continue to win seats in wards where it won in 2003 until it holds all 3 seats in these wards.

The BNP would therefore have 18 seats in 2006 on its 2003 performance, even if it did not win further seats in wards such as Whittlefield and Ightenhill where it won a seat in a two-seat contest in 2003 and Rosegrove and Lowerhouse where it won a seat in 2002. (Although the BNP was resoundingly defeated in Lanehead in a by-election in 2003, the evidence of this report and the particular circumstances of that by-election do not necessarily make it a good indicator of what might happen in future elections).

Full Council elections:

Although Burnley Council is generally elected 'in thirds', we have also considered what might happen if Burnley were to change to full elections every fourth year (as is the practice in many parts of England).

If the May 2003 elections had been held for all seats in each ward considered and parties had fielded the same number of candidates as seats, then in a three-member ward, for example, it is likely that most Labour voters would have given their three votes to the three Labour candidates, most BNP voters would have given their three votes to the three BNP candidates, etc. As a result, in the wards won by the BNP in 2003, each BNP candidate may well have received more votes than any of the candidates of other parties and the BNP would have won all seats in these wards. Thus in the 6 wards which the BNP fought for a single seat, rather than winning 6 seats the BNP could have won 18.

In real elections, of course, not all voters use all of their votes and some might split their votes between candidates of different parties – as happened in Whittlefield with Ightenhill in 2003 and in several wards in 2002. As a result, where the BNP was only slightly ahead of its nearest rival (e.g. Brunshaw where the majority was only 3 votes) it is possible that the BNP would not have won all 3 seats in a full election. In wards such as Cliviger with Worsthorpe the lead of the BNP candidate was such that, even allowing for some cross-party voting, the BNP would have had a very good chance of winning all three seats.

The Alternative Vote

The Alternative Vote (AV) can be used in elections for a single seat, which is the case in most local elections in Burnley. With AV, rather than voting with a single 'X', voters list the candidates in order of preference. If no candidate has more than 50% of the votes, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated and his or her votes transferred to the next preferences on their voters' ballot papers. If there is still no candidate with more than 50% of the votes, the candidate who then has fewest votes is eliminated and their votes are transferred to the next listed preferences. The process continues until a candidate has more than 50% of the votes.⁸

An advantage of AV is that it reduces the need for most tactical voting. For example, a ward where Labour is considered stronger than the Liberal Democrats, a Liberal Democrat voter whose second preference is Labour can safely

8. Disregarding votes for eliminated candidates that cannot be transferred because voters have not listed any further preferences.

vote 'Liberal Democrat 1; Labour 2' knowing that the vote will not be wasted: if Liberal Democrat support is indeed weak, when the Liberal Democrat candidate is eliminated the vote will be transferred to the Labour candidate. If Labour and Liberal Democrat voters were to have the defeat of the BNP as a prime objective, AV would prevent their combined anti-BNP vote being split.

A consequence of AV is therefore that all parties can stand candidates, irrespective of their chances of success, without fear of denying votes to the candidate most likely to defeat the BNP.

We have analysed the 6 wards in which the BNP fought for a single seat in 2003 (leaving out Whittlefield where there were two vacancies and where AV could not therefore have been used) to see what might have happened if AV rather than FPTP had been used. We have assumed that FPTP votes reflect first preferences⁹ and used the preferences expressed by respondents to our survey, summarised in table 15¹⁰ in making transfers from candidates who would have been eliminated using AV.

Below is a 'results sheet' for Cliviger with Worsthorne ward:

Table 18: Cliviger and Worsthorne: possible result under AV

Candidates	Party	1st stage (2003 votes)	Eliminate Bennett	2nd stage	Eliminate Robinson	3rd stage	Eliminate Walsh	4th stage	
C Bennett	Lib Dem	128	-128	0	0	0	0	0	
K Robinson	Ind.	465	44	509	-509	0	0	0	
B Turner	BNP	795	6	801	95	896	146	1042	
T Walker	Con	551	34	585	206	791	478	1269	Elected
P Walsh	Lab	483	41	524	206	730	-730	0	
Total		2422							

As no candidate received more than half of the votes, the candidate with the lowest vote (Bennett) is eliminated. These votes are then transferred to other candidates using the preferences expressed by Liberal Democrat supporters in table 15. At the second stage there is still

9. This assumption may not be totally accurate as some votes under FPTP might have been cast tactically. However, the pattern of voters' preferences suggests that the figures of table 15 would have been even less favourable to the

BNP if there had not been tactical voting.

10. Table 15 shows only 1st, 2nd and 3rd preferences. In some cases we have also needed to compute 4th preferences.

nobody with 50% of the votes, so Robinson is excluded. Robinson's votes are then similarly transferred.¹¹ The Labour candidate, Walsh, is now excluded and the transferred votes enable the Conservative candidate, Walker, to overtake Turner of the BNP.

The following page (table 19) shows result sheets for the other five wards where the BNP won in 2003 in single-seat contests.

In summary, whereas the BNP won these 6 seats under FPTP, it is likely that they would not have won any of them under AV.

Table 20: Summary of possible outcomes under AV

	May 2003 winner	Likely winner under AV
Briercliffe	BNP	Liberal Democrat
Brunshaw	BNP	Labour
Cliviger with Worsthorpe	BNP	Conservative
Gannow	BNP	Labour
Hapton with Park	BNP	Labour
Lanehead	BNP	Labour

11. In this case, as 465 votes using the 'Independent' supporters' second preferences of table 15, and 44 using the third preferences of those giving a first preference to the Liberal Democrats and second to

Independent candidates.

Table 19: Possible outcomes under AV in other wards won by the BNP in May 2003

Briercliffe							
Candidates	Party	1st stage (2003 votes)	Eliminate Healey	2nd stage			
A Healey	Labour	250	-250	0			
P Rennie	Liberal Dem	862	199	1061			Elected
P Thomson	BNP	877	27	904			
Total		1989					
Brunshaw							
Candidates	Party	1st stage (2003 votes)	Eliminate Tahir	2nd stage	Eliminate Walker	3rd stage	
D Halsall	Labour	712	98	810	265	1075	Elected
M Stowe	BNP	715	49	764	69	833	
C Tahir	Independent	245	-245	0			
A Walker	Conservative	259	98	357	-357		
Total	1931						
Gannow							
Candidates	Party	1st stage (2003 votes)	Eliminate Pickup	2nd stage	Eliminate McCann	3rd stage	
C Hughes	BNP	687	31	718	38	756	
M McCann	Lib Dem	274	126	400	-400	0	
J Pickup	Conservative	209	-209	0			
P Tierney	Labour	611	42	653	292	945	Elected
Total	1781						
Hapton with Park							
Candidates	Party	1st stage (2003 votes)	Eliminate Marsden	2nd stage	Eliminate Stinton	3rd stage	
A Marsden	Conservative	132	-132	0			
L Starr	BNP	661	18	679	110	789	
P Stinton	Independent	319	75	394	-394	0	
A Tatchell	Labour	584	33	617	205	822	Elected
Total	2422						
Lanehead							
Candidates	Party	1st stage (2003 votes)	Eliminate Doyle	2nd stage	Eliminate M Smith	3rd stage	
B Cooper	Labour	623	87	710	361	1071	Elected
A Doyle	Independent	311	-311	0			
L Smith	BNP	668	62	730	53	783	
M Smith	Lib Dem	365	162	527	-527	0	
Total	1967						

The Single Transferable Vote

AV is not a proportional system and therefore does not overcome FPTP's tendency to produce unrepresentative results. It is not therefore a system that the Electoral Reform Society would recommend for local elections.

The Society's preferred system of proportional representation (PR) is the Single Transferable Vote (STV). STV uses multi-member wards (all proportional systems require a number of candidates to be elected in each electoral area). As with AV, voters rank the candidates in order of preference, but as well as transferring votes from candidates who are eliminated through having insufficient support, votes are also transferred from candidates who have more support than they need to secure election. A result is that most votes count towards the election of a councillor and most voters will find that there is a councillor they have helped to elect.

The Electoral Reform Society's website, www.electoral-reform.org.uk gives more details on how STV operates and why it is considered a superior system to other forms of proportional representation. It is used for local government in Northern Ireland; a bill for its use in local elections in Scotland was published by the Scottish Executive in November 2003; and it was the system recommended for local government in Wales by the Sunderland Commission which was established by the Welsh Assembly.

Modelling how elections in Burnley might have turned out under STV is more difficult, but our analysis nevertheless indicates that the BNP did much better under FPTP than they might have done under proportional representation.

In modelling STV elections using the 2003 results, we have assumed that the parties that stood single candidates would have more than one candidate if they felt they had a chance of winning more than one of the seats. We have also left out of our analysis the parties which did not contest in 2003: although it is likely that most parties would have fought in all wards in STV elections, our assumption is effectively that the actual results show the picture after the transfer of votes from the weaker parties (for

Note on calculating shares of votes

Cliviger with Worsthorne, 2002

Candidate	Party	Vote	'share of vote'
Heginbotham	Con	1032	30.0
Edwards	BNP	898	26.1
Robinson	Ind	817	23.7
Walker	Con	801	
Stewart	Con	711	
Burns	Lab	694	20.2
Walsh P	Lab	693	
Walsh M	Lab	678	
Musker	Ind	666	

In considering what effect STV might have had, we have used the 2003 election results. Although elections were held for all seats in all wards in 2002, as would have been the case in a STV election, because of the BNP's tactic of only standing one candidate in each ward, it is not possible from the results to measure what the true strength of the BNP's support was at that time. Take, for example, the results in Cliviger with Worsthorne ward:

The fourth column of the table above shows the 'share of the vote' following the usual practice in a multi-member election of making the calculation using just the leading candidate of each party. This, however, may considerably overstate BNP support.

The BNP only stood one candidate in each ward, presumably because they felt their best chance of success was through receiving votes from supporters of other parties rather than relying on the votes of people who were primarily BNP supporters. Their hope, it appears, was that, say, Labour voters would decide to use one of their three votes to express their dissatisfaction with the Labour council and that by offering only one candidate, that candidate would benefit from all of these protest votes. If the election had been run under STV, it does not therefore follow that 26.1% of voters would have given their first preference to a BNP candidate - some

of those who gave a vote to the BNP might have voted:

1 Labour; 2 Labour; 3 BNP

or some similar list of preferences involving other parties. In 2003, however, electors only had one vote, giving us a more accurate measure of BNP support.

example, if there were no Conservative candidate in a ward, we assume that the votes show the position after Conservative supporters had given their votes to their highest preference participating in the election).

All wards in Burnley have 3 seats, and we have therefore modelled STV in the existing 3-member wards.

The first step in a STV election is the calculation of the 'quota' – the number of votes a candidate must reach to ensure election. The quota is calculated as:

$$\text{total votes} / (\text{number of seats} + 1)$$

In a 3-member ward, the quota is therefore 25% (i.e. $100/(3+1)$). The reason for this quota is that if 3 candidates were to reach 25%, no other candidate could get more than 25%.

Table 21 below shows the BNP vote in each of the 6 single-seat elections that the BNP contested in 2003.

Table 21: Possible quotas won by BNP under STV

Ward	BNP vote	Winning party	Total vote	Quota	BNP quotas
Bank Hall	505	Lab	1505	377	1.34
Briercliffe	877	BNP	1989	498	1.76
Brunshaw	715	BNP	1931	483	1.48
Cliviger	795	BNP	2422	606	1.31
Coalclough	532	LD	1557	390	1.36
Gannow	687	BNP	1781	446	1.54
Gawthorpe	712	Lab	1773	444	1.60
Hapton	661	BNP	1564	391	1.69
Lanehead	668	BNP	1967	492	1.36
Queensgate	612	Lab	1855	463	1.32
Rosehill	634	Lab	1853	464	1.37
Trinity	491	Lab	1437	360	1.36

In each ward it appears that the BNP would have received more than a quota on first preference votes alone – therefore it probably would have won at least one seat in each of these 12 wards.

We now need to consider whether the BNP might have received more than one seat in any ward. Our analysis suggests that it would not. As table 15 shows, only small percentages of those who support parties other than the BNP give the BNP as a second or subsequent preference. In the transfer of votes, other parties would therefore fare much better than the BNP.

Below we consider Briercliffe and Hapton with Park, the two wards where it appears that the BNP would have come closest to reaching a second quota.

Table 22: Possible outcome in Briercliffe if STV had been used

	Votes (2003)	Share votes	Quota	Full quotas	Part quotas	Transfer Lab votes	After transfer	Total quotas
BNP	877	44.1%	25%	25.0%	19.1%	1.4%	20.4%	1
Labour	250	12.6%	25%	0.0%	12.6%	-12.6%	0.0%	0
Liberal Democrats	862	43.3%	25%	25.0%	18.3%	10.0%	28.3%	2
Total	1989	100.0%						
Quota	498	25.0%						

Although STV is a voting system in which candidates rather than parties compete, we have assumed that voters would vote according to candidates' party affiliations and that voters would rank the candidates of their preferred party above the candidates of other parties. The above sheet therefore only considers the parties represented in the 2003 election in the ward. In a real election, of course, this would not be strictly true as many would take account of the qualities of the candidates. However, while some might vote, say, BNP-Labour-BNP, others might vote Labour-BNP-Labour; thereby reducing the net effect of cross-party transfers. Our assumption should therefore give a reasonable approximation of how STV might have affected the results.

The BNP and the Liberal Democrats would each have had more than the quota on first preference votes (or on votes transferred between candi-

dates of the same party). Each would have won a seat on the basis of these votes. Column 6 shows what remains of the BNP and Liberal Democrat votes after the election of the first two candidates. Both still have more votes than Labour, and Labour would therefore be eliminated. (If there were more than one Labour candidate, the Labour candidates with the lowest number of votes would in turn be eliminated and, it is assumed, the great majority of these votes would transfer to other Labour candidates until only one Labour candidate remains – that candidate would then be eliminated and votes transferred to candidates of other parties.)

Column 7 shows the transfer of Labour votes. Here the figures have been calculated using the preferences shown in table 15 (table 15 shows that some Labour voters would give, say, the Conservatives as their second preference – we have assumed that those votes would be transferred to the first listed preference for either the BNP or the Liberal Democrats.)

As table 15 shows, relatively few Labour supporters would rank the BNP above the Liberal Democrats. In this example the Liberal Democrats consequently gain most of the votes of the eliminated Labour candidate(s), giving the Liberal Democrats enough votes for a second quota.

This model therefore predicts that in Briercliffe the Liberal Democrats would have won 2 seats and the BNP one.

As a second example, the sheet below shows that STV in Hapton with Park ward would probably have resulted in the BNP, an Independent and Labour each winning a seat.

Table 23: Possible outcome in Hapton with Park if STV had been used

	Votes (2003)	Share votes	Quota	Full quotas	Part quotas	Transfer Lab votes	After transfer	Total quotas
BNP	661	42.3%	25%	25.0%	17.3%	1.8%	19.1%	1
Independent	319	20.4%	0%	0.0%	20.4%	9.5%	29.9%	1
Labour	862	37.3%	25%	25.0%	12.3%	-12.3%	0.0%	1
Total	1564	100.0%						
Quota	391	25.0%						

Voting systems compared

The likely effects of different voting systems in Burnley can therefore be summarised as follows:

First Past the Post

- Under FPTP the BNP won 6 seats in single-seat contests in 2003 (and a further seat in a two-seat contest).
- If the BNP were to repeat this performance in the coming two elections it might have 18 seats in these 6 wards, with the possibility of further seats elsewhere in Burnley.
- FPTP could therefore lead to a gross over-representation of the BNP on Burnley Council.
- If Burnley were to change to full Council elections rather than elections in thirds, on its 2003 performance the BNP could move more quickly to having 18+ seats.

Alternative Vote

- If AV had been used in the 2003 elections, the BNP would not have won any seats on Burnley Council.

Single Transferable Vote

- If STV had been used in Burnley's existing three-member wards, the BNP on its 2003 performance would have won one, but only one, seat in each of 12 wards where it fought for a single seat, with the possibility of a thirteenth seat in Whittlebury ward.
- In subsequent elections it would not have been able to add to that total without a swing in votes to the BNP.

FPTP could lead to the BNP being over-represented, and indeed FPTP is the only voting system that could give the BNP the chance of winning control of the council. Moreover, FPTP would certainly lead to BNP candidates winning in wards where the majority of voters would prefer any candidate other than the BNP candidate. That we do not regard as being acceptable.

If our objective were to prevent the BNP from winning seats, then AV would be by far the best voting system to choose.

That, however, should not be our objective. Our aim should be the election of a council that represents the diversity of views in Burnley, even if we find some of these views distasteful. AV would deny representation to a significant number of voters: in Burnley it would deny representation to BNP voters, but in other councils it could be supporters of mainstream parties who are denied representation.

STV, however, while allowing the BNP representation that reflects their support amongst voters, would not allow the BNP more than its proportional share of seats. STV is a voting system which rewards candidates (and consequently parties) who have wide appeal and who can therefore attract transfers of second or lower preference votes from candidates of other parties, but acts against candidates with extreme political positions as such people are not likely to gain much from such transfers.

Some might argue that STV would result in the BNP being under-represented in that the proportion of seats it would win would be less than its share of the vote. Certainly the 2003 election results suggest that the BNP would have received well over a quota of votes in the seats it fought, but never more than a single seat. However, conventional measures of proportionality are rather crude in that they only take account of first preference votes. Given that the great majority of voters rank the BNP low in their lists of preferences, we would argue that STV would provide by far the fairest and most representative result.

Conclusions

Burnley is a town that has suffered from poor race relations for some time. It is in an area that has been targeted by the BNP and its ancestors for many years. While the BNP and others might have fomented racism in Burnley, it is clear that they found Burnley fertile territory. That is not to say that a majority of people in Burnley are racists or latent racists, as shown by views expressed on race relations and on party preferences in our survey, and possibly by the extent to which other parties appear to have colluded in their opposition to the BNP.

We must therefore ask why Burnley was so vulnerable to BNP propaganda. Our survey suggests that a principal reason has been the perceived inability of Burnley Council to tackle the town's economic decline and failure of efforts to promote harmony and understanding between people of different ethnic backgrounds. Deteriorating economic and social conditions in Burnley have provided an opportunity for the BNP to blame the Asian community for the general malaise. In this report, however, we cannot make any judgments about the performance of Burnley's Council. Whether they neglected the concerns of indigenous Burnley residents and whether they could have done more to explain the rationale of their policies is a matter for others to debate.

Moreover, it would be surprising if there were not other towns whose councils have performed no worse than that of Burnley but which have not seen the BNP make similar advances. A similar survey (but with refinements to gather more information on the motives of BNP supporters or potential supporters) in another comparable town should therefore be considered.

However, it is incontrovertible that a large number of people in Burnley feel, rightly or wrongly,

that their council has been ineffective and unresponsive to their concerns. Such situations are not uncommon in areas where the electoral system has over the years produced unrepresentative councils and in which most electoral contests are hopelessly one-sided. One of our general arguments against first-past-the-post (supported by academic research) is that it does not produce strong links between elected members and their constituents.

We therefore conclude that if in past years Burnley Council had been elected by a system of proportional representation, and particularly STV, perceptions of the Council would not have been nearly so negative and there would have been greater appreciation of its problems and policy options. Moreover, by requiring parties to field teams of candidates in multi-member wards, parties would have had a greater incentive to select teams of candidates reflecting the diversity of society in Burnley, thereby producing a more inclusive form of politics. We cannot claim that the use of STV alone would have obviated recent problems, but we must conclude that the use of FPTP has certainly contributed to the present situation.

While the past cannot be undone, we believe that a change in the voting system could greatly assist in overcoming Burnley's difficulties. Electoral reform could help in two ways:

- Electoral reform would ensure that Burnley Council becomes more representative of the people of Burnley and that the BNP is not allowed to win more seats than its support would appear to justify. We have examined the likely impact of AV and STV: although we have concluded that AV would effectively eliminate the BNP from Burnley Council, we do not believe that that would be either democratic or

desirable. While there is significant support for the BNP, we believe it best that that support has representation on the Council where the nature of the BNP can be brought into the open and confronted politically. We therefore recommend STV as the better option, not just for the BNP but for all Burnley councillors.

- In the longer term, the creation of a council which better reflects the political, social and ethnic diversity of Burnley would help restore faith in the Council by allowing all voices to be heard – and heeded – and would enhance the accountability of councillors to all of their constituents. With a council more engaged with its electorate – and vice versa – the temptation to turn to the BNP out of frustration with the Council's perceived inadequacies would be removed and prejudice based on misinformation would be substantially reduced.

Finally, although our report has examined Burnley, and although our survey data comes from only three wards in Burnley, that does not mean that our conclusions have no relevance outside Burnley. It would be surprising if other towns, even if luckier in not having received the same attentions from extremist elements, were not harbouring similar problems which could easily erupt in future years. If lessons can be learnt from Burnley's experience, then not only will the people of Burnley benefit, but also all those who are committed to the strengthening of local democracy and the improvement of inter-community relations.

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December 2003

Appendix I: Respondent Comments

Analysis of respondent comments

An automatic word count and manual recording of mentions of particular topics was used to analyse the comments made by voters for each party.

This information was then further broken down into the most relevant areas.

In this appendix the information is presented for each party in turn. Comparisons between the parties are made in the main body of the report.

Analysis of BNP Voter Comments

	Number of voters mentioning at least once	% all	% comments
Asians / ethnic minorities	16	12	25
Crime / police	15	11	23
Asylum / immigration	14	10	22
Unfair distribution	13	9	20
Labour	12	9	19
Council failure	9	6	14
Protest vote / 'wake up'	6	4	9
Not racist'	5	4	8
Elderly	4	3	6
Labour / council not listening	3	2	5
Racist views	10	7	16

Number of comments

64 BNP voting respondents out of 139 made comments – 46%.

Comments on the Labour Administration

12 individuals comment on Labour: 9 individuals comment on the council. 'Labour' and 'council' are both mentioned 19 times. All of the comments about the Labour administration are negative. For example:

'The Labour party in this town don't listen to the needs of the people of Burnley that is why most people voted B.N.P.'

'The M.P. for Burnley is useless'

Crime

6 mentions were made of 'Police' and 4 of crime. 15 individuals commented on the police or crime levels making this the second most frequently mentioned topic. For example:

'Crime is on the increase'

'Police crime youths are all a problem and nothing is done about it'

'Not racist' but perceiving unequal allocation of council funds.

13 individuals mentioned the perception that council funds were distributed unequally to Asian areas. Of these, five explicitly said that they were not racist (despite this view) and 3 more intimated this. For example:

'As you can see by this form I have voted for the BNP party on the last 2 local election. But this does not mean I am racist. In general I get on well with other ethnic groups. But I feel the local Labour Party's policies do lean in favour of Asian groups within the Burnley district'

Protest voters

2 mentions of 'protest' were made. This theme was adopted by 6 of those making comments. The background suggests that more votes are protest votes than this – rather than a complete loss of faith in all the other parties but this cannot be stated with certainty. We can state, however, that, amongst respondents making comments, at least 9% of BNP voters were protest voters. For example:

'The local Council... need a kick in the pants'

'My vote is purely a protest vote until someone stands up and listens to people properly'

Racists

A large number of the comments contain prejudice and generalisations about Asians, immigrants and asylum seekers. This includes comments about distribution of funds. Whatever the truth of the accusations about distribution of funds the idea is compounded by clear generalisations, prejudice and mistrust. For example.

'Send them back on a leaky boat – ALL. You don't live in Burnley and you have no idea what they are like ignorant, arrogant, drug pushers lazy bastards. Send them all back or pitchfork them'

'This town is full of the flotsam and jetsam of the world. So called asylum seekers who are only here

for what they can get for free most of them should be back in their own countries rebuilding them instead of scrounging off us. Pakistanis who hate us they don't want to mix with us. They want to turn this country into little Pakistan... Keep Britain white our forefathers fought and died so that we could have the country we have today, it is all being destroyed'

'3 Asian women in Nelson got £30.000 in benefit fraud and walked out of court laughing at us... They don't like us we don't like them'

'The police, council etc are afraid of challenging the ethnic groups in Burnley for fear of being accused of racism. On the other hand the ethnic groups have no intention of integrating unless the situation directly benefits them'

Analysis of Conservative voter comments

	Number of voters mentioning at least once	% all	% comments
Labour	6	10	30
Asian / ethnic minorities	4	6	20
Crime / Police	4	6	20
Council failure	4	6	20
Unfair distribution	3	5	15
BNP	3	5	15
Racism	3	3	15
Asylum / immigration	2	3	10
Council not listening	2	3	10
Elderly	0	0	0
Protest	0	0	0
Thank You	0	0	0

Number of comments

20 Conservative voting respondents out of 62 made comments – 32%

Comments on the Labour administration

6 individuals mention Labour; 4 discuss council failures and 2 expressed the feeling that the council does not listen. 'Council' and 'Labour' are both mentioned 6 times. The comments are all negative.

'Find town so Labour controlled we are going worse by the month'

'I think the local Council WASTE A LOT of money and don't really think things through, they do things for themselves to make them look good'

Crime

4 individuals mention crime and the police. 'Police' and 'crime' are both mentioned once.

'Crime on the increase in most areas. The police do their best, but seem to be in short supply. Local police counters are closed, because of shortages.'

Why not recruit “specials” to walk areas in need of a police presence?’

‘We need a warden in this area because we are bothered with yoboes’

Unequal allocation of funds

3 individuals mention this perception.

‘It is perceived by most people in Burnley that monies allocated to the town are unfairly distributed with a bias towards the Asian community. This may not be so, but perhaps more open discussion & maybe publishing of how the money is spent would clear these grey areas’

Racism

Comments contain prejudice and generalisations about Asians, immigrants and asylum seekers.

‘Taliban fighters are welcomed back into the community!’

‘There is a deep dislike of the Asian Community as they are seen to be takers and not givers’

Ethnic mix

1 of the 20 Conservative voters making comments is Asian British.

Analysis of Independent voter comments

	Number of voters mentioning at least once	% all	% comments
Asians / ethnic minorities	4	11	25
Unfair distribution	4	11	25
Labour	4	11	25
Racism	4	11	25
BNP	3	9	19
Council failure	3	9	19
Labour/council not listening	3	9	19
Elderly	2	6	13
Protest vote	2	6	13
Thank you	2	6	13
Crime/police	1	3	6
Asylum/immigration	0	0	0

Note on sample

As one of the sampled wards had an Asian independent candidate in 2003, it is possible that a Burnley-wide survey would have produced a different pattern of responses from Independent voters. Nevertheless, some of the comments display the attitudes which some claim to be common amongst Independent supporters in Burnley.

Number of comments

16 Independent voting respondents out of 35 made comments – 46%

Comments on the Labour administration

4 Individuals comment on Labour and 3 on the council. 'Council' is mentioned 6 times and 'Labour' 5 times. All the comments are negative.

'I am thoroughly disillusioned with Labour'

'local councils are not taking these issues seriously'

Crime

One individual specifically mentions crime and the police. 'Crime' is mentioned once and 'Police' twice.

'Please feel free to get my advice in any matter about Burnley's improvement with polices about crime or violence thanks'

Unequal allocation of funds

4 individuals talk about this.

'Government money goes to the Asian people / district to the detriment of the run down white areas'

Protest

2 individuals talk of protest voting but 'protest' is not specifically mentioned.

'Backlash has occurred'

Racism

Some comments contain prejudice and generalisations about Asians, some comment on racism faced by Asians.

'BURNLEY IS A RACIST Town Council people are THE PROBLEM THEY don't like Asian or 'BLACKS' and THEY DEPRIVE THEM Of THEIR RIGHTS AS MUCH AS THEY can'

'The council do not monitor the filth and anti British rubbish that is preached in the Mosques – why?? I have voted Labour for over forty years but I am now what the do-gooders and P.C people would call a racist'

Ethnic mix

6 of the 16 Independent voters making comments is Asian – 38%

Analysis of Labour voter comments

	Number of voters mentioning at least once	% all	% comments
Asians/ethnic minorities	10	5.0	17.9
Crime / police	10	5.0	17.9
BNP	10	5.0	17.9
Unfair distribution	9	4.5	16.1
Labour	8	4.0	14.3
Council failure	5	2.5	8.9
Elderly	4	2.0	7.1
Asylum/immigration	2	1.0	3.6
Protest vote	2	1.0	3.6
Racism	1	0.5	1.8
Thank you	1	0.5	1.8
Labour/council not listening	1	0.5	1.8

Crime

10 individuals mentioned crime and the police. 'Crime' was mentioned 6 times and 'Police' 4 times. The two most frequently mentioned issues are the same as for BNP voters – Asians / ethnic minorities and then crime / police.

'The crime amount in Burnley is getting out of control'

'More emphasis on law and order'

Unequal allocation of funds

9 individuals mention this perception. This is a lower percentage of the comments than for BNP voters but equally the fourth most frequently mentioned issue.

'A lot of people in Burnley are not racist, but are disillusioned with the large grants and handouts going to Asian communities while their own areas are left with nothing'

'It all seems to be what the ethnic population want in Burnley'

Potential Protest

2 individuals mention the possibility of making a protest vote and 'protest' is mentioned once.

'I have never voted BNP but I am seriously thinking of doing it at the next elections, because I, like a lot of other people are getting heartily sick of the injustices to the white communities in their own town'

Racists

A large number of the comments contain prejudice and generalisations about Asians, immigrants and asylum seekers but less than BNP comments. There are also concerns expressed about racism.

'Too much crime = many Asian & coloured people'

'I think we cannot Take Any MORE immigration or any colour'

'From a personal perspective the racism in Burnley is disturbing and given the problems that both poorer Asian & white people face it makes matters worst'

Ethnic mix

6 of the 56 Labour voters making comments is Asian British – 11%

Analysis of Liberal Democrat voter comments

	Number of voters mentioning at least once	% all	% comments
Asian / ethnic minorities	7	7	28
Council failure	6	6	24
Asylum / immigration	4	4	16
Labour	4	4	16
Crime / police	3	3	12
BNP	3	3	12
Thank you	2	2	8
Elderly	1	1	4
Racism	1	1	4
Unfair distribution	0	0	0
Protest	0	0	0
Council not listening	0	0	0

Number of comments

25 Liberal Democrat voting respondents out of 101 made comments – 25%

Comments on the Labour administration

6 individuals comment on council failures and 4 on Labour. 'Council' is mentioned 10 times and 'Labour' 6 times. All the comments are negative.

'Insufficient people with the necessary degree of interest & knowledge in local government seem prepared to put themselves up for election (therefore) the council is run (Labour) by a group, some of whom, I suspect, are purely self-serving'

'There is no confidence in the ruling local council either to manage the funds available efficiently or to provide the taxpayer with truthful information. Financial measures taken by the local authority appear by many people to have been taken on the basis of trying to buy votes'

Crime

3 individuals make comments on the police and

crime though 'Police' and 'crime' are not stated.

'With security, safety, burglaries, assaults, drugs, violence etc. why do you not target the main culprits and get them out of this area, and then all the rubbish will go out with them. At least then the streets / houses and all people Asian / white etc. will be safe, secure and protected'

Racism

There is some generalisation about Asians, asylum seekers and immigrants. 2 comments on the problems of asylum seekers come from Asian respondents.

'I am very worried about Asylum seeker's because they say to the Home Office that they are from Afghanistan but they are from PAKISTAN'

Selection of Respondent comments

Selection of BNP voter comments

I would like to give the main reason why I voted BNP. The situation in Burnley with the Asian population in Burnley is appalling – gangs of Asian youths driving round in cars, shouting abuse at white people, drugs in abundance, all in all not a very nice place to live. People come up from the south to assess the situation no & again, stay for the day & say everything's OK when it's far from it. They don't live with any in their area or if they do they must be far more civilised than the ones in this area. As for the voting in Burnley if Mickey Mouse stood for Labour he would get elected. If people wanted to know the real story, they would have to stay for about a month, be spat on, swore at & be scared to go out in certain areas at night. Burnley needs help but thanks to do gooders there doesn't seem to be any forthcoming. I am not racist but with the situation as it is at the moment I am heartily sick & tired (as are the majority of people in Burnley) or it all.

The Labour party in this town don't listen to the needs of the people of Burnley that is why most people voted B.N.P. I was born & bred in Burnley.

All people should be fined or punished somehow for throwing or putting litter of any sort on the road-pavement or grass, and anybody committing any act of vandalism should be punished severely. I would publish their names and address in all local papers and let the people of our town know what it is costing us to rectify any damage. Please let the punishment fit the crime.

There was a Catholic church in the Burnley area set on fire it was discovered that Asians had done it, what happened nothing they don't want any other churches in their area, they find it offensive that church had been there 200 years a lot longer than them. Actress Coronation Street said that

(ASIAN) she couldn't understand why people fly the Union Jack as the Jubilee was over and so was the football. We don't and won't fly our flag 365 days because it causes offence to Asians. I will tell you what I find offensive: the fact that we are not patriotic, we are a soft touch, come to Britain and get what you want, send them back on a leaky boat. ALL you don't live in Burnley and you have no idea what they are like: ignorant, arrogant, drug pushers, lazy bastards. Send them all back or Pitchfork them.

I voted Labour for over 50 years, but not any more. Under Labour, it is a crime to get old. Old folks' homes are being closed, crime is on the increase, certain areas of the town have more postal votes, then people allowed to vote, no action taken by the police (yet). Cuts in services, with higher rates. All factory work has left the town, but work is to be found in a town, flooded with supermarkets. Under New Labour, this town is slowly dying. And if any grants are coming to the town, please make sure it goes to all the people of the town, not one section.

I feel that the BNP is the only party not prejudiced against anyone; they only want to give the people of Britain a fair deal all round. Maybe if other parties stopped pulling them down they would be able to concentrate on more important issues like the BNP want to. Let them have some power locally; it would only take for them to fail once what are Labour + Conservatives afraid of: BNP succeeding and doing more than them.

Burnley Council as it is, run by Labour, is utterly useless.

As you can see by this form I have voted for the BNP Party on the last 2 local elections. But this does not mean I am racist. In general I get on well

with other ethnic groups. But I feel the local Labour party's policies do lean in favour of Asian groups within the Burnley district. Are they afraid of upsetting the Asian community and people in higher government. If this is the case then unfortunately they are now upsetting the white community of Burnley the local government has to find a better balance for its policies and stop slagging off the BNP which again only helps the BNP party and hardens peoples feelings for the BNP. Let them join in with local debates and issues. The we will see if they sink or swim.

Labour has been in control of Burnley for a very long time. If their policies were working Burnley would be the best town in Britain instead of one of the worst.

We pay more council tax for less service

Selection of Conservative voter comments

I feel that some areas in Burnley do get more help more often & other areas are neglected in my opinion this is one of the reasons for the bad feelings and also the problems with the riots recently, especially when known Taliban fighters are welcomed back into the community!

Find town so Labour controlled we are going worse by the month

My employment brings me into contact with many Asians, most of whom have been charged with criminal offences, the younger Asians do have an attitude problem (as do many White young people). There is a deep dislike of the Asian Community as they are seen to be takers and not givers, having said that, I would never vote BNP. Burnley has had a Labour Council for many, many years the general appearance of the town is of a shabby, poor, lack lustre area. I am due to retire in 3 years, I will not stay in the area under any circumstances

Selection of Independent voter comments

I am disgusted at the way the county council has closed too many homes for the elderly, and at the way they have done it

My view of the elections in Burnley over many years comes down to the conclusion that the

Labour Party would be returned no matter who was put up for election. Consequently the people of Burnley have been taken for granted. Hence the backlash over the last two election. PS:. watch this space for the general election.

All the Executive committee are Labour members. Government money goes to the Asian people / district to the detriment of the run down white areas. The BNP party are the only party that sympathises with the poor white areas. Burnley Borough Council (Labour) cancelled a concert by "Bernard Manning" in the town because the minority of people (Asian) might be offended. The council do not monitor the filth and anti British rubbish that is preached in the Mosques – why?? I have voted Labour for over forty years but I am now what the do-gooders and PC people would call a racist. I will assist and vote for the BNP until people take their heads out of the sand and see what is happening to this once great country of ours.

Burnley is a racist Town Council. People are the problem they don't like Asian or blacks and they deprive them of their rights as much as they can

Selection of Labour voter comments

It is my opinion that the Burnley Council is a poor reflection of 'New' Labour policies and is dominated by 'old' Labour factions which lead to its relative unpopularity. There is no reliable opposition to it and it therefore remains the only choice for me. Regrettably, capable people do not put themselves forward for office.

Too much crime = many Asian & coloured people. Not enough help for the old. Too much government money wasted. The Burnley general hospital very good but like all hospitals need more money but too much goes on red tape like the police. Not just in Burnley but through out England. On crime all the help is for the wrong-doer not the victim.

In place of don't mix: – no contact. The rise of the BNP should not be a surprise. The local ruling Labour group appear to have no direction apart from industrial estates blotting the landscape and derelict mills & property left for years. The town centre is effectively divided into two parts, access

for cars is appalling, the streets are a mess and the back-streets are appalling also.

I am very alarmed by the rise of the BNP in Burnley and by the failure of other parties to counter their influence on local people. I believe that many people voted BNP as protest against the local labour party and have been duped by the BNP into believing they are a legitimate party. However I think the biggest problem is the 'first past the post' voting system. If we had proportional representation people would be able to vote for what they believe in and more energy would be put into exposing the BNP for what they really are. In addition a bigger percentage of the population would vote

I think in the next 10-15 years the BNP will emerge as one of the main parties. A lot of people in Burnley are not racist, but are disillusioned with the large grants and handouts going to Asian communities while their own areas are left with nothing. This will make the BNP strong and promote racism. The people of Burnley need to be treated as equals in their own country.

The streets are filthy

People born and bred in Burnley do not seem to matter any more. It all seems to be what the ethnic population want in Burnley

I have never voted BNP but I am seriously thinking of doing it at the next elections, because I, like a lot of other people are getting heartily sick of the injustices to the white communities in their own town. When you go into areas that are predominantly Asian like Stoneyholme and the Leyland Rd area you see the evidence of the monies that have been spent on improving their homes and the extensive road redesigns to slow down traffic to safeguard their children. You see no such evidence of home improvement in areas that are predominantly white. We live on the one way system on Briercliffe Road and we haven't even got anywhere to park our car yet right outside our front door we have yards and yards of totally unnecessary pavement. When are we going to start getting home improvement grants and parking areas. After all it is our town. We were born and brought up here.

We have been voting for Labour all our life but now we won't vote for them because of some policies .e.g Labour said no tax was going to be put on & they put more taxes than any other government, and also Iraq war wasn't right.

I believe this town has become surplus to requirements and is becoming a rubbish tip for the unemployed and the unemployable i thank you for listening

I don't have much faith in any of the parties. None of them really do anything to improve the situation of the country. The system is very unfair and one sided. Ethnic minorities seem to get the better hand and the English are pushed to the bottom of the list.

I love Burnley so let us work together all of us

Get the BNP out

More emphasis on law and order and street cleaning and councillors more involved in the communities they represent

Selection of Liberal Democrat voter comments

I'm a Labour party member, but feel we need a better opposition on the council.

Insufficient people with the necessary degree of interest & knowledge in local government seem prepared to put themselves up for election (therefore) the council is run (Labour) by a group, some of whom, I suspect, are purely self-serving – or is this the way with politicians? It is difficult to criticise when unprepared to take up the challenge oneself. We lost our good Independent councillor with change of ward boundaries & it was left, this year, with no representative.

I am white English British Christian who doesn't seem to get any say these days, everyone wants me to be ethnic in my thinking and to get on with asylum or Asian people who have different views and religion to what I have been used to. If I vote BNP I'm right wing but Welsh, Irish & Scots can have a nationalist party with no problems Labour have been in control for years in this area

and its rubbish, they think more about immigrants, etc than people who have lived here all their life

Conservatives do not put up a councillor in my ward.

I am most worried about Asylum seekers because they tell the Home OFFICE that they are from Afghanistan and have no Family's here but they are really from Pakistan and have a member of their family in U.K. Burnley have got worse for jobs, Housing because of them

Appendix 2: The Questionnaire

Please tick boxes as appropriate.

1-Please indicate your ethnic group

- White British Black British
 Asian British Other Please specify

2-Did you vote during the Local Elections?

- Yes No If No why not?
-

3-What party do you traditionally support?

- BNP Conservative Independent None
 Labour Liberal Democrats
 Other (Please specify)
-

4-What party did you vote for in this year's local election?

- BNP Conservative Independent
 Labour Liberal Democrats
 Other (Please specify)
-

5-What party did you vote for last year in the local elections?

- BNP Conservative Independent
 Labour Liberal Democrats
 Other (please specify)
-

6-What are the issues that affected your voting behaviour this year?

- Crime/ Violence Poor council services
 Immigration and Asylum
 Electoral Campaign
 Government Policies Iraq war

7-Please tick the two policies that are most important to you?

- Education Crime Housing
 Employment Roads Transport
 Environment Other (Please specify)
-

8- Please rank the parties in order from 1 to 5, 1 being your favourite, 2 second favourite and so on.

- BNP Conservative Independent
Labour Liberal Democrats
Other Please specify
-

9-What parties contacted you by telephone or on your doorstep before or during the elections?

- BNP Conservative
Independent Labour
Liberal Democrats
Other Please specify
-

10-What parties contacted you by leaflet before and during the elections?

- BNP Conservative
Independent Labour
Liberal Democrats
Other Please specify
-

11-How do you think Burnley has changed over the years?

- No real change Mostly got worst
Mostly improved Don't Know
-

12-How would you judge your own relationship with other ethnic groups in Burnley?

- Very good Good Don't mix
Poor Very poor
-

13-How would you judge the current electoral system

- Democratic Undemocratic

14-How is your party represented in the council administration

- Not represented Fairly represented
Represented Well represented

Please feel free to make any comment

Thank you for your help. Your answers to the above questions will help us in planning and promoting improvements in our local democracy.

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