



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

To: Leaders of councils with elections in May 2026 where proposals for reorganisation have been submitted and decisions not yet taken

Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing,
Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

22 January 2026

Dear Leader,

Re: Decision on the Postponement of Local Elections Scheduled for May 2026

I am writing to follow up on the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness' letter of 18 December 2025 regarding the potential postponement of local elections in areas undergoing local government reorganisation.

This Government remains steadfast in its commitment to streamlining local government by replacing the outdated two-tier system with single-tier unitary councils, a landmark reform essential to ending the two-tier cost for local taxpayers and creating stronger local authorities equipped to drive economic growth and provide exceptional services to the public we serve.

We are grateful to you for your quick and helpful response to the Minister's last letter, and for the hard work that went into the representations that were submitted. I appreciate that for many of you it has been a challenging process for which you, like me, had to consider a wide range of factors before sharing your representations.

After carefully considering the representations made by councils, parliamentarians, residents and wider local government stakeholders, I have decided to bring forward legislation to **postpone the local elections scheduled for 7 May 2026 for a period of one year** for the following councils:

- Adur District Council
- Basildon Borough Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Council
- Burnley Borough Council
- Cannock Chase District Council
- Cheltenham Borough Council
- Chorley Borough Council
- City of Lincoln Council

- Crawley Borough Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Exeter City Council
- Harlow District Council
- Hastings Borough Council
- Hyndburn Borough Council
- Ipswich Borough Council
- Norfolk County Council
- Norwich City Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Preston City Council
- Redditch Borough Council
- Rugby Borough Council
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Tamworth Borough Council
- Thurrock Council
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
- West Lancashire Borough Council
- West Sussex County Council
- Worthing Borough Council

This decision follows a comprehensive consideration of all the evidence available to me. I have listened to concerns regarding the resource pressures of running intensive elections for councils proposed for abolition shortly thereafter. By delaying these elections, I am confident that we will be releasing essential capacity within councils to allow your teams to focus their full energy on the complex reorganisation process, while also addressing concerns regarding the cost of holding elections for bodies that will soon cease to exist.

This move ensures our continued delivery against an ambitious timetable that sees new councils going live in April 2028, delivering on our promise to create sustainable, effective structures within this Parliament.

For a number of councils, we received representations indicating that they had the capacity required for elections to proceed during the process of local government reorganisation; representations indicating postponement would be helpful but without sufficient evidence of the impact on capacity; or postponement was not sought. For these councils, elections will go ahead as planned. A full list of May 2026 elections in areas undergoing reorganisation and their status is attached to this letter.

Next steps

The legislative process to postpone these elections will now commence, and the necessary Statutory Instrument will be laid as soon as possible. An Explanatory Memorandum will be published alongside the Statutory Instrument, which will give more detail about the

representations received. We will write to you again to share this with you once it has been published.

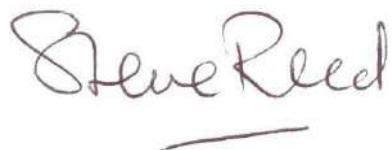
Town and Parish Council elections

Please note that I am making no provision for the postponement of **town or parish council elections**. As these bodies are outside the scope of the local government reorganisation, those elections will proceed as scheduled.

I am copying this letter to your Chief Executives, the other Leaders and Chief Executives of councils in the local government reorganisation programme, and to local MPs, Combined/Combined County Authority Mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners and Best Value Commissioners in local government reorganisation areas.

Many thanks once again for your continued hard work in delivering this important reorganisation programme.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Reed". A horizontal line is drawn underneath the signature.

RT HON STEVE REED OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

LIST OF 63 COUNCILS IN REORGANISATION AREAS WITH ELECTIONS SCHEDULED IN MAY 2026

Elections where legislation will be brought forward to postpone

Adur District Council
Basildon Borough Council
Blackburn with Darwen Council
Burnley Borough Council
Cannock Chase District Council
Cheltenham Borough Council
Chorley Borough Council
City of Lincoln Council
Crawley Borough Council
East Sussex County Council
Exeter City Council
Harlow District Council
Hastings Borough Council
Hyndburn Borough Council
Ipswich Borough Council
Norfolk County Council
Norwich City Council
Peterborough City Council
Preston City Council
Redditch Borough Council
Rugby Borough Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Suffolk County Council
Tamworth Borough Council
Thurrock Council
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
West Lancashire Borough Council
West Sussex County Council
Worthing Borough Council

Elections that are going ahead

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Brentwood Borough Council
Broxbourne Borough Council
Cambridge City Council
Cherwell District Council
Colchester City Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Epping Forest District Council

Essex County Council
Fareham Borough Council
Gosport Borough Council
Hampshire County Council
Hart District Council
Havant Borough Council
Huntingdonshire District Council
Isle of Wight Council
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
North East Lincolnshire Council
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Oxford City Council
Pendle Borough Council
Plymouth City Council
Portsmouth City Council
Rochford District Council
Rushmoor Borough Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Southampton City Council
Southend-on-Sea City Council
St Albans City and District Council
Three Rivers District Council
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Watford Borough Council
West Oxfordshire District Council
Winchester City Council