



# 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This Government remains steadfast in its commitment to streamlining local government by replacing the outdated two-tier system with single-tier unitary councils, a landmark reform essential to ending the two-tier cost for local taxpayers and creating stronger local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