



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

Alison McGovern MP
Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness
2 Marsham Street
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18 December 2025

Dear Leader,

I am writing to you regarding the elections your council is scheduled to hold on 7 May 2026.

This Government is determined to streamline local government by replacing the current two-tier system with new single-tier unitary councils, ending the wasteful two-tier premium. We are progressing this landmark reform quickly, which will be vital in delivering our vision: stronger local councils equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and empower their communities. I am fully committed to ensuring councils can deliver new, sustainable structures within this Parliament.

We have now received proposals from all 20 remaining invitation areas, demonstrating strong collaboration between local partners. A consultation is open on 17 of those proposals from six invitation areas. I expect to launch a consultation in early February on proposals from the remaining 14 areas that seek to meet the terms of the 5 February statutory invitation. That consultation would be for seven weeks.

I remain committed to the indicative timetable that was published in July, that sees elections to new councils in May 2027 and those councils going live in April 2028. This is a complex process, and we will take decisions based on the evidence provided.

We have listened to councils telling us about the constraints they are operating within, and the work that reorganisation introduces on top of existing challenges. Now that we have received all proposals, it is only right that we listen to councils who are expressing concerns about their capacity to deliver a smooth and safe transition to new councils, alongside running resource-intensive elections to councils who may be shortly abolished. We have also received representations from councils concerned about the cost to taxpayers of holding elections to councils that are proposed to shortly be abolished.

Previous governments have postponed local elections in areas contemplating and undergoing local government reorganisation to allow councils to focus their time and energy on the process. We have now received requests from multiple councils to postpone their local elections in May 2026.

The Secretary of State recognises that capacity will vary between councils and that is why he has reached the position that, in his view, councils are in the best position to

judge the impact of potential postponements on your area and in the spirit of devolution and trusting local leaders, this Government will listen to you.

I am therefore inviting you, by midnight on Thursday 15 January, to set out your views on the postponement of your local election and if you consider this could release essential capacity to deliver local government reorganisation in your area and so allow reorganisation to progress effectively. For those who have already made their views known, we will be taking these into account. Views should be sent by email to LGRElections@communities.gov.uk.

The Secretary of State has adopted a locally-led approach. He is clear that should a council say they have no reason for postponement, then we will listen. But if you voice genuine concerns about your capacity, then we will take these concerns seriously. To that end, the Secretary of State is only minded to make an Order to postpone elections for one year for those councils who raise capacity concerns. A list of the relevant elections is annexed.

For areas where there are also scheduled town or parish council elections, the Secretary of State is minded to make no provision in the Order so these elections continue as scheduled, given town and parish councils are outside of local government reorganisation.

I appreciate that preparations for elections may have started, and you will be keen to have certainty, which we will deliver as soon as possible.

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.

Yours sincerely,



ALISON MCGOVERN MP

Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness

**Annex – 63 councils with elections under consideration for postponement
(there are 64 elections including that for the Mayor of Watford)**

1. Adur District Council
2. Basildon Borough Council
3. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
4. Blackburn with Darwen Council
5. Brentwood Borough Council
6. Broxbourne Borough Council
7. Burnley Borough Council
8. Cambridge City Council
9. Cannock Chase District Council
10. Cheltenham Borough Council
11. Cherwell District Council
12. Chorley Borough Council
13. City of Lincoln Council
14. Colchester City Council
15. Crawley Borough Council
16. East Sussex County Council
17. Eastleigh Borough Council
18. Epping Forest District Council
19. Essex County Council
20. Exeter City Council
21. Fareham Borough Council
22. Gosport Borough Council
23. Hampshire County Council
24. Harlow District Council
25. Hart District Council
26. Hastings Borough Council
27. Havant Borough Council
28. Huntingdonshire District Council
29. Hyndburn Borough Council
30. Ipswich Borough Council
31. Isle of Wight Council
32. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
33. Norfolk County Council
34. North East Lincolnshire Council
35. Norwich City Council
36. Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
37. Oxford City Council
38. Pendle Borough Council
39. Peterborough City Council
40. Plymouth City Council
41. Portsmouth City Council
42. Preston City Council
43. Redditch Borough Council
44. Rochford District Council

45. Rugby Borough Council
46. Rushmoor Borough Council
47. South Cambridgeshire District Council
48. Southampton City Council
49. Southend-on-Sea City Council
50. St Albans City and District Council
51. Stevenage Borough Council
52. Suffolk County Council
53. Tamworth Borough Council
54. Three Rivers District Council
55. Thurrock Council
56. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
57. Watford Borough Council
58. Watford Borough Council Mayor
59. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
60. West Lancashire Borough Council
61. West Oxfordshire District Council
62. West Sussex County Council
63. Winchester City Council
64. Worthing Borough Council