



# A provisional directory of the May 2026 local elections

Local elections are scheduled to take place in a number of English councils on Thursday 7th May, 2026. Exactly how many, however, is unclear, and won't become so until February or even March, just weeks before polling day.

Every autumn, for over a decade now, TUSC has produced a directory of where council elections will be held the following spring as a resource for local campaigners. This time, however, because of Labour's local government reorganisation plans, the biggest in England since the 1970s, no such certainty is possible; as was the case with this year's county council elections, which were only confirmed at the last moment.

Keir Starmer's New Labour Mark II government aims to merge district and county councils into larger, less accountable, single bodies – known as unitary authorities – and increase the number of directly-elected 'super mayors'. They favour larger, more remote councils because, by weakening local democratic accountability, they hope it will make it easier for them to push through their austerity agenda to cut and privatise local public services.

Whereas people living in towns and cities like, for example, Exeter, Basildon, Worcester, Crawley or Norwich, can currently vote every year for who runs their local public services – in district council elections, for one-third of the seats each time, and a county election in the fourth year – under the new plans they will only have a vote once every four years, and then only for distant mega-councils with populations of half a million or more. Some existing unitary authorities, including substantially-sized cities like Southampton or Brighton and Hove, are also under threat because they are deemed to be 'too small'.

So this year we are only able to provide a breakdown of the English councils which will definitely have elections in May 2026, with the number of seats to be contested in each council and its current political leadership.

## **But there may be more, many more**

Additionally, however, the directory lists in each region the 66 councils that are slated to be incorporated into new unitary authorities but which were scheduled to hold elections in this four-yearly cycle and which still may do so. In fact, until the statutory instruments go through parliament to cancel them the assumption is that a scheduled election in a particular council is still on.

The directory lists, firstly, those councils that are in the government's 'Priority Programme' for the establishment both of mayoral combined authorities and local government re-organisation – Greater Essex; Hampshire & Solent; Norfolk & Suffolk; and Sussex & Brighton. And secondly, for other councils where local government reorganisation proposals are less advanced. But actually neither category tells us much about whether there will be elections in 2026 or not.

So, for example, elections for new authorities that may result from the reorganisations may be held in 2026. On the other hand, others may not hold the first elections for the new bodies until 2027 instead. In some cases, where elections were postponed in 2025 for the same reason – to 'prepare for reorganisation' – councillors might end up having extended their term of office by two years without facing any election at all!

It is also possible however, that where the re-organisation and the starting date for the new authority is delayed, elections may proceed in 2026 in the old council areas, with those newly elected acting as 'shadow councillors' for the new authorities. To give a scale of the numbers involved, the 66 councils that have scheduled elections for May 2026 but which are affected by local government reorganisation uncertainties, currently have 2,885 councillors.

### **What we do know**

For a second time in two years then a full picture of where local elections will take place in England in May 2026 will not be clear until February or March; itself another example of the increasingly undemocratic character of the Starmer government, hiding once again from the electorate.

What we do know, however, is that elections will definitely take place for all 32 London borough councils and 40 other Metropolitan district and district councils.

Also on the same day there will be Mayoral elections in Watford and the London boroughs of Croydon, Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

So our estimate is that May 2026 will see, as a minimum, at least 3,452 councillors elected in 1,537 wards. There may be more, many more – but what there definitely will be is a significant enough electoral opportunity for trade unionists, anti-war protestors and working class community campaigners to organise to give their verdict on the Starmer government and put forward at the ballot box the socialist alternative that we need.

Clive Heemskerck  
TUSC National Election Agent  
8th October 2025



# The 2026 elections: The English councils

Below is a breakdown of the English councils which will definitely have elections in May 2026, with the number of seats to be contested in each council and the current political leadership of the council recorded.

And in addition there are lists in each region of the councils that are slated to be incorporated into new unitary authorities where there may be elections in 2026 but which won't be clear until February or March, of those that are in the 'Priority Programme' and, separately, where the local government reorganisation process is less advanced.

## Eastern

**Number of councils with elections: 1    Total number of seats up for election: 60 in 20 wards**

*1 Labour-led*

### **Milton Keynes**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 60 councillors in 20 wards

**Councils in the re-organisation 'Priority Programme', with their current number of councillors:**

Basildon (42 councillors); Brentwood (39); Colchester (60); Epping Forest (60 seats); Great Yarmouth (42); Harlow (36); Ipswich (54); Norwich (39); Rochford (39); Southend (51); Thurrock (42)

**'Non-priority' councils facing re-organisation, with their current number of councillors:**

Broxbourne (39 councillors); Cambridge (42); Huntingdonshire (52); Peterborough (60); St Albans (57); South Cambridgeshire (45); Stevenage (39); Three Rivers (48); Watford (36); Welwyn Hatfield (54)

## East Midlands

**There are no councils in this region which will definitely have elections in May 2026**

**'Non-priority' councils facing re-organisation, with their current number of councillors:**

Lincoln (33 councillors)

## London

**Number of councils with elections: 32    Total number of seats up for election: 1,817 in 649 wards**

*5 Conservative-led; 21 Labour-led; 3 Liberal Democrat-led; 2 No overall control; 1 Aspire-led*

### **Barking and Dagenham**

Labour – elections for all 51 councillors in 17 wards

### **Barnet**

Labour – elections for all 63 councillors in 21 wards

### **Bexley**

Conservative – elections for all 45 councillors in 17 wards

### **Brent**

Labour – elections for all 57 councillors in 22 wards

### **Bromley**

Conservative – elections for all 58 councillors in 22 wards

**Camden**

Labour – elections for all 55 councillors in 20 wards

**Croydon**

No overall control – elections for all 70 councillors in 24 wards

**Ealing**

Labour – elections for all 70 councillors in 24 wards

**Enfield**

Labour – elections for all 63 councillors in 21 wards

**Greenwich**

Labour – elections for all 55 councillors in 23 wards

**Hackney**

Labour – elections for all 57 councillors in 19 wards

**Hammersmith and Fulham**

Labour – elections for all 50 councillors in 21 wards

**Haringey**

Labour – elections for all 57 councillors in 19 wards

**Harrow**

Conservative – elections for all 55 councillors in 20 wards

**Havering**

No overall control – elections for all 55 councillors in 20 wards

**Hillingdon**

Conservative – elections for all 53 councillors in 21 wards

**Hounslow**

Labour – elections for all 62 councillors in 22 wards

**Islington**

Labour – elections for all 51 councillors in 17 wards

**Kensington and Chelsea**

Conservative – elections for all 50 councillors in 18 wards

**Kingston**

Liberal Democrat – elections for all 48 councillors in 16 wards

**Lambeth**

Labour – elections for all 63 councillors in 21 wards

**Lewisham**

Labour – elections for all 54 councillors in 18 wards

**Merton**

Labour – elections for all 57 councillors in 20 wards

**Newham**

Labour – elections for all 66 councillors in 24 wards

**Redbridge**

Labour – elections for all 63 councillors in 21 wards

**Richmond**

Liberal Democrat – elections for all 54 councillors in 18 wards

**Southwark**

Labour – elections for all 63 councillors in 21 wards

**Sutton**

Liberal Democrat – elections for all 55 councillors in 20 wards

**Tower Hamlets**

Aspire – elections for all 45 councillors in 20 wards

**Waltham Forest**

Labour – elections for all 60 councillors in 20 wards

**Wandsworth**

Labour – elections for all 58 councillors in 22 wards

**Westminster**

Labour – elections for all 54 councillors in 18 wards

## Northern

**Number of councils with elections:** 6    **Total number of seats up for election:** 305 in 123 wards

*6 Labour-led*

**Gateshead**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 66 councillors in 22 wards

**Hartlepool**

Labour – 12 seats (one-third) up for election

**Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 78 councillors in 26 wards

**North Tyneside**

Labour – 20 seats (one-third) up for election

**South Tyneside**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 54 councillors in 18 wards

**Sunderland**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 75 councillors in 25 wards

## North West

**Number of councils with elections: 14    Total number of seats up for election: 363 in 289 wards**

*21 Labour-led; 2 No Overall Control*

**Bolton**

No overall control – 20 seats (one-third) up for election

**Bury**

Labour – 17 seats (one-third) up for election

**Halton**

Labour – 18 seats (one-third) up for election

**Knowsley**

Labour – 15 seats (one-third) up for election

**Manchester**

Labour – 32 seats (one-third) up for election

**Oldham**

Labour – 20 seats (one-third) up for election

**Rochdale**

Labour – 20 seats (one-third) up for election

**St Helens**

Labour – All 48 councillors up for election in 18 wards

**Salford**

Labour – 20 seats (one-third) up for election

**Sefton**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 66 councillors in 22 wards

**Stockport**

No overall control – 21 seats (one-third) up for election

**Tameside**

Labour – 19 seats (one-third) up for election

**Trafford**

Labour – 22 seats (one-third) up for election

**Wigan**

Labour – 25 seats (one-third) up for election

**‘Non-priority’ councils facing re-organisation, with their current number of councillors:**

Blackburn-with-Darwen (51 councillors); Burnley (48); Chorley (51); Hyndburn (33); Pendle (42); Preston (48); Rossendale (36); West Lancashire (45)

## South East

**There are no councils in this region which will definitely have elections in May 2026**

**Councils in the re-organisation ‘Priority Programme’, with their current number of councillors:**

Adur (45); Basingstoke and Deane (60); Crawley (36); Eastleigh (44); Fareham (32); Gosport (51); Hart (39); Hastings (32); Havant (42); Portsmouth (42); Rushmoor (39); Southampton (51); Winchester (57); Worthing (42)

**‘Non-priority’ councils facing re-organisation, with their current number of councillors:**

Cherwell (48); Elmbridge (61); Mole Valley (42); Oxford (48); Reading (45); Reigate and Banstead (54); Runnymede (48); Slough (39); Tandridge (42); Tunbridge Wells (48); West Oxfordshire (48); Woking (39); Wokingham (54)

## South West

**Number of councils with elections: 4    Total number of seats up for election: 109 in 72 wards**  
*3 Labour-led; 1 Liberal Democrat-led*

### **Cheltenham**

Liberal Democrat – 20 seats (one-half) up for election

### **Exeter**

Labour – 13 seats (one-third) up for election

### **Plymouth**

Labour – 19 seats (one-third) up for election

### **Swindon**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 57 councillors in 20 wards

## West Midlands

**Number of councils with elections: 7    Total number of seats up for election: 382 in 192 wards**  
*3 Conservative-led; 4 Labour-led*

### **Birmingham**

Labour – 101 seats in all-up elections in 69 wards

### **Coventry**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 54 councillors in 18 wards

### **Dudley**

Conservative – 24 seats (one-third) up for election

### **Sandwell**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 72 councillors in 24 wards

### **Solihull**

Conservative – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 51 councillors in 17 wards

### **Walsall**

Conservative – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 60 councillors in 20 wards

### **Wolverhampton**

Labour – 20 seats (one-third) up for election

### **‘Non-priority’ councils facing re-organisation, with their current number of councillors:**

Cannock Chase (39 councillors); Newcastle-under-Lyme (44); Nuneaton and Bedworth (34); Redditch (30); Rugby (39); Tamworth (30); Worcester (36); Wyre Forest (42)

## Yorkshire

**Number of councils with elections: 8    Total number of seats up for election: 416 in 192 wards**  
*6 Labour-led; 1 Liberal Democrat-led; 1 No overall control*

### **Barnsley**

Labour – 63 seats in 21 wards in an all-up election (to start an election every four years cycle)

### **Bradford**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 90 councillors in 30 wards

### **Calderdale**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 51 councillors in 17 wards

### **Hull**

Liberal Democrat – 19 seats (one-third) up for election

### **Kirklees**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 69 councillors in 23 wards

### **Leeds**

Labour – 33 seats (one-third) up for election

### **Sheffield**

No overall control – 28 seats (one-third) up for election

### **Wakefield**

Labour – All-up elections after boundary reorganisation for 63 councillors in 21 wards

### **‘Non-priority’ councils facing re-organisation, with their current number of councillors:**

North East Lincolnshire (42 councillors)