



A directory of the local elections taking place in May 2026

Below is a directory of the local elections that will take place in 136 English councils on Thursday 7th May 2026. This is an annual TUSC publication produced as an aid for working class campaigners considering standing as candidates. Compiling this year's edition, however, has been more fraught than usual, with around a fifth of the scheduled contests in this four-yearly cycle the subject of a series of on-off-on announcements.

In yet another example of the increasingly undemocratic character of Starmer's Labour Party, a decision was made at the end of January to cancel the elections in thirty areas, citing the ongoing reorganisation of local government.

Following a legal challenge by Nigel Farage's Reform UK, however, on February 16th the government retreated and all the elections scheduled to take place this year will now go ahead.

A total of thirty councils had asked for their elections to be postponed, the majority Labour-led. But they also including Conservative and Liberal Democrat councils, despite the most recent protestations of Kemi Badenoch and Sir Ed Davey that they 'always opposed cancelling elections'. The cynical argument made by the councils and government that democracy is 'too expensive' – summed up by the Local Government Secretary Steve Reed in The Times that elections would be "costly, time consuming and will take scarce resources away from front-line services like fixing pot holes and social care" – has only served to bolster Reform's posturing as the 'anti-establishment' party. Even the Green administration in Hastings asked for a postponement.

This makes it even more important that a working class, socialist anti-austerity and anti-war alternative is made as widely available as possible in the contests that are going ahead.

Our final estimate is that May 2026 will see 4,995 councillors elected in 2,915 wards or county council divisions with, on the same day, mayoral elections in Watford and the London boroughs of Croydon, Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

Of the 136 councils with elections, 73 are currently led by Labour administrations, 19 by the Conservatives, 15 by the Liberal Democrats and 26 under 'no overall control' being led minority administrations or cross-party coalitions. One council – in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets – is led by the Aspire party, and two are newly-created councils, for East and West Surrey. Of the nearly 5,000 councillors facing re-election, just under 2,200 are members of Keir Starmer's Labour.

Overall then, a wide enough battlefield 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.

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TUSC National Election Agent
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The 2026 elections: The English councils

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

Eastern

Number of councils with elections: 24 Total seats up for election: 684 in 585 wards and divisions
7 Conservative-led; 7 Labour-led; 3 Liberal Democrat-led; 7 No overall control

Basildon

Labour – 14 seats (one-third) up for election in 14 wards

Brentwood

No overall control – 13 seats (one-third) up for election in 13 wards

Broxbourne

Conservative – 10 seats (one-third) up for election in 10 wards

Cambridge

Labour – 14 seats (one-third) up for election in 14 wards

Colchester

No overall control – 17 seats (one-third) up for election in 17 wards

Epping Forest

Conservative – 18 seats (one-third) up for election in 54 wards

Essex County Council

Conservative – Elections for all 75 councillors in 70 divisions

Harlow

Conservative – 11 seats (one-third) up for election in 11 wards

Huntingdonshire

No overall control – All-up elections for 52 councillors in 26 wards

Ipswich

Labour – 16 seats (one-third) up for election in 16 wards

Milton Keynes

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

Norfolk County Council

Conservative – Elections for all 84 councillors in 84 divisions

Norwich

No overall control – 13 seats (one-third) up for election in 13 wards

Peterborough

No overall control – 19 seats (one-third) up for election in 19 wards

Rochford

Conservative – 13 seats (one-third) up for election in 13 wards

St Albans

Liberal Democrat – 20 seats (one-third) up for election in 20 wards

South Cambridgeshire

Liberal Democrat – All-up elections 45 councillors in 26 wards

Southend-on-Sea

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

Stevenage

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

Suffolk County Council

Conservative – Elections for all 70 councillors in 63 divisions

Three Rivers

No overall control – 13 seats (one-third) up for election in 13 wards

Thurrock

Labour – 11 seats (one-third) up for election in 11 wards

Watford

Liberal Democrat – 12 seats (one-third) up for election in 12 wards

Welwyn Hatfield

No overall control – 16 seats (one-third) up for election in 16 wards

East Midlands

Number of councils with elections: 1 Total number of seats up for election: 11 in 11 wards

1 Labour-led

Lincoln

Labour – 11 seats (one-third) up for election in 11 wards

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: 21 Total number of seats up for election: 462 in 388 wards

16 Labour-led; 5 No Overall Control

Blackburn-with-Darwen

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

Bolton

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

Burnley

No overall control – 15 seats (one-third) up for election

Bury

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

Chorley

Labour – 14 seats (one-third) up for election

Halton

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

Hyndburn

Labour – 11 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

Pendle

No overall control – 10 seats (one-third) up for election

Preston

Labour – 16 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

West Lancashire

No overall control – 15 seats (one-third) up for election

Wigan

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

South East

Number of councils with elections: 26 Total seats up for election: 685 in 602 wards and divisions
3 Conservative-led; 6 Labour-led; 7 Liberal Democrat-led; 8 No overall control; 2 New councils

Adur

Labour – 14 seats (one-third) up for election in 14 wards

Basingstoke and Deane

Liberal Democrat – 18 seats (one-third) up for election in 18 wards

Cherwell

No overall control – 16 seats (one-third) up for election in 16 wards

Crawley

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

East Surrey

NEW COUNCIL – All-up elections for 72 councillors in 36 wards

East Sussex County Council

No overall control – Elections for all 50 councillors in 50 divisions

Eastleigh

Liberal Democrat – 14 seats (one-third) up for election in 14 wards

Fareham

Conservative – 16 seats (one-half) up for election in 16 wards

Gosport

Liberal Democrat – 14 seats (one-half) up for election in 14 wards

Hampshire County Council

Conservative – Elections for all 78 councillors in 76 divisions

Hart

No overall control – 11 seats (one-third) up for election in 11 wards

Hastings

No overall control – 16 seats (one-half) up for election in 16 wards

Havant

No overall control – 12 seats (one-third) up for election in 12 wards

Isle of Wight

No overall control – All-up elections for 39 councillors in 39 wards

Oxford

Labour – 24 seats (one-half) up for election in 24 wards

Portsmouth

Liberal Democrat – 14 seats (one-third) up for election in 14 wards

Reading

Labour – 16 seats (one-third) up for election in 16 wards

Rushmoor

No overall control – 13 seats (one-third) up for election in 13 wards

Southampton

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

Tunbridge Wells

Liberal Democrat – 13 seats (one-third) up for election in 13 wards

West Oxfordshire

No overall control – 16 seats (one-third) up for election in 16 wards

West Surrey

NEW COUNCIL – All-up elections for 90 councillors in 45 wards

West Sussex County Council

Conservative – Elections for all 70 councillors in 70 divisions

Winchester

Liberal Democrat – 15 seats (one-third) up for election in 15 wards

Wokingham

Liberal Democrat – 18 seats (one-third) up for election in 18 wards

Worthing

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

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 in 20 wards

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: 13 Total number of seats up for election: 491 in 278 wards

4 Conservative-led; 7 Labour-led; 2 No overall control

Birmingham

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

Cannock Chase

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

Coventry

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

Dudley

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

Newcastle-under-Lyme

Conservative – elections for all 44 councillors in 21 wards

Nuneaton and Bedworth

No overall control – 19 seats (one-half) up for election in 19 wards

Redditch

Labour – 9 seats (one-third) up for election in 9 wards

Rugby

No overall control – 14 seats (one-third) up for election in 14 wards

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

Tamworth

Labour – 11 seats (one-third) up for election in 11 wards

Walsall

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

Wolverhampton

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

Yorkshire

Number of councils with elections: 9 Total number of seats up for election: 431 in 207 wards

6 Labour-led; 1 Liberal Democrat-led; 2 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

North East Lincolnshire

No overall control – 15 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