STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2026 No. 96

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND

The Local Authorities (Changes to Years of Ordinary Elections) (England) Order 2026

Made - - - -	*3rd February 2026*
Laid before Parliament	*5th February 2026*
Coming into force - -	*27th February 2026*

The Secretary of State makes this Order in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 87(1) and (3) and 105(2) and (3) of the Local Government Act 2000(**a**).

Citation, commencement, extent and interpretation

1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the Local Authorities (Changes to Years of Ordinary Elections) (England) Order 2026 and comes into force on 27th February 2026.

(2) This Order extends to England and Wales.

(3) In this Order—

"the ordinary day of election of councillors" has the same meaning as in section 37 of the Representation of the People Act 1983(**b**);

"specified local authority" means a local authority specified in the Schedule to this Order.

Changes to the years of ordinary elections for specified local authorities

2. The ordinary elections of councillors of a specified local authority that would, but for this Order, have taken place on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2026 are instead to take place on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2027.

Retirement of councillors of specified local authorities

3.—(1) A councillor of a specified local authority who would, but for this Order, have retired on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2026 will retire instead on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2027, unless the councillor resigns or the office otherwise becomes vacant before that day.

(2) Paragraph (3) applies to East Sussex County Council, Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council and West Sussex County Council.

(**a**) 2000 c. 22.
(**b**) 1983 c. 2. Section 37 was amended by section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50), paragraph 5 of Schedule 3 to the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (c. 29), section 6(16) of the Wales Act 2017 (c. 4) and by S.I. 2018/1310.

(3) A councillor of a local authority to which this paragraph applies who is elected on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2027—

(a) comes into office on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2027, and

(b) retires on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2029, unless the councillor resigns or the office otherwise becomes vacant before that day.

(4) A councillor of a specified local authority other than those to which paragraph (3) applies, or Thurrock Council, who is elected on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2027—

(a) comes into office on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2027, and

(b) retires on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2030, unless the councillor resigns or the office otherwise becomes vacant before that day.

(5) Section 243(1) of the Local Government Act 1972(**a**) applies for the purposes of this article as if it were a provision of that Act.

Consequential modifications: existing casual vacancies

4.—(1) This article applies where—

(a) before the coming into force of this Order a casual vacancy occurs in the office of councillor of a specified local authority, and

(b) but for this Order, that vacancy would have been filled at the ordinary election of councillors in 2026 in accordance with section 89(3) of the Local Government Act 1972.

(2) Where this article applies, section 89(1) of the Local Government Act 1972(**b**) applies in respect of that vacancy as if, in paragraphs (a) and (b), for the words from "thirty-five days" to the end there were substituted "the period beginning with 27th February 2026 and ending with 7th May 2026".

(3) Section 90 of the Local Government Act 1972(**c**) applies in respect of a person elected to fill a casual vacancy to which this article applies as if for the words from "date" to "retired" there were substituted "fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2027".

Consequential amendments

5.—(1) In article 1(3)(b) of the following Orders, for "2026" substitute "2027"—

(a) the Norfolk (Electoral Changes) Order 2021(**d**);

(b) the Suffolk (Electoral Changes) Order 2022(**e**);

(c) the Wealden (Electoral Changes) Order 2024(**f**);

(d) the Thurrock (Electoral Changes) Order 2025(**g**).

(2) In the West Suffolk (Electoral Changes) Order 2023(**h**), in article 1(4)(b), for "2026" substitute "2027".

(**a**) 1972 c. 70.
(**b**) Section 89(1) was amended by section 19 of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50).
(**c**) Section 90 was amended by paragraph 11 of Schedule 14 to the Local Government Act 1985 (c. 51), Part 1 of Schedule 13 to the Education Reform Act 1988 (c. 40) and Part 10 of Schedule 1 to the Statute Law (Repeals) Act 2004 (c. 14).
(**d**) S.I. 2021/1219, as amended by S.I. 2025/137.
(**e**) S.I. 2022/823, as amended by S.I. 2025/137.
(**f**) S.I. 2024/435, as amended by S.I. 2025/137.
(**g**) S.I. 2025/129, as amended by S.I. 2025/137.
(**h**) S.I. 2023/285, as amended by S.I. 2025/137.

(3) In the Cheltenham (Electoral Changes) Order 2023(**a**), in article 4(3)(a), for "2026" substitute "2027".

(4) Paragraph (5) applies to the following Orders—

(a) the Stevenage (Electoral Changes) Order 2023(**b**);

(b) the Redditch (Electoral Changes) Order 2023(**c**).

(c) the Basildon (Electoral Changes) Order 2023(**d**);

(d) the Harlow (Electoral Changes) Order 2023(**e**);

(e) the Cannock Chase (Electoral Changes) Order 2023(**f**);

(5) In article 4 of the Orders to which this paragraph applies—

(a) in paragraph (3)—

(i) omit sub-paragraph (a);

(ii) in sub-paragraph (b), for "one is" substitute "two are";

(b) for paragraph (4), substitute—

"(4) Of the councillors elected for a ward in 2024, the councillors to retire under paragraph (3)(b) are to be the councillors elected by the smallest number of votes and the next smallest number of votes.".

(c) after paragraph (4), insert—

"(4A) Of the councillors elected for a ward in 2027—

(a) one is to retire on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in England in 2030; and

(b) one is to retire on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in England in 2031.

(4B) Of the councillors elected for a ward in 2027, the first councillor for each ward to retire is to be the councillor elected by the smaller number of votes.".

(d) in paragraph (7), after "paragraph (3)" insert "or paragraph (4A)".

(6) In the West Lancashire (Electoral Changes) Order 2022(**g**), in article 4—

(a) in paragraph (3)—

(i) omit sub-paragraph (b);

(ii) in sub-paragraph (c), for "one is" substitute "two are";

(b) omit paragraph (4)(b);

(c) after paragraph (4), insert—

"(4A) Of the councillors elected for a ward in 2027—

(a) one is to retire on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in England in 2030; and

(b) one is to retire on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in England in 2031.

(**a**) S.I. 2023/820.
(**b**) S.I. 2023/653.
(**c**) S.I. 2023/654.
(**d**) S.I. 2023/731.
(**e**) S.I. 2023/797.
(**f**) S.I. 2023/1023.
(**g**) S.I. 2022/1179.

(4B) Of the councillors elected for a ward in 2027 the first councillor for each ward to retire is to be the councillor elected by the smaller number of votes.".

(d) in paragraph (7), after "paragraph (3)" insert "or paragraph (4A)".

(7) In the Borough of Thurrock (Scheme of Elections) Order 2024(**a**), in article 2(2), (3) and (4), for "2026" substitute "2027".

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Alison McGovern
Minister of State
3rd February 2026 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(**a**) S.I. 2024/543, as amended by S.I. 2025/137.

SCHEDULE

Article 2

Specified local authorities

1. Adur District Council
2. Basildon Borough Council
3. Blackburn with Darwen Council
4. Burnley Borough Council
5. Cannock Chase District Council
6. Cheltenham Borough Council
7. Chorley Borough Council
8. City of Lincoln Council
9. Crawley Borough Council
10. East Sussex County Council
11. Exeter City Council
12. Harlow District Council
13. Hastings Borough Council
14. Hyndburn Borough Council
15. Ipswich Borough Council
16. Norfolk County Council
17. Norwich City Council
18. Pendle Borough Council
19. Peterborough City Council
20. Preston City Council
21. Redditch Borough Council
22. Rugby Borough Council
23. Stevenage Borough Council
24. Suffolk County Council
25. Tamworth Borough Council
26. Thurrock Council
27. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
28. West Lancashire Borough Council
29. West Sussex County Council
30. Worthing Borough Council

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

This Order changes the year of ordinary election of councillors for those English councils specified in the Schedule from 2026 to 2027. The years in which subsequent ordinary elections of councillors for those councils take place are not changed by this Order, except for Thurrock Council for which subsequent ordinary elections are, as a result of this Order, to be held in 2031 and every four years thereafter.

Article 3 extends the term of office of existing councillors of those authorities, and shortens the term of office for those councillors elected to those authorities (other than Thurrock Council) in 2027, as a consequence of the change. Councillors elected to councils where elections were also postponed in 2025 will retire in 2029, while councillors elected to other councils covered by this order (other than Thurrock Council) will retire in 2030.

Article 4 provides for the filling of certain casual vacancies by by-election where the casual vacancy occurred during the period of six months before the date on which the councillor whose office is vacant would otherwise retire but before the coming into force of this Order. Article 4 applies where, but for this Order, the election to fill that vacancy would have been held on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2026. Article 4(2) allows the returning officer to hold a by-election to fill such a casual vacancy at a time between the coming into force of this Order and 7th May 2026, even where this would be after the end of the period of thirty-five working days (beginning with the day on which the vacancy occurs) in which an election would otherwise be required to be held. Article 4(3) provides that a councillor elected to fill such a vacancy retires on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2027.

Article 5 makes consequential amendments. Article 5(1), (2) and (3) amends legislation that makes changes to divisions or wards, as the case may be, so that boundary changes come into force in 2027 rather than 2026. Article 5(4) to (6) amends legislation to clarify how the retirement of councillors is to work where 2026 elections are postponed to 2027. Article 5(7) amends article 2 of the Borough of Thurrock (Scheme of Elections) Order 2024 (S.I. 2024/543) so that the change of the scheme of elections for Thurrock Council provided for in that Order takes effect in 2027 rather than 2026.

A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no, or no significant, impact on the private, voluntary or public sector is foreseen.

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