



Cllr Susan Brown  
Leader, Oxford City Council  
Oxford Town Hall  
St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1BX

5 January 2026

Dear Cllr Brown

**An Open Letter re Government's invitation to postpone local elections, May 2026**

I write in relation to the potential postponement of the Oxford City Council elections, due to take place in May 2026, and to express our very strong view that these elections must go ahead.

While the Government has recently offered councils involved in local government reorganisation the opportunity to postpone their May 2026 elections, this would be inconsistent with the democratic process, which is designed to ensure that councillors are held accountable by the electorate in an appropriate time frame.

While the letter from Alison McGovern MP, Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness (18 Dec 2025) refers to "the postponement of your local election", the reality of a decision to postpone would be to effectively cancel elections in May 2026, without any guarantee as to how soon the next elections would occur.

Even in the most optimistic scenario, where elections would occur in May 2027 to a new council structure, these councillors would be part of a shadow unitary council which would not become operational until April 2028. This means that the current Oxford City Council, which has already been in place for 2 years, would remain in place for a further 2 years, without the electorate having any opportunity to influence the make-up of the Council during that time. This is clearly not acceptable.

Furthermore, with the complexity of the tasks of reorganisation, and the many examples of Government project over-run, it is highly likely that this situation might extend beyond that projected two-year period. In any case, the result of cancelling the elections in May 2026, will be to have the existing City Council in place for 4 years or more, when the current model is that there should be a 'refresh' via the ballot box every two years.

Public confidence in our democratic processes is already low, and cancelling the 2026 elections will further undermine that confidence, as it denies the electorate their right to vote in a timely way.

It is notable that 24, out of the 63 councils offered the cancellation option, have already indicated clearly that they will go ahead with elections in 2026, citing the importance of residents getting to vote. Only three have so far confirmed they will seek to cancel (Local Government Chronicle, 5 Jan 2026).

**In light of these issues, the Independent Oxford Alliance is calling on Oxford City Council to do the right thing, and confirm that Oxford City Council elections will go ahead as planned in May 2026.**

Yours sincerely,

*Anne Gwinnett*

Dr Anne Gwinnett  
Party Chair

cc Cabinet members: Cllr Ed Turner, Cllr Anna Railton, Cllr Lubna Arshad, Cllr Nigel Chapman,  
Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cllr Chewe Munkonge, and Cllr Linda Smith

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