



Round-up of Recent Political Changes – 18 May 2026

Ministerial Changes

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

The Rt Hon James Murray MP is the new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. He has been MP for Ealing North since 2019 and most recently was Chief Secretary to the Treasury from 1 September 2025 to 14 May 2026. He previously held the office of Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, having been shadow Financial Secretary for three and a half years before that. James Murray's original profession was as a management consultant. Before being elected to Parliament he was a local councillor and a member of the Greater London Assembly, and Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development from 2016 to 2019.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/secretary-of-state-for-health-and-social-care>

Minister for Devolution

Nesil Caliskan MP is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. She replaces Miatta Fahnbulleh MP who has resigned. The responsibilities she will hold are still to be confirmed. She was previously a Government Whip from 7 September 2025 to 12 May 2026 and elected as the MP for Barking in July 2024. She is a former leader of Enfield London Borough Council and the Local Government Association's Labour group

<https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/parliamentary-under-secretary-of-state--307>

Other Appointments

Natalie Fleet MP is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Home Office, replacing Jess Phillips MP. She is the MP for Bolsover.

Catherine Atkinson MP is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice replacing Alex Davies-Jones MP.

Preet Kaur Gill MP is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department of Health and Social Care replacing Dr Zubir Ahmed MP.

Local Government

The outcome of the local elections is having big effects on most councils where elections took place – 136 local authority areas. There are now 64 councils from this group with no

overall control, bringing the total number of councils in England with no overall control to 162, 50.9% of all councils. This includes councils where there is a minority administration.

Reform UK have taken control of 14 new councils from both the Conservatives and Labour; they are also the largest party in 14 others with no overall control.

The Greens now control five councils and have two directly elected mayors of London boroughs. Overall, Green votes did not turn into the expected number of council seats, but they still saw significant gains in councillor numbers usually at the expense of Labour.

There were gains in councillor numbers for the Liberal Democrats. Elections to the two new unitary councils in Surrey [East Surrey and West Surrey] both returned Liberal Democrat majorities.

This set of elections also resulted in a very large number of new councillors elected for the first time, coupled with the loss of councillors with years of experience and understanding of the local government sector. This will make things much harder for council officers, many of whom will need to spend significant time on induction and supporting new councillors, particularly those taking on governance and decision-making responsibilities. All councils also need to hold the council AGM before the end of May – creating a pressured timescale for council staff to fulfil the legal requirements including electing a leader and cabinet.

Leadership of Local Government Association

Following the local elections held on Thursday 7 May 2026, the LGA’s political proportionality has now been calculated and independently verified. The Labour Group remains the largest group at the LGA and will thus retain the Chair of the LGA. A new formal Group has been created for the Green Party meaning that the LGA will have to navigate six different groups within its committees and decision making structures.

The results are as follows:

Labour	24.6%
Conservative	20.0%
Reform UK	18.7%
Liberal Democrat	17.6%
Independents	10.9%
Green	8.2%

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-political-proportionality-confirmed-1>

County Councils Network

Following the significant changes in county council administrations, Reform UK is the party with the largest number of county councillors. Reform UK will now nominate the Chair of the County Council Network.

Reform UK	35.3%
Liberal Democrat	22.5%
Conservative	21.9%
Independents	8.8%
Green	5.8%
Labour	5.6%

<https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/new-political-proportionality-at-the-county-councils-network-2/>

Changes of Note

Reform UK have lost control of **Worcestershire County Council** after one year in power as a minority administration. The leader of the Conservative group on the council made a deal with the Green Party, Liberal Democrats and independents to form a new administration. The Reform UK group had also seen bitter infighting and a battle for leadership of the council. This triggered the Conservative leader to act as he did, and he has now been suspended from the party.

The incoming Reform UK leadership of **Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils** have threatened to take legal action in an attempt to stop local government reorganisation [LGR]. This is despite the previous Conservative led Essex County Council deciding not to proceed with a judicial review of the LGR decision on the basis that it was unlikely to be successful.