

Appendix N

LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Local authority elections were normally held in the United Kingdom annually, in either March/April or November. Although war broke out on 4 August 1914, this event did not affect local elections and these duly took place in November 1914 and April 1915.

A coalition government was formed in May 1915 and in June it was announced that legislation would be introduced to extend the life of Parliament and to postpone the municipal elections due in November 1915. The postponement would also relieve local authorities from the necessity of compiling new electoral registers. The Elections and Registration Bill was introduced to the House of Commons on 22 July 1915 by the President of the Local Government Board, Walter Long, and completed all its stages rapidly, receiving the Royal Assent on 29 July 1915.

Section 1 of the Act provided that the “next statutory elections of county and borough councillors, district councillors, guardians, and parish councillors, shall be postponed for a year, and the term of office of the existing councillors and guardians shall accordingly be extended by one year.” Elections were also not required to fill any casual vacancies, which were to be filled “by means of the choice by the council” and that any councillor so chosen was to “hold office in the same manner in all respects as if he had been elected to fill the vacancy.” Section 3 of the Act provided that the Parliamentary and local government register of electors in force at the time of the passing of the Act was to remain in force until 31 December 1916.

The war continued until the Armistice on 11 November 1918, so the provisions of the 1915 legislation were renewed on four occasions by Parliament as follows:

| Act | Date of Royal Assent |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Parliament and Local Elections Act 1916 | 23 August 1916 |
| Parliament and Local Elections Act 1917 | 26 April 1917 |
| Parliament and Local Elections (No. 2) Act 1917 | 29 November 1917 |
| Parliament and Local Elections Act 1918 | 30 July 1918 |

This last Act postponed any statutory local elections due before 1 March 1919; therefore the April 1919 local elections were able to take place as normal.