

Electoral Matters Committee

18 December 2025

Electoral Pilot Early Voting Hubs for May 2026 Elections

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jane Spilsbury Portfolio Holder for Performance, Engagement and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services
Report Author Darren Whitney	Job Title: Electoral Services Manager Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881650
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Electoral Matters Committee RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The Elections Pilot Working Group be made up of the agreed Councillors, and**
- 2) the first working group meeting date be advised.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In August 2025 the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published a prospectus on Flexible Voting Pilots 2026 under the Government's Electoral Modernisation banner. It noted that little has changed in the way voting is carried out since the Ballot Act 1872 and that it is necessary to explore ways to make voting in person more efficient, convenient and better aligned with the electorate of today. MHCLG invited local authorities with elections in May 2026 to apply to take part in these pilots.
- 2.2 At the meeting of this Committee held on 21 October Members endorsed the application made by Officers in consultation with Group Leaders.
- 2.3 The pilot application was to offer the electorate the option of early voting at designated hubs across Redditch Borough.

Electoral Matters Committee

18 December 2025

The application asked MHCLG to consider the following as part of the pilot:

- **Early voting period:** from Saturday 2 May 2026 through to Wednesday 6 May 2026.
- **Voting hubs:** one hub in a location of high footfall (e.g. the Kingfisher Shopping Centre or Abbey Stadium Leisure Centre), supplemented by up to four further hubs.
- **Access:** all polling station electors (those without absent votes) within the Borough would be able to cast their vote at any hub.
- **Technology:** use of electronic polling station registers to support the administration of early voting and ensure real-time accuracy across hubs.

Polling day on Thursday 7 May would be as normal with all usual polling stations open and only electors that normally vote in those would be allowed to do so.

- 2.4 It was noted that the pilot should not incur extra costs for the Borough and that, to avoid confusion the early voting hubs should not be sited within buildings that are routinely used for polling.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 This Committee resolved to set up an Election Pilot Working Group to agree preferred voting hubs within the Borough. Due to the tight timetable it is recommended the working group meet virtually to discuss the voting hubs.
- 3.2 The working group is to be made up of Members of this Committee, other Elected Members that express an interest and relevant officers. Group Leaders have been asked to if they wish to nominate members of their group to sit on the working group.
- 3.3 Over the past few weeks officers have been investigating venues that have potential to be an early voting hub. They have, so far, approached the following venues:
- Abbey Stadium
 - Alexandra Hospital
 - Arrow Valley Visitor Centre
 - Kingfisher Shopping Centre
 - Kingsley Sports Centre, Tudor Grange Academy

Electoral Matters Committee

18 December 2025

- Morrisons, Warwick Highway
- Morton Stanley Park, Windmill Drive
- Tesco Extra, Coldfield Drive

It should be noted that some of the above venues may require temporary buildings sited at the venue.

Progress on discussions with the above venues will be given at the meeting.

- 3.4 After meeting with the MHCLG, officers think that a maximum of four early voting hubs should be used.
- 3.5 The working group may want to direct officers to investigate additional potential sites that could be used as a voting hub.
- 3.6 As securing early voting hubs in a timely manner is essential, officers recommend that meeting dates for the working group are agreed at the meeting. It is envisaged that the working group would conclude it's findings by mid-January so work with suppliers can progress in a timely manner.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The MHCLG have confirmed that funding of additional costs for running the pilot would be covered by them.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Once approved a statutory order would be drawn up by the Secretary of State to allow the pilot to go ahead. This would modify existing legislation to allow for the changes that the pilot would create.
- 5.2 MHCLG state that they would intend that the order would be in place by January 2026.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 Participation in this pilot exercise should help to inform how elections will take place in the future.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The proposals detailed in this report, relate to delivering quality services under the organisational priorities of high quality services and supported governance.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report but there may be a reduction in direct polling station journeys.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 Accessibility to any voting hubs would need to be factored in.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 As this is a pilot there is a risk of voter confusion. Although mitigated in the fact polling day will be held as normal, work on communications will be key to reducing any confusion.
- 7.2 Hubs may not be available for the whole of the early voting period so early identification and booking of these is essential.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Electoral Matters Committee

18 December 2025

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jane Spilsbury	
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	
Financial Services	Deb Goodall, Assistant Director of Financial and Customer Services	9 December 2025
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal Solicitor - Governance	9 December 2025