# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE** | **Update on Flexible Voting Pilots** |
| **DATE** | **09 November 2021** |
| **BY** | **Mick Antoniw MS, Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution** |

On 29 July, I published a written statement setting out the four strands of work we intend to pursue in advance of the May 2022 elections to enable more of our newly enfranchised voters and existing voters to register and vote if they so choose:

* to work with principal councils on a selection of flexible voting pilots to test different forms of advanced voting;
* to work with local authorities and the electoral community to increase registration, especially through working with schools;
* to build on existing channels to increase overall democratic engagement. This is particularly relevant for young people and their understanding of the impact that local government has on their lives;
* to consider the design of postal ballots, to ensure everything is done to minimise errors.

The local government elections in May 2022 are the first opportunity to make progress towards ensuring elections in Wales are as accessible as possible and that everyone who wants to vote can vote.

This written statement provides an update on our plans for flexible voting pilots which will test different forms of advanced voting.

Following an expressions of interest process, I am pleased to announce that I have agreed in principle proposals from four local authorities who intend to deliver a flexible voting pilot for the May 2022 local government elections. They are:

***Blaenau Gwent*** *–* the centrally-located Ebbw Vale Learning Zone will be used as an advanced polling station for all residents of the county, including students of the college. Advance voting will be available during the week leading to Election Day.

***Bridgend*** - polling stations in certain low turnout wards will be open for advanced voting during the week leading up to Election Day A new polling station will also be created in a school for registered students at that school only.

***Caerphilly*** – the council offices at Ystrad Mynach will be used as an advanced polling station for all residents of the county on the weekend before Election Day.

***Torfaen –***the council offices at Pontypool will be used as an advanced polling station for all residents of the county on the weekend before Election Day.

My officials will continue to work closely with the authorities to refine the details of their proposals and commence the formal approval process in line with section 10 of the Representation of the People Act 2000.

I look forward to working closely with local government and the electoral community on all these issues and will keep members updated on progress.