

Alison McGovern (MP)
Minister of State for Local Government
and Homelessness
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Enquiries to:
Tom Shardlow

Direct Dial:
02476 376004

Direct Email:
Tom.shardlow@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk

Date: 05 January 2026

Our Ref: AMG

Dear Minister McGovern (MP)

Your Ref:

**RE: Council Response to Minister of State for Local Government –
May 2026 Elections**

Further to your recent correspondence addressed to the Leader of the Council, I am writing to provide the council's formal response. This matter carries significant implications for our authority and our communities. Though unprecedented, under normal circumstances, such a decision would be subject to Full Council debate and public engagement. However, given the limited timeframe set by Government, to lay down the statutory mechanism to delay an election, this has not been possible.

Following consultation with the Chief Executive Officer (Returning Officer), and the council's Monitoring Officer, I have agreed to undertake a response as Leader of the council. However, noting that the council is under no overall control, and to ensure fairness and transparency, this letter includes contributions from all political group leaders, as well as an objective assessment of the Chief Executive and Returning Officer as to our election readiness and capacity.

Cllr Christopher Watkins Leader of the Labour Group and Leader of the Council (18 members)

We have discussed this at a full meeting of the Labour group, and it was decided that we should ask you to postpone the May 2026 local elections.

Although, as you will see, our preparation for the elections is well underway, it was felt that holding elections for a local authority that is shortly to be abolished is not a prudent use of resources.

Concern was expressed about the considerable effort required to properly prepare for LGR, and that some of the money saved could be put towards this important preparatory work.

Cllr Kris Wilson Leader of the Conservative Group (17 members)

The Conservative group at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council opposes the prospect of delaying our elections in May 2026 and does not believe that the high threshold to delay has been met that would justify their delay. Of the 10 priority areas the Government announced last year to be in the first tranche of reform, only Surrey County Council has had confirmation of the number of new authorities. Work is still required to deliver this and the other 9 priority areas which are yet to have their arrangements confirmed. Further delays to these councils would potentially risk councillors serving up to 7-year terms, which is unacceptable.

As Warwickshire would be in tranche 2 our arrangements would necessarily take longer to determine and announce. In our view it is unlikely that we will meet the proposed 2028 establishment of the new authority/ies and runs the risk of extraordinarily long terms of office for existing councillors. Democracy delayed is democracy denied, and the Conservative group here in Nuneaton cannot in all conscience condone the removal of such a fundamental right to our residents.

Cllr Michele Kondakor Leader of the Green Group (2 members)

As the Green Group on Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC), we are very much in favour of the 2026 local elections going ahead.

Fundamentally, elections should always go ahead as planned whenever possible. If there was to be postponement of any elections due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), this should have been part of the plan/timetable for LGR, not considered as an afterthought. If these elections are postponed, those who would be up for re-election in May 2026, would be having their terms extended by 2 years, even if they were expecting to stand down, as the 2027 elections will be for the

shadow unitary authority, in whatever form that takes. It is too late in the planning phase of elections to decide to postpone them and would be undemocratic. It is unreasonable that this has been brought up over the Christmas period when it has not been able to be discussed at the normal cycle of Council meetings.

Cllr Rob Roze Liberal Democrat (1 member)

The foundation of democracy lies in fair elections and the mandate given to this council. It has been so far clear for everyone the timing and the mandate the councillors have been given in this council.

What has changed is the introduction of local government reorganisation. Something which is not fully understood by most of the borough residents.

I see no grounds for postponing the elections. It is quite opposite - the lack of clarity of reorganisation is damaging the trust in the council and councillors. Quite clearly the elections should go ahead as planned. If there are any changes to be done on how councils operate in Nuneaton, Bedworth and Bulkington - it needs to be done locally!

Tom Shardlow CMgr (FCMI) Chief Executive and Returning Officer

I can confirm that preparations for the forthcoming elections are progressing in line with statutory requirements and Electoral Commission guidance. Key elements such as venue bookings, printing arrangements, and systems are in place, and recruitment and training of election staff are underway. This was confirmed to Full Council in December 2025.

The Election Planning is managed through an Elections Project Board, and an Elections Risk Register has been updated and is monitored through this mechanism. Subject to continued monitoring and mitigation, I am satisfied that the council can deliver a lawful and transparent election, should the May 2026 elections go ahead.

Should the elections be postponed, then there may be a cashable saving to the authority in the region of £150,000 - £200,000. However, several members had historically indicated that they only wished to serve until May 2026, so the prospect of by-election may diminish this proportionately.

It is of note that the 2024 elections were unusual in that they were 'all out'. As Nuneaton and Bedworth elects in halves, on 4-year terms, the

current members who are due to have their seat contested in May 2026, will have only served 2 years.

Finally, no public engagement has been undertaken, nor have nominations been undertaken, so I am unable to represent the view of the electorate or any candidates who are not currently elected but may wish to stand.

We trust this response reflects the collective position of the council and its political groups. Should you require further clarification or discussion, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Chris Watkins
Leader of the Council
On behalf of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council