

# PLEASE NOTE VENUE

## **GENERAL PURPOSES (POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW) SUB-COMMITTEE AGENDA**



**Wednesday 21 November 2007**

**at 2.00 pm**

**in the Red Room, Avondale Centre,  
Dyke House, Hartlepool  
(Raby Road entrance)**

MEMBERS: GENERAL PURPOSES (POLLING  
DISTRICT REVIEW) SUB COMMITTEE:

Councillor J Marshall (Chair);  
Councillors Akers-Belcher, Griffin, Fleming, Morris, Shaw and Worthy.

Resident Representatives:  
Joan Steel (North), Bob Farrow (Central), Michael McKie (South).

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES**
  - 3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 21 August and 3 September 2007
- 4. ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**
  - 4.1 Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places – *Chief Solicitor*
- 5. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

# **GENERAL PURPOSES (POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW) SUB COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES RECORD**

21 August 2007

The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. in the Belle Vue Community, Sports and Youth Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillor: John Marshall (In the Chair)

Councillors: Stephen Akers-Belcher, Tim Fleming, Sheila Griffin,  
Dr George Morris, Jane Shaw and Gladys Worthy.

Resident Representatives: Joan Steel, Bob Farrow and Michael McKie.

Officers: Tony Brown, Chief Solicitor  
Christine Armstrong, Central Services Manager  
Lorraine Bennison, Principal Registration and Members Services  
Officer  
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **2. Declarations of interest by members**

Resident Representative Bob Farrow declared a personal interest through his involvement with the Belle Vue Centre.

### **3. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places** *(Chief Solicitor)*

The Chief Solicitor reported that at their meeting on 25 July 2007, the General Purposes Committee resolved to establish a sub-committee to undertake the work involved in the review of polling districts and polling stations as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006). The committee also approved a timetable for the review but in the light of concerns expressed by members of the committee regarding the time

available for public consultation, further consideration has been given to options to advance the commencement of consultation and to defer the date for implementation of the review. In consequence, it has been agreed with the Chairman that the first meeting of the sub-committee should take place earlier than proposed in the timetable, thereby enabling the second meeting to be advanced to the beginning of September (3 September).

Additionally, an assessment has been made of the latest date by which the review could be completed. In this respect, concerns centre around the timing of the issue of the new registers of electors, which are required to be published on 1st December. Whilst the ideal position would be to incorporate changes in the new register, it is felt to be acceptable that the changes be given effect by republishing the register on 1 January 2008 – but in this case, anyone wishing to have a copy of the register incorporating new district boundaries would have to wait until 1 January. In relation to the review programme, this would enable the changes to be referred to Council on 13 December 2007 (with a fall-back of a special Council meeting before Christmas if approval was not given on that date). In turn, this would extend the consultation period by a further two weeks approximately. Overall, these changes to the programme would build a further three to four weeks into the consultation period.

The Chief Solicitor briefly outlined the appendices circulated with the report which provided the following information/details: -

- 1) Current district boundaries - maps showing location of most recently used polling stations
- 2) List of existing halls/rooms available for public use/hiring (to follow)
- 3) Electorate at existing polling stations
- 4) Turnout at existing polling stations
- 5) Postal vote applications ward by ward
- 6) Any comments received in respect of last used polling stations
- 7) Information relating to future residential development (to follow)
- 8) Draft Hartlepool Borough Council Accessibility Strategy (to follow)
- 9) Future population estimates from Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (to follow)
- 10) EC Circular 28/2007

Members discussed some of the figures set out in the appendices and were concerned at some of the population projection figures when there was such significant development both on-going and proposed for the town. Members asked that the accuracy of the Joint Strategy Unit's figures in light of the proposed development was correct.

The Sub Committee went on to discuss the method of review and general matters that would affect it. It was highlighted that presently there were around 68500 electors in 17 wards with 50 polling districts. Some wards were quite small; Greatham for instance had only 1400 electors though the others averaged around 4100 electors. In the polling districts there were

an average of around 1350 electors. This needed to be balanced against recent turnout figures that gave average figures of 390 per polling district. If postal votes were then subtracted, the average number of electors visiting each polling station on polling day was 250, which was less than 20 per hour. The numbers obviously varied quite widely among individual polling stations. Members asked during the meeting for details of the postal votes for individual wards over the recent elections. The Central Services Manager indicated that no figures for postal votes other than those set out in the appendices relating to the most recent elections were available.

It was also necessary to take into account the geographical layout of the ward and polling districts. Busy main roads, walking distances, steep hills, large open spaces, school sites, cemeteries etc. all had an effect on the movement of people which needed to be taken into account.

The Chief Solicitor highlighted that as the Returning Officer he had the facility of using council premises as polling places – schools, community centres etc. However, there were issues of use for many other facilities around the town. Previously, those venues controlled by Housing Hartlepool would have all been readily available for instance. Management Committees and resident now were in some properties, deciding not to allow their use as a polling station. It was essential that the local authority had some reliability of availability of venues for polling places over the next few years, though it was accepted that over the years polling stations would change and move. In those areas where there were no readily available community facilities, portacabins were used, though only as a last resort. Portacabins had many problems, there were access problems for the elderly and disabled, they were costly and also unpopular with staff.

The Chief Solicitor indicated that in line with the requirements of the regulations, public notice of the review had been given. Once the sub committee had made its proposals, they would be open to public consultation. Some Members indicated that there may also be submissions made by the political groups.

The Sub Committee went on to discuss its approach to the review. Many members had comments to make in relation to specific polling stations and problems experienced at recent elections. The Sub Committee agreed to assess initially the number of polling districts for each individual ward. Utilising the maps circulated to Members showing each ward and the polling districts within each, the sub committee considered each ward in turn. The Chief Solicitor highlighted that in relation to parish areas the regulations state that “each parish must be a separate polling district; if this creates too large a district, it should be split into separate districts.” This would be particularly pertinent to the Elwick, Headland and Greatham Parish Councils areas.

The Sub Committee then discussed the seventeen wards in the borough

and considered the polling districts in each as set out on the maps. Members made the following recommendations for each ward.

Brus Ward – 3 polling districts (same as current situation)  
 Burn Valley Ward – 3 districts (same as current situation)  
 Dyke House Ward – 3 districts (same as current situation)  
 Elwick Ward – 8 districts (same as current situation)  
 Fens Ward – 3 districts (though consideration should be given to potentially combining EA/EB to reduce to 2 polling districts)  
 Park Ward – 3 districts (same as current situation)  
 Foggy Furze Ward – 3 districts (same as current situation)  
 Greatham Ward – 2 districts (same as current situation)  
 Grange Ward – 3 districts (same as current situation)  
 Hart Ward – 4 districts (same as current situation)  
 Owton Manor Ward – 2 districts (reduced from 3)  
 Stranton Ward – 4 districts (same as current situation)  
 Rift House Ward – 4 districts (increase by 1 by dividing LB)  
 Rossmere Ward – 4 districts (same as current situation)  
 Seaton Ward – 3 districts (same as current situation)  
 St Hilda Ward – 3 districts (same as current situation)  
 Throston Ward – 3 districts (redraw boundaries between QA and QB north to south)

It was highlighted that there were some detailed changes to be made to the boundaries of some of the polling districts due to recent housing developments. These would be included in the revised maps brought to the next meeting which would include those comments made by Members. The sub committee would then focus on the locations of polling stations within the districts.

The Chair indicated that the next meeting would be held on Monday 3 September at 10.00am. The venue for the meeting would be confirmed to Members shortly.

### **Decision**

1. That the recommendations of the sub committee in relation to the polling districts in the wards are as set out above.
2. That revised ward maps based on the recommendations of the sub committee including any necessary detailed revisions be submitted to the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN

# **GENERAL PURPOSES (POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW) SUB COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES RECORD**

3 September 2007

The meeting commenced at 10.00 p.m. in the Avondale Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillors: Stephen Akers-Belcher, Tim Fleming, Sheila Griffin, and Gladys Worthy.

Resident Representatives: Joan Steel, Bob Farrow and Michael McKie.

Officers: Tony Brown, Chief Solicitor  
Christine Armstrong, Central Services Manager  
Lorraine Bennison, Principal Registration and Members Services Officer  
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **4. Appointment of Chair**

In the absence of the Chair of the Sub Committee, Councillor Akers-Belcher was appointed Chair for this meeting.

### **5. Apologies for Absence**

Councillors J Marshall, Dr Morris and Shaw.

### **6. Declarations of interest by members**

Resident Representative Bob Farrow declared a personal interest through his involvement with the Belle Vue Centre.

### **7. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 August 2007**

Consideration of the minutes of the previous meeting was deferred.

### **8. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places** *(Chief Solicitor)*

Following Members' discussions at the previous meeting revised polling district plans had been circulated to Members. The Chief Solicitor referred to his report where he had indicated that it was necessary to determine a

certain degree of certainty in relation to suitable premises for polling places. The following factors were relevant: -

- Where suitable premises are in Council ownership, e.g. schools, community centres, libraries, then it would be reasonable to identify such premises as the polling place. It would be unwise to seek to identify a specific room or section of the building as a change in circumstances might render the place unavailable.
- Where Council premises are not available, and it becomes necessary to rely on premises in the control of private persons/organisations, it is unlikely that the owner will be prepared to commit to the use of the premises in the long term. If there are alternative polling stations within an area comprising part of the district but uncertainty whether any of them will be available come an election, the polling place could be the area enclosing all alternative premises. In some instances, it may be possible to enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for premises to be made available over the period until next review and, on that basis to identify the premises as the polling place.
- Where no suitable premises are identifiable, and reliance must be made on e.g. a portable unit, the whole of the district should be identified as the polling place.

It was highlighted that in relation to SLA's that it had not been the Council's previous practice to utilise these agreements. They had only come to the fore following recent discussions with Housing Hartlepool over the use of some of their premises. The Chief Executive had indicated to the Chief Solicitor that she would be happy to enter into such SLA's as long as the residents of the particular premises authorised such an agreement.

The meeting then moved on to consider the revised polling district maps for each of the wards. The revised maps showed in greater detail the layout of estates and housing areas and gave a clearer indication of the location of previous and proposed polling places.

#### BRUS WARD

There was discussion over the location of the polling place for district AA. Initial preference was for the station to be at the Working Men's Club, if not a porta-cabin located near the shops was considered the next best option. In light of this, it was decided to declare the whole of AA as the polling place. There were no concerns in relation to the polling places in AB and AC.

#### BURN VALLEY WARD

The alterations to the boundaries of BA and BB as discussed at the previous meeting were shown on the new plan. The new arrangements

were agreed.

#### DYKE HOUSE WARD

There was considerable debate over the revised boundaries for CA and CB. Members agreed to reconsider the boundary on a north south basis. Several alternatives were discussed. The final arrangements were suggested for consultation.

CA would remain as originally set out

CB would be reduced but as previously using the Jesmond Road polling place. CB to include Jesmond Road/Jesmond Gardens east across to a line North south along Chatham Gardens and Acclom Street.

CC – to include the part of previous CB east of Chatham Gardens and Acclom Street south of Challoner Road to Hart Lane. On the east side of Raby Road to include part Wharton Terrace, Tumbull, Hurworth, Perth, Gray and Granger Streets and the 'Walks'.

CD – new – the remainder of the previous CC not included in the revised CC above voting at the Library in Wharton Terrace.

#### ELWICK WARD

Arrangements to remain as present. The whole of the districts to identified as polling places.

#### FENS WARD

The revised plans were agreed. There was some discussion over the polling places. EA was to utilise the Public House on Mowbray Road. EB and EC would both utilise the Fens School, though the arrangements at the school would need to be improved.

#### FOGGY FURZE WARD

Arrangements to remain as at present. In FC both the Club and the Belle Vue Centre would be designated as polling places. The Chief Solicitor still had concerns in relation to the Belle Vue Centre and the room used. Members did comment that the public had clearly indicated that they preferred the Centre.

#### GRANGE WARD

The new arrangements for Grange were set out on the revised plan. GA would vote at the St John's Ambulance Hall on Sandringham Road, GB at the Lynnfield Centre and GC at Walmsley Hall on Osbourne Road.

#### GREATHAM WARD

Whole HA to be identified as polling place. Potential move of location of porta-cabin to the end of the black path. Other arrangements to remain.

#### HART WARD

Minor changes to IB and IC had been incorporated. The whole of IB to be identified as a polling place, though there was the potential to use the Rowntree Trust development as a polling place in the future.

#### OWTON WARD

Minor amendments had been made to JB. With the potential closure of Brierton Secondary School, Owton Manor Primary would be used as a polling place.

#### PARK WARD

Some minor changes had been made to KA and KB around Dunston Road.

#### RIFT HOUSE WARD

The previous LB had now been split as requested at the previous meeting with Oxford Road as the boundary between the two new areas. The polling places would be: LA – Rift House Primary School; LB – Browning Avenue Baptist Church; LC – Kingsley School; and LD – Swinburne House.

#### ROSSMERE WARD

No changes proposed.

#### St HILDA WARD

NA – it was proposed that the Phoenix Centre to replace Heronspol Close as the polling place. The whole of the district to be declared the polling place to allow for the arrangements to be clarified.

#### SEATON WARD

Some minor amendments had been made to the boundary between OB and OC. Polling places: OA – The Schooner PH; OB – Seaton Library; and OC – Seaton Youth Centre.

#### STRANTON WARD

Members discussed the potential polling places in the ward. A polling place at the Church of the Nazarene was proposed but it was reported that

approaches had been made and refused. There was discussion on the potential move of the polling place for PB to a location on Church Street.

#### THROSTON WARD

Members had discussed several changes to the boundaries of QA and QB at the previous meeting but on seeing the proposed maps, agreed to the return to the original polling districts. Polling Places to be: QA – Throston Grange Community Centre; QB – Throston Grange Primary School; and QC – Jesmond Road Primary School.

#### DRAFT REVIEW DOCUMENT

The Chief Solicitor submitted a draft of the covering document that would be issued with the consultation documents. The proposals now approved by the Sub-Committee would be incorporated into the document together with the revised maps. Following the consultation period, the comments would be reported to a further meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 22 November 2007.

The Chair commended the sub committee for the detailed work undertaken during the two meetings.

#### **Decision**

That the proposed polling districts for Hartlepool approved by the sub committee and incorporating their comments as detailed above form part of the formal consultation documents for the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in Hartlepool

CHAIRMAN

# **GENERAL PURPOSES (POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW) SUB-COMMITTEE**

**21<sup>st</sup> November 2007**



**Report of:** Chief Solicitor

**Subject:** REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

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## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is

- (a) to acquaint the sub-committee with the responses to consultation received up to the close of the consultation period (9<sup>th</sup> November 2007), and
- (b) to invite the sub-committee to agree the proposals (with any changes arising from the consultation) to be recommended to the General Purposes Committee at their meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At their meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September the sub-committee expressed their views on the boundaries of polling districts and upon available polling places, and approved a proposals document for consultation.
- 2.2 The proposals were open to formal consultation from .....September - 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007. Public notice of the consultation appeared in the Hartlepool Mail where news releases appeared on 2 occasions during the consultation period. The consultation document was placed on the Council's website with a link to the relevant page appearing prominently on the home page. The document was also submitted to the persons and organisations previously approved by the sub-committee. Due to other commitments of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, the proposals were not considered by the co-ordinating committee until 9<sup>th</sup> November and, accordingly, at the time of preparation of this report, the views of the co-ordinating committee are still awaited.

### **3. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 There are appended to this report, Appendix 1 (being a composite of the responses supplied in the context of a questionnaire which was issued with the consultation document) and Appendix 2 being comments received otherwise than in the questionnaire.
- 3.2 The level of response was relatively low, in total 13 responses.
- 3.3 Of the responses submitted by questionnaire (11), there was overwhelming support for both the polling district boundaries and the polling places. Members will note (Appendix 1) several comments raising issues which members may wish to consider at their meeting. Of greatest significance in terms of the number of polling places affected is the view expressed by one respondent that schools should not be used. If this principle were adopted, the authority would have great difficulty in providing polling places due to the number of schools which are used. Where schools are used all practical steps available are used to ensure that the least level of contact between voters and pupils. It is, of course, significant that the legislation relating to the conduct of elections entitles the authority to make use of premises (such as schools) which are funded from public funds.
- 3.4 I will advise the sub-committee at their meeting of any further comments received up to the date of the meeting.

### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

That the sub-committee consider the responses to consultation and, subject thereto, approve the proposals for submission to the General Purposes Committee.

### **5. CONTACT OFFICER**

Tony Brown/Christine Armstrong.

## **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

### **Questionnaire Responses**

As part of the public consultation exercise, proposals relating to the review were sent to interested parties including Councillors, Group Secretaries, Iain Wright MP, Political Parties, Parish Councils, Hartlepool Access Group, HVDA, Polling Station Owners/Booking Agents and Housing Hartlepool. The proposal was also included on the Council's website in the Your Town Your Say section and made available at the Central Library & Civic Centre for public inspection.

A questionnaire formed part of the consultation documents and 11 responses were received.

In responding to the specific questions, feedback received was:

**1. Do you agree with the proposals for the Polling District areas?**

10 (91%) respondents agreed completely, and 1 (9%) responded agreed in part with the proposals for the Polling District areas.

**2. If you do not agree completely, please explain why:**

No comments were received.

**3. Do you agree with the proposals for Polling Places?**

9 (82%) respondents agreed completely, 1 (9%) respondent agreed in part and 1 (9%) did not agree at all with the proposals for Polling Places.

**4. If you do not agree completely, please explain why:**

Comments received were:

**GRM**

There is no excuse for using schools as Polling Stations in this day and age. It compromises children's safety and interferes with their education. Alternative venues must be sought as a matter of urgency.

**HARTLEPOOLSINGS**

The archaic use of schools as polling places should be abandoned. It is disruptive to children's learning in most cases and special arrangements usually are required to accommodate the polling station within the building. Since the introduction of literacy and numeracy strategies and an overloaded curriculum, any disruption to daily routines is not in the best

interests of the children and their learning. Children first – not political arrangements.

**5. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the review of polling districts and polling places and the proposals?**

VERONICA FARROW

Pleased to see that Belle Vue Community Centre is being proposed used – Social Club not suitable for disabled people.

ST. MATTHEW'S COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Committee of St. Matthew's Community Centre are happy for it to be used as a polling station.

PAULINE FROST

Please ensure that the correct names of the buildings are used when notifying people of the polling stations in Rossmere Ward.

COUNCILLOR JOHN LAUDERDALE

Will the ORB centre be large enough?

HARTLEPOOL MARITIME EXPERIENCE (HME)

In providing the space at HME for a polling station, may on occasions lose valuable income for catering etc as the large Baltic Room is unavailable for hire.

COUNCILLOR MICHELLE PLANT

- (i) Would like something more permanent for King Oswy area. The elderly cannot climb the steps of the prefab, they are too high.
- (ii) People like to know well in advance where their polling station is going to be ie. Last election they were asking right up until the day where they had to vote.

**Review of Polling Districts & Polling Places**

**Comments Received**

**Hartlepool Access Group – 31 August 2007**

Christine Remmer commented by telephoned that the Hartlepool Access Group considered that an access audit should be undertaken at all potential polling places prior to them being confirmed. It was advised that proposals would be put forward for public consultation, however, Christine's view was that these should be undertaken prior to the proposal being put forward for public consultation.

**Resident – Whitfield Drive**

A resident has expressed concerns about the distance from their home to the polling station at Tanfield Road.

## Hartlepool Access Group

SHOPMOBILITY · ALL ABILITY FORUM  
ACCESS AUDIT GROUP · BEFRIENDING SERVICE  
DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

15/08/2007

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I write with reference to correspondence recently received regarding the 'review of polling districts and polling places'.

17 AUG 2007  
RECEIVED TO  
FILE NO.

It is my understanding that the sub-committee will meet later this month, and that the proposals will then be open to public consultation. As a development worker for Hartlepool Access Group, I feel it is important to make representation before the public consultation, to ensure that the needs of disabled people are taken into consideration at the onset of any sub-committee decisions.

Usually in a case such as this, I would converse with the All Ability Forum (a generic forum and consultative vehicle for disabled individuals) to highlight specific issues. Unfortunately, I am unable to do so in this instance due the time constraints.

I ask then, that the sub-committee consider the following generic points with regards to access for persons with any type of disability.

- Access into and around places of polling
- Egress from building in case of emergency
- Appropriate signage in and around polling station
- Information in alternative formats (taking into consideration colour tonal, font size, text layout etc)
- The approach to the polling station i.e. tactile dropped kerbs, street lighting, and other street furniture

Should you require elaboration or any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Similarly, should a representative wish to attend the All Ability Forum to consult direct with disabled people and representatives of disability groups, please contact me and I will be happy to accommodate this.

Thank you



Claire Boddy  
Development Worker  
All Ability Forum & Hartlepool Life Chances Partnership Board.

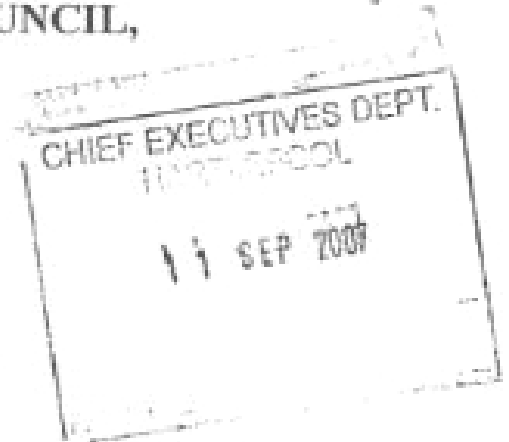


Shopmobility Centre Unit 120 Middleton Grange Shopping Centre Hartlepool TS24 7RJ  
t: 01429 861777 f: 01429 891881 e: shopmobilityhartlepool@hotmail.com

Registered Charity Number 1048120

GREATHAM PARISH COUNCIL,  
Greenholme,  
West Row,  
Greatham,  
Hartlepool,  
TS25 2HW

(Tel. 01429/870301)



3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2007

Mr. J. Anthony Brown,  
Electoral Registration Officer,  
Hartlepool Borough Council,  
Civic Centre,  
Hartlepool.  
TS24 8AY

Dear Mr. Brown,

Thank you for your letter of 10<sup>th</sup> August.

Following discussion of its contents at the last meeting of Greatham Parish Council I was asked to pass on the following comments.

Members would be grateful for your reconsideration of such properties as Bank Top Cottage, Stockton Road. In the past voting information has been directed to "Claxton", as opposed to "Greatham" and the residents have been obliged to travel to Newton Bewley in order to cast their votes.

Your consideration of the above would greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Rak Brooker

Clerk.



# HIGH TUNSTALL COLLEGE of SCIENCE

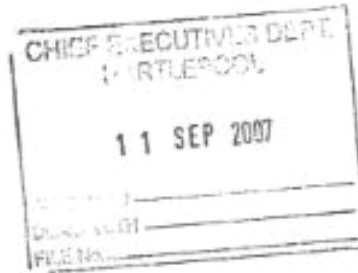
Headteacher: M. B. Bühler-Willey

Elwick Road, West Park, Hartlepool TS26 0LQ

Tel: (01429) 261446 • Fax: (01429) 222856 • E-mail: [admin.hightunstall@school.hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:admin.hightunstall@school.hartlepool.gov.uk)

7<sup>th</sup> September 2007

Mr J A Brown  
Electoral Registration Officer  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Hartlepool  
TS24 8AY



Dear Mr Brown

## REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

I write in response to your letter regarding your forthcoming review. We would register our concerns as having to restrict vehicular access at certain key times of the day in order to enable staff and students to arrive on time which in itself, affects disabled access given the distance they would have to walk.

Our other ongoing concern is the fact that, by allowing the general public on to the premises during normal school hours, we are jeopardising the safety and security of staff and students. You may also wish to consider the fact that we have started the consultation process that may lead to us becoming a Foundation College.

Yours sincerely

Mr W R White  
Director of Services





## Hartlepool Access Group



SHOPMOBILITY . ACCESS AUDIT GROUP  
ALL ABILITY FORUM . IMPROVING LIFE CHANCES  
DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

Electoral Registration Officer  
Civic Centre  
Hartlepool  
TS24 8 AY

25 September 2007

Dear Mr Brown

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the 'Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.'

As an Access Group representing nearly 2,000 disabled people in Hartlepool we are very interested in the review, particularly regarding access to polling stations.

I recently rang the Civic Centre to enquire about the processes that will ensure the polling stations are accessible. We were asked to give our opinions about which polling stations were deemed as inaccessible and if we had any suggestions that would present reasonable options for new polling stations.

As access for the disabled is one of our specialities, we are aware that an **Access Audit** is required to identify and record any barriers to access as the first step in any review and before any decisions and/or assumptions are made about what is deemed as accessible/inaccessible.

It is therefore not feasible to comment upon any individual polling station or to propose alternative venues until full Access Audits have been carried out.

Hartlepool Borough Council employs an Access Officer who is a fully qualified Auditor. Hartlepool Access Group also carries out Access Audits.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

  
Christine Remmer  
Coordinator