



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Chief Executive: John Mitchell

Peter Snow
Democratic and Electoral Services
Manager
Uttlesford District Council

22 October 2014

Our ref: PJS
Your ref:

Please ask for Mr Snow
01799 510430
Email: psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk

Dear Peter,

Polling District Review – formal consultation stage 2

You invited me to comment on the stage 2 proposals as part of the polling district review. Since stage 1 of the review you have filled in much of the missing detail and undertaken a great deal of work in visiting and assessing both existing and potential venues.

Looking again at the comments I made at the first stage in mid-September, I feel there is little I can usefully add to those comments. As far as the designation of particular venues is concerned I would add only that, in adopting a revised scheme, members should concern themselves solely with the convenience of electors and try to disregard other factors such as the implications for schools of enforcing closure on polling days.

My duty is to administer all elections in accordance with the law. I take that responsibility very seriously at all times. I am especially aware of the potential for problems to arise at a high profile election such as we are expecting next May. That being so, I would urge the Council to ensure that polling facilities are fully capable of meeting the demands of administering combined polls with the accompanying challenge of high voter turnout.

Yours sincerely

John Mitchell
Chief Executive and Returning Officer

KATHERINE SEMAR JW

Peter Snow

From: Peter Snow
Sent: 08 October 2014 15:43
To: admin@katherinesemar-jun.essex.sch.uk
Subject: Possible election use at Katherine Semar Junior School

Dear Mrs Callaghan

Following the visit Rebecca and I made to your school last week I wonder whether the school governors have yet had the opportunity to consider the implications for the school of your hall being designated for polling station use? I have to prepare a report by early next week for the Electoral Working Group commenting on the suitability of the various buildings under consideration. It will help me a great deal to have some idea of the feasibility of the school remaining open while being used as a polling facility. You said that you would explore the option of keeping the school open bearing in mind that the hall is not used for meals or classes and is not generally used for external bookings.

Any feedback you can provide from the school's perspective will be really helpful. As I said to you last week, as long as the hall and the entrance to the building is provided exclusively for use in conjunction with the operation of the polling station, and at least 10 parking spaces can be cordoned off for our use, I do not see any difficulty in the school remaining open unless there are security or safeguarding concerns.

Of course no decision has yet been taken and any information you can provide will be helpful in making a proper assessment of the options available to me.

Many thanks for your kind hospitality last week.

Yours sincerely

Peter Snow
Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
01799 510430
psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk

KATHERINE SEMAR SW

Peter Snow

From: Katherine Semar Junior Admin Email <Admin@katherinesemar-jun.essex.sch.uk>
Sent: 09 October 2014 07:43
To: Peter Snow
Subject: School Hall

Dear Mr Snow

I think it is very much if the school needs to be used we will work around this at the time.

The Gobs are not opposed to the school being used.

I hope this is helpful.

Kind Regards

Rachel Callaghan

Peter Snow

From: Heads PA <HeadsPA@swchs.net>
Sent: 30 September 2014 13:02
To: Peter Snow; Rebecca Dobson
Cc: Hilary Goldsmith; Mr Lee (Site Manager); Mrs Hartshorne; Barbara Calland (barbara.calland@btinternet.com); Mark Hayes; markhayes@christianaction.org.uk
Subject: Message from John Hartley

Dear Peter and Rebecca

Thank you for coming in to school this morning – it was good to have the opportunity to explain to you the school's position on being used as a polling station next May.

As has been found to be the case with other schools in Uttlesford, I do not believe it would be possible for SWCHS to be used as a polling station without closing the site to students for the day. In line with our safeguarding duties, all visitors to the site during school hours are required to sign in and out at school reception. Staff and students know there should never be any adult on site who is not either wearing a staff or visitor's badge. Indeed, we encourage students to challenge adults who are not appropriately badged. In this way we are fulfilling the DfE and Ofsted's requirements with regard to safeguarding children. Given that I understand electors could not be asked to sign in, I would have no alternative but to close the school for the day. Closing the school on 10th May is not acceptable to the governors and myself because the students would be losing a day's preparation and revision for the vital GCSE and A level examinations which would be starting a few days later. Future education and career opportunities depend on the results our students achieve and I am unwilling to do anything which might jeopardise their chances of maximising their achievements.

I suggested three alternative possibilities; St Mark's College, the District Council offices and the Church at the top of the High Street. Although you said it was just impossible to use the District Council offices, I do find it hard to accept that there is nowhere in that building that could not be used as a polling station. Surely that would be preferable to interrupting students' preparations for their exams?

You did ask for the dimensions of our gymnasium, they are; 18m x 12m

In conclusion, I very much hope you and the District Council will act in the best interests of students and use an alternative site next May as a polling station.

Kind regards
 John Hartley

Mrs Kathleen Hutchinson
 Head's PA

Saffron Walden County High School

Audley End Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4UH

Tel: 01799 513030 Ext; 204 | Fax: 01799 513031 | Email: headspa@swchs.net

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Peter Snow

From: Peter Snow
Sent: 02 October 2014 10:53
To: 'Heads PA'
Cc: Hilary Goldsmith; Mr Lee (Site Manager); Mrs Hartshorne; Barbara Calland (barbara.calland@btinternet.com); Mark Hayes; markhayes@christianaction.org.uk; Rebecca Dobson
Subject: RE: Message from John Hartley

Dear John

Thank you for your kind hospitality on Tuesday morning and for following up with the information requested about the dimensions of your gymnasium.

Your views about the use of the school are very clearly expressed and nothing less than I would expect. You are protecting the interests of your school in a robust but entirely reasonable manner. As explained this morning, I will of course consider all of the possible options for providing suitable polling facilities in the Audley South polling district and take full account of all that you have said. It will be a members' decision and I can only recommend.

As for the option of designating the Council Offices, I can assure you that this option will be assessed carefully and placed before members for decision. I think it is a little unfair to say there is a reluctance to use the offices. All potential polling locations are assessed against a number of criteria including, location, suitable access arrangements, internal space dimensions, parking provision and so on and are scrutinised very carefully. I have to bear in mind that I have to make suitable and adequate provision for nearly 2,500 electors with a likely turnout of 70-75%, resulting in an average of 100 electors per hour accessing the polling station. Each elector will be marking three separate ballot papers. That number of electors means the provision of two polling stations will most definitely be required. In my judgement that rules out the provision of a mobile unit and also means the internal space dimensions of the room in which polling is located must be adequate to accommodate two stations and to keep them as separate and distinct areas to deal with the throughput of voters.

The only possible locations for polling at London Road are the staff room and the council chamber. Of those, the staff room is simply too small a space (two separate areas of approx. 6m x 4.5m and with internal pillars) to accommodate two polling stations. The council chamber is my centre of operations for elections and is in use for work in connection with opening and checking postal ballots on polling day. Added to that it is located on the first floor accessed by a wide stairway and a lift in the atrium area. I would not be prepared to recommend the use of a first floor facility. The remainder of the building is used as offices and not accessible to the public. Voters would need to access any space designated via the reception area and along internal corridors through security doors. This is wholly impracticable. Neither would I recommend the use of a mobile unit.

In terms of proximity to voters the council offices would be preferable to any of the other locations under consideration but reasons of practicality seem to me to rule it out.

St Marks College is simply too far removed from the centres of population to be considered seriously. The church at the top of the High Street is located in the wrong polling area and lacks parking provision. In my judgement the choice narrows to the Friends' School or the CHS. I will of course put all of your comments before members for their consideration.

I appreciate the concerns you mention about your safeguarding responsibilities and do not underestimate that in any way. However, it does seem to me possible that the school could continue to operate by isolating the lower car park off Copperfields and the ground floor entrance to the sports hall complex including the gymnasium. That of course would come down ultimately to your judgement and the conditions set by your governors. It seems to me that the external steps area could be barriered off if needed and with the provision of good and clear signage,

electors could be quite easily confined to the designated areas. Anybody found wandering around any other part of the school site could continue to be challenged as would happen normally.

As I have said, I do consider the gym area to be a realistic option for the location of a polling facility and will ask members to weigh the merits and disadvantages against the other options available. It is located nearer the bottom of the hill via the Copperfields entrance and therefore reasonably accessible for most electors in the polling district area. However, I will of course make plain to members the concerns of the school.

I do have one further question I forgot to ask you on Tuesday. In the event that the gym is selected as the polling place, would it be possible please to clear the gym area of equipment for the duration of polling activities and leave it as an open space? We would of course meet your reasonable costs in any adaptations or other work needed to accommodate us.

If you have any further comments please do let me know. The consultation close on 24 October and I will report to the Electoral Working Group on 28 October. The Working Group will then recommend to Council on 11 November. That meeting will set the scheme to be adopted and I will of course write to you after that to let you know the outcome.

Best wishes

Peter Snow
Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
01799 510430
psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk

From: Heads PA [<mailto:HeadsPA@swchs.net>]
Sent: 30 September 2014 13:02
To: Peter Snow; Rebecca Dobson
Cc: Hilary Goldsmith; Mr Lee (Site Manager); Mrs Hartshorne; Barbara Calland (barbara.calland@btinternet.com); Mark Hayes; markhayes@christianaction.org.uk
Subject: Message from John Hartley

Dear Peter and Rebecca

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I suggested three alternative possibilities; St Mark's College, the District Council offices and the Church at the top of the High Street. Although you said it was just impossible to use the District Council offices, I do find it hard to accept that there is nowhere in that building that could not be used as a polling station. Surely that would be preferable to interrupting students' preparations for their exams?

You did ask for the dimensions of our gymnasium, they are; 18m x 12m

Peter Snow

From: Stephen Welch <stephenwelch@friends.org.uk>
Sent: 26 September 2014 12:28
To: Peter Snow
Subject: Re: Friends' School Polling

Dear Peter

I can assure you that a booking for our Assembly Hall would be treated as a firm booking. I look forward to hearing from you, once the final decision has been taken.

With thanks

Stephen

On 26 September 2014 11:41, Peter Snow <psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Stephen

Thank you for meeting with me this morning and for taking the time to show me your sports hall facility. I am grateful that you are able to confirm the Assembly Hall will not be required for exams on 7 May next year and therefore available for election use.

As I said to you this morning, I am anxious to ensure the provision of an adequate and convenient polling facility for the 2,500 electors in Audley South for the combined Parliamentary/local elections taking place next year and this will really preclude the use of a mobile unit unless there is no alternative available. Although I will be designating polling places for a five year period I am slightly more relaxed about what happens from 2016 onwards.

However, having said that I would hope and expect that a booking made for the Assembly Hall will be treated as a firm booking not subject to change before the election takes place. If we can proceed on that basis I think there is every prospect that the Friends' School will be selected as the polling place for Audley South and I will be able to confirm that to you by the middle of November.

It seems to me that the Sports Hall is potentially suitable as a fall-back option, but only if the Assembly Hall is not for any reason available on a particular date.

Best wishes

Peter

From: Stephen Welch [mailto:stephenwelch@friends.org.uk]
Sent: 26 September 2014 10:08

Peter Snow

From: Peter Snow
Sent: 26 September 2014 11:42
To: 'Stephen Welch'
Subject: RE: Friends' School Polling

Dear Stephen

Thank you for meeting with me this morning and for taking the time to show me your sports hall facility. I am grateful that you are able to confirm the Assembly Hall will not be required for exams on 7 May next year and therefore available for election use.

As I said to you this morning, I am anxious to ensure the provision of an adequate and convenient polling facility for the 2,500 electors in Audley South for the combined Parliamentary/local elections taking place next year and this will really preclude the use of a mobile unit unless there is no alternative available. Although I will be designating polling places for a five year period I am slightly more relaxed about what happens from 2016 onwards.

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It seems to me that the Sports Hall is potentially suitable as a fall-back option, but only if the Assembly Hall is not for any reason available on a particular date.

Best wishes
Peter

From: Stephen Welch [mailto:stephenwelch@friends.org.uk]
Sent: 26 September 2014 10:08
To: Peter Snow
Cc: Anna Chaudhri; Marion Grainge
Subject: Re: Friends' School Polling

Dear Peter

It was good to meet with you this morning. I have checked with our exams officer who has confirmed that our Assembly Hall will not be in use for exams on Thursday 7 May 2015 and is therefore available for use as a polling station.

With thanks
Stephen

On 23 September 2014 09:12, Peter Snow <psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Stephen

Friday at 9.30am sounds absolutely fine for me thanks and I will see you then. I will have my colleague Rebecca Dobson with me.

Peter Snow

From: Simon Lloyd <Simon@saffronwalden.gov.uk>
Sent: 10 October 2014 12:02
To: Peter Snow
Subject: RE: Polling District Review - stage 2 consultation

Dear Peter,

Our Town Council met last night and one of the items on the agenda was the review of the Polling District Review – Stage 2 consultation. Just to inform you that the review was approved and they did not have any recommendations.... Back to you please!!

Regards, and enjoy the week-end,

Simon

SJA LLOYD MBE
Town Clerk Saffron Walden
11 Emson Close
Saffron Walden
Essex CB10 1HL

Tel: 01799-516501

From: Peter Snow [<mailto:psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk>]
Sent: 24 September 2014 18:29
To: Peter Snow
Subject: Polling District Review - stage 2 consultation

Message distribution: all district and county councillors; parish and town council clerks; Sir Alan Haselhurst MP; MEPs in the Eastern Region; and representatives of political parties and pressure groups active in the Uttlesford district

Please find attached various documents published today on www.uttlesford.gov.uk relating to stage 2 of the public consultation for the review of polling districts and places in the Uttlesford district. Any comments or proposals for alternative polling arrangements must be received by me please by no later than **Friday 24 October 2014**.

The website includes a pack containing all representations received at the first stage of the public consultation.

Peter Snow
Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
01799 510430
psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk

STANSTED

STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL

Council Offices, Crafton Green House, 72 Chapel Hill
Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex CM24 8AQ

Clerk: Mrs Ruth Clifford

Office Hours: 10am to 1pm



Tel/Fax: 01279 813214
parishcouncil@stansted.net

P Snow Esq
Uttlesford District Council
Council Offices
London Road
SAFFRON WALDEN
Essex CB11 4ER

16 October 2014

Dear Peter

POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW IN THE DISTRICT OF UTTLESFORD

This Parish Council has considered the Stage 2 consultation document and is largely in favour of the proposals. Following our full Parish Council meeting on 8 October when this issue was discussed, our objections relate to the loss of one polling place – the Youth Centre in Lower Street and to the use of Bentfield Primary School for Stansted West.

Stansted South and Birchanger Ward

Whilst the Romeera Leisure Centre is easily accessible for most people living at Foresthall Park, it is quite some distance to go for those living in and around the Mountfitchet Estate, especially if they do not have their own transport. If you retained the Youth Centre to serve Stansted South and Birchanger, there is a public bus service which takes residents from the Mountfitchet Estate down into Lower Street – an easy walk then to the Youth Centre. There is no such bus to take people from that Estate up to the Leisure Centre.

Stansted East and Stansted West

We recognise that the use of primary schools as polling places is very disruptive for children, staff and working parents. We actually believe that the Lower Street site is large enough to provide two polling places – you could use one part of the building for Stansted South and Birchanger electors, and the other part as a polling place for Stansted East, leaving the Peter Kirk Centre to be used by Stansted West.

We hope that the Electoral Working Group will note the comments from the Full Council meeting which represents our residents and community.

Yours sincerely

Ruth A Clifford
Clerk to the Council

Rebecca Dobson

From: Peter Snow
Sent: 22 October 2014 15:27
To: Rebecca Dobson
Subject: FW: Polling District Review

From: Thaxted Parish Council [mailto:clerk@thaxted.co.uk]
Sent: 25 September 2014 15:48
To: Peter Snow
Subject: RE: Polling District Review

Hi Peter,

Thanks for your reply. The contact for the Church Hall is David Morgan. He can be contacted on 01371 830132.

I wasn't present at the meeting where this was discussed but having asked councillors I have been told that the trustees of BSH find the disruption to regular hires on Thursday a pain. The Church Hall was apparently keen to take on the role they had many years ago.

Hope this helps. If I glean anymore information I will forward it to you.

Best regards

Julie Abel

Clerk to Thaxted Parish Council
Community Information Centre
7 Town Street
THAXTED
Essex CM6 2LD
Tel: 01371 831952

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From: Peter Snow [mailto:psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk]
Sent: 25 September 2014 15:13
To: Clerk to Thaxted PC
Subject: RE: Polling District Review

Julie

I confirm that I have received the PC's brief representation dated 11 September stating its preferred polling location as the Church Hall in Margaret Street. However, there is no accompanying explanation for this proposal, or any reasons put forward as to why the Church Hall is regarded as preferable to the long standing polling facility at Bolford Street. Can you please let me have a statement of the PC's reasons for making this suggestion to enable me to take it forward.

I will now need to visit both locations to make a direct comparison of the merits of each building before I am able to report back to my members with a recommendation. Do you have contact details please for the Church Hall?

Regards

Peter Snow
Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
01799 510430
psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk

From: Thaxted Parish Council [<mailto:clerk@thaxted.co.uk>]
Sent: 25 September 2014 09:08
To: Peter Snow
Cc: terry@thaxted.co.uk; victoriaandclive@googlemail.com
Subject: FW: Polling District Review

Good Morning Peter,

Thank you for sending me a copy of the proposed scheme and representations received at the first stage of the public consultation. You will see that we did notify you of the parish council's view on this earlier this month however this doesn't seem to be reflected in the latest documentation. Does that mean that there is an error or has the view of the council not been accepted? I'd be grateful if you could let me know as I'm sure councillors will ask me!

Best regards

Julie Abel

Clerk to Thaxted Parish Council
Community Information Centre
7 Town Street
THAXTED
Essex CM6 2LD
Tel: 01371 831952

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From: Rebecca Dobson [<mailto:rdobson@uttlesford.gov.uk>]
Sent: 11 September 2014 16:45
To: Clerk to Thaxted PC
Subject: FW: Polling District Review

Hi Julie, thanks for this response.

Regards

Rebecca Dobson
Principal Democratic Services Officer

Uttlesford District Council
Council Offices
London Road
Saffron Walden
CB11 4ER
Tel: 01799 510510 (direct line 510433)
Email: rdoobson@uttlesford.gov.uk
Website: www.uttlesford.gov.uk

From: Peter Snow
Sent: 11 September 2014 16:37
To: Rebecca Dobson
Subject: FW: Polling District Review

From: Thaxted Parish Council
Sent: 11 September 2014 16:36:59 (UTC) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: Peter Snow
Subject: Polling District Review

Dear Peter,

The Council has considered the options for polling in the Town and agreed that the Church Hall in Margaret Street is its preferred location.

Best regards

Julie Abel

Clerk to Thaxted Parish Council
Community Information Centre
7 Town Street
THAXTED
Essex CM6 2LD
Tel: 01371 831952

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THAXTED

Mr P Snow
Uttlesford District Council



2 Gallows Hill
Saffron Walden
Essex CB11 4DA

October 1st 2014

Dear Peter

I have heard on the grapevine (please forgive me if it is untrue), that you may be switching the venue for the polling station for next years' elections to the Church Hall in Thaxted rather than Bolford Street Hall.

As you know my wife and I have been Presiding Officer and Pole Clerk at Thaxted for over 20 years and so have an interest in this development. As a result I am not sure how suitable the Church Hall would be for such a busy Polling Station with two boxes.

The access is very poor for elderly or disabled voters and parking on a busy corner could result in traffic congestion at busy times. Furthermore the hall is much smaller than Bolford Street which itself gets very full at peak voting times with queues reaching back to the front doors.

I did speak to one of your colleagues on Tuesday regarding my concerns and I raise these points only to ensure the elections run smoothly.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Barker

Concerns expressed by telephone
by Joan Francis
c. Lan Bennett 6/10/14