



From: Parish Clerk [mailto:parishclerk.ccsipc@gmail.com]

Sent: 27 September 2018 12:57

To: CDC Management

Subject: FAO Bob Smith

For the attention of Mr Bob Smith,
Returning Officer,
Chiltern District Council

cc Cllr Nick Rose

Dear Mr Smith,

Re Review of Polling places in Cholesbury-cum-St. Leonards

Following an exchange of emails and discussions with Cllr. Nick Rose he has advised the Parish Council to submit a formal complaint to you in your capacity of Returning Officer for Chiltern District Council.

In July 2018, the parish council discovered, only by chance, that the Governance and Electoral Arrangements Committee had on 27th June recommended there should be only one polling station for polling districts 'CMA' and 'CMB' to cater for all the residents in Cholesbury-cum-St. Leonards parish. This polling station would be located at Cholesbury Village Hall, consequently, St Leonards Parish Hall would no longer be used as a polling place for residents in the CMB area. No adequate reasons were provided for reaching this decision.

When this was investigated by Cllr. Nick Rose the parish council was informed that the Governance and Electoral Arrangements Committee had been briefed erroneously that the parish council had been consulted about the proposal to cease having a polling station at St Leonards and that the parish council had not raised an objection.

Since then this flawed decision has also been published on the Chiltern DC website.

The feedback from Nick Rose advising about the errors that had been made also set out a way forward which is included here:-

".....On investigation this morning I was informed by our Officers that your parish Council had been consulted about discontinuation of St Leonards as a separate polling station and I had the same impression. But in view of your discussions last night this is clearly not the case. It is not a major

problem in as much as in the short term the Returning Officer has the power to create a polling station anywhere or reverse a previous decision, so if there were to be an election tomorrow then St Leonards could still be used. In the longer term the committee needs to review the decision regarding St Leonards and it would help greatly if your council were to complain formally to the Returning Officer, Bob Smith about lack of consultation. The Committee could then look at the situation again and obviously I would support that. The view of the community is always of prime importance."

In short, and for the record, the parish council has not at any stage been consulted over this proposal to stop using St Leonards Parish Hall. In the absence of any opportunity to respond, and in view of the flawed process operated by your officers, the parish council has now resolved to take Cllr. Rose's advice and formally complain to you about how this matter has been dealt with.

To make clear, the parish council's prime concern over the removal of this polling station is the impact on the elderly community living in St Leonards village and in the hamlet beyond at the furthest end of the parish who will be adversely affected by this proposal. According to the record of the Governance and Electoral Arrangements Committee comparable consideration was not given to other polling places of a similar nature in the district. The decision therefore appears arbitrary. The parish council also believes in carrying out a flawed review and decision-making process the District Council has failed to meet its statutory obligations to carry out a proper equality and human rights audit prior to coming to any conclusion over the impact this decision will have to this rural community.

For these reasons, the parish council seeks a review by you of this matter, including the flawed consultation process and how members were misled about the how the consultation process was conducted which led to this illogical decision being taken. The suggested approach succinctly set out by Nick Rose in his email to the parish council provides the basis of the way forward.

The parish council looks forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Hayley Lewis
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