

Alison Hodgson

Sent: 21 August 2019 18:01
Subject: RE: Polling station review - Recommendation

I am confused by the suggestion we move the Bush Fair Polling station from William Martin School to St Stephens. The school, together with the Council, made arrangements such that in the 2019 election only the nursery was used for polling- as the rest of the school could be isolated from that building the rest of the school would have remained open if the day had not already been earmarked as an INSET day. Also the parking opposite the school will not be lost due to the Bushey Croft Development. Plans show the provision will remain and be enhanced, it certainly has more parking than St Stephen's Church.

Thanks

From: Alison Hodgson <alison.rayman@harlow.gov.uk>
Date: 21 August 2019 at 15:39:41 BST
Subject: RE: Polling station review- Recommendation

Dear Councillor

I am emailing you as one of the ward councillors in Bush Fair, Church Langley and Old Harlow. Please find attached our recommendations for changes to the polling stations in your ward as part of the polling station review.

These will be published and open for Public comments until 20 September 2019.

Regards

Alison Hodgson
Electoral Services Assistant Manager (Part-Time)
Electoral Services
Latton Bush Centre
Southern Way
Harlow
CM18 7BL

Alison Hodgson

Sent: 02 September 2019 10:47
Subject: Use of Henry Moore Primary as a polling station
Categories: In Progress

Dear sir/madam,

I am supportive of the acting officer's proposal to stop the use of Henry Moore Primary School as a polling location for all but Parliamentary and Referendum votes.

As a trustee of the Harlow Inspirational Learning Trust, I am reassured that this proposal will provide much less disruption for the pupils within our Trust.

However, I would ask you to consider using Church Langley Community Centre as a polling station for Parliamentary and Referendum votes as well, or- if this is not possible - to please explain why Henry Moore is a more suitable polling station for this category of elections.

Yours faithfully,

Harlow Inspirational Learning Trust

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Alison Hodgson

Sent: 20 September 2019 08:55
Subject: Review of Polling stations

Please find attached a response to the (Acting) Returning Officers recommendations following the responses to the review of polling stations in Harlow. It is sent on behalf of the three Church Langley ward councilors.

Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

(Acting) Returning Officer's Representation

Henry Moore Primary School

Current polling station is unsuitable, primarily because there is no parking and most people go to the polling station in their car, either going to or coming from work. It also causes disruption to the school.

Church Langley Community Centre is in a good location within the Ward, is big enough and has plenty of parking available.

Response

This representation fails on a number of important grounds:

- there have been no changes to the circumstances affecting the role of the polling station since the last review to warrant such a drastic upheaval as closure;
- insufficient weight is given to accessibility as required in sections 4.2 and 4.6 of the *Polling Station Review - Guidance* issued by the Electoral Commission;
- and the suggestion of having different polling stations for different elections is confusing. What arrangements do you have for referenda or the Police and Crime Commissioner elections?

Henry Moore school has been used a polling station ever since it opened nearly twenty years ago and is now recognised and accepted as such by the electorate. There have been no changes to the population size since the last review nor to the highways infrastructure making access more difficult. No evidence is provided to support such a recommendation now. Its location and normal ease of access it is appropriate for use as a polling station within the guidelines.

Some parents wonder why the school closes for an additional day when it can be allocated for training or similar purposes. Adequate notice is available for elections.

There is parking available if the school chose to make it so. Residents popping into to the school to vote will require only a short stay so there would be rapid turnover. The school is closed to pupils so there is no risk to children. Henry

Moore is unique in that other schools in Harlow used as polling stations keep their gates open and manage to provide parking without difficulty.

The use of schools as polling stations is covered in section 5.22 of the Guidance. Schools are public funded public buildings usually situated centrally within a community and its location generally known by that community. For this reason traditionally schools have been used not just in Harlow but across the country. Nearly half of the 23 polling stations in Harlow are in schools, so Henry Moore is far from unusual.

It can only be anecdotal to say that most people go to vote by car as no such study has ever been undertaken and there is no evidence of any great change in voter habits over the past twelve months. There are plenty of retired and non-employed residents who walk to the polling station during the day and evening.

In terms of access and equality it seems unfair to discriminate against the majority of voters by closing their polling station. The west polling district (Henry Moore) served 3,737 voters (May 2018), whereas the East (Community Centre) district served only 2,593 voters. Equity would suggest that the least number of voters should be inconvenienced by closing their polling station and using a more central and more convenient polling station in the middle of the ward.

It is likely more voters would drive to a remote polling station, located in a far corner of the ward, than walk to their local one – an unnecessarily environmentally unfriendly result. Something seemingly overlooked in this Representation is the existing congestion at the Church Langley School, adjacent to the Community Centre, at school starting and closing times. This is exacerbated by residents popping into the store for shopping on their way to work. The distance and congestion would deter many people from attending a single polling station stuck in an isolated part of the estate. Most voters in Church Langley (West) live within a quarter mile of Henry Moore School whereas it is over a mile to the community centre.

The current layout of the school as a polling station is in breach of the Equality Act 2010, including section 149 Public Sector Equality Duty, by discriminating against people with disabilities, a protected characteristic under Section 4 of the Act. Section 149 is breached by failing to eliminate discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity. There is a perfectly usable room for a polling station adjacent to the main entrance to the school, which is only yards from the main entrance. However, the layout provided forces voters to take a hundred yard walk to a second hall at the far end of the school building. It is therefore necessary for a member of the polling staff to wait at the locked

gates and telephone through for the presiding officer to walk to the gate with a voting paper in order for a disabled voter to exercise their democratic right.

Having two systems of voting for different elections will be confusing to voters, especially with annual local elections. It is inevitable that voters in a general election would make their way to the Community Centre, only to be told they have to go somewhere else. Most people will make the effort, but some will not, but voters from the west division will wonder at the sense of their local authority. There is no record of any other council operating a dual polling station voting arrangement.

Schools and parents have plenty of time to prepare for elections. They are always held the first Thursday in May, except for European Elections, now no longer an issue, and general elections every few years.

It is not much of an ask that citizens can exercise their democratic freedom and rights achieved at the sacrifice of millions in two world wars, and the campaign by Suffragettes to achieve female emancipation.

Nothing has changed since the last review to warrant the closure of the polling station, access issues are not properly reviewed and the suggestion of different polling stations for different elections is not practical.

Alison Hodgson

Sent: 07 September 2019 12:23
Subject: Polling Station query

Dear Harlow Council,

I write with reference to the proposed polling station site to be located at Newhall Primary School.

Although thankfully I do not have children in this school and it will not effect me personally I am opposed to it. Primarily because I have schooled my children at Henry Moore School and it has caused unnecessary disruption to the school, the children & parents so much so that the school is trying to cease their school being used as a polling station any longer.

However I am thankful that a new polling station site is being sought closer to where I live and preferably one that I can walk to.

Please may I ask why other locations other than schools aren't being researched?

For example we have New Ground Cafe practically next door to this school and it is a focal point of our community, could this not be considered an option?

Last year I witnessed a lovely atmosphere at The Queens Head Public House in Churchgate Street in Old Harlow. The polling station was inside the pub and people voted and stayed to have a drink resulting in great community spirit.

I have no links to the Cafe and am unsure even if they would be prepared/ permitted to have the polling station at the cafe due to extended opening hours, however I have *cc'd* them in incase this could be researched. Apologies for direct approach.

Please see below picture posted on Harlow Council's Facebook page of Polling Day in May this year at The Queens Head PH on Churchgate Street.

Kind Regards

Alison Hodgson

Sent: 07 September 2019 09:59
Subject: Proposed Polling Station @ Newhall Primary Acaedmy

Dear Planning Dept,

As a parent of a child who attends Newhall Primary Academy, I strongly oppose your proposal of opening a polling station at the school as this will ultimately be putting our children at risk, however minuscule the risk and despite any safeguarding measures you put in place it's still a risk non the less!

If the school stays open during polling days do you plan CRB check every person(s) entering the school?

alike many other parents I have spoken with i would not feel comfortable sending my child to school on this day!

If the school decides close on these days to you plan to reimburse us parents the cost of childcare for those days?

Surely there has be to a more suitable place within the Newhall area for a polling station ensuring we are protecting our child against even minimal risks.

I look forward to your response.

Regards

Sent from my iPhone

Alison Hodgson

Sent: 05 September 2019 22:51
To: Registration
Subject: Polling statiions

To whom it may concern,

I have just come across your Facebook post regarding the polling station review.

I have a child who has attended Henry Moore since year 2 and is now in year 4. The days of elections are a huge problem for us trying to find childcare..... especially as I work within a school that does not close for polling as they use a church hall instead.....

Therefore, seeing the reasons you wish to move Henry Moore polling station to Church Langley community centre is great.....you are correct in saying it causes a disruption to the school and all the school children who are legally obligated to attend..... therefore, moving it to church Langley community centre is great news.....

However, below this box I then see the plan is to create a Newhall polling station which fair enough there probably is a need.....however, the plan there is to close the Newhall school and disrupt that school instead..... (which my son attends by the way so the great news above just becomes really rubbish news as I'm yet again stuck with no childcare).

If one of the reasons is to not use Henry Moore due to the disruption of the school..... why is it then ok to disrupt another school instead?

There is absolutely no logic in that decision at all.

The polling days cause massive problems for childcare for any parent as the schools cannot even run an emergency childcare club to help those parents who cannot get time off as they cannot use the site.

Working in a school myself I don't get holiday entitlement..... But I will certainly not be flavour of the month if I keep having to tell my work that I have no-one to have my kids especially as the beings that run parliament seem to keep running polling days just for fun

If it was just one day a year..... that's bad enough but this year with the potential of another vote.....

That will be 3 school learning days missed in one year..... please can you explain how it is acceptable for children to loose those three days when other schools do not close and they get the extra 3 days of education they are entitled to?

Kind regards,

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Alison Hodgson

Sent: 07 September 2019 08:32
To: Registration
Subject: Newhall polling district

Dear Sirs

As a Newhall resident, I fully support the proposal to create a district for the Newhall area and use of the local school as a polling station. The current station is too far away and results in people being unable to get there and vote.

Kind regards

Sent from my iPhone

Alison Hodgson

Sent: 07 September 2019 10:25
To: Registration
Subject: Newhall polling station

I just wanted to say I support using the Newhall school as a polling station, there is an active member of our new hall community who has told everyone this is the opposition email address so you will be receiving an unbalanced amount of negative feedback.

Alison Hodgson

Sent: 24 August 2019 15:35
To: Alison Hodgson
Subject: RE: Polling station review - Recommendation

That sounds very sensible. Is Churchgate Street still in the Church Hall.

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